

Tackling tyre graveyards as new road surface using rubber is trialled

A section of road between junctions 23 to 22 on the southbound carriageway of the M1 near Leicester has been laid with the new surface which has been developed by Tarmac.

Highways England is funding trials into the new asphalt mix to see if this environmentally-sound innovation could be the way forward for future road surfaces.

Using waste tyres in roads has both economic and environmental benefits.

Some 40 million waste tyres are produced every year in the UK and over 500,000 disused tyres shipped out of the UK each year to be landfilled.

EU rules ban the disposal of tyres in landfill sites. Therefore the tyres generally go to the Middle East and Asia. There are over seven million tyres filling one Kuwaiti landfill site which is so vast that the 'tyre graveyard' is now visible from space.

Tarmac is believed to be the first in the UK to have developed an asphalt technology which recycles tyres by adding granulated rubber to the mix.

It is estimated by Tarmac that up to 750 waste tyres could be used in every kilometre of road surfaced with the new material, depending on the thickness of the road.

The trial on the M1 will test the effective durability of the road surface on a highly trafficked network.

Corporate Group Leader Martin Bolt, who oversees innovations projects for Highways England in the Midlands, said:

Highways England is committed to investing in innovation to help us meet the economic, environmental and efficiency challenges we face in our changing world and also to delivering environment improvements as we strive to ensure our road network works more harmoniously with its surroundings.

This trial could well be the first step to rapidly reducing the number of tyres piling up in the UK and beyond. The economic and environmental potential of this new asphalt is significant and we are delighted to be working with Tarmac in this trial.

Paul Fleetham, managing director of Tarmac, added:

Technical innovation has a key role to play in improving the environmental performance of our roads. As a previously overlooked waste stream, used tyres offer a significant opportunity to unlock the benefits of a circular economy.

There has been a very positive response to our rubberised asphalt since the first local authority trial was announced in May and we're very pleased to be working with Highways England to explore its potential to support the sustainability of the strategic road network.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.