

Press release: Improvements for drivers on M1 in East Midlands

Motorists using the M1 in the East Midlands are set to benefit from better, more reliable journeys as part of a £120m upgrade starting next week.

Highways England will be improving 7.5 miles of the vital route in a project which will make journeys faster and more reliable by providing a much needed extra lane in each direction, particularly around East Midlands Airport.

The work, which starts on 30 March, is part of a major government investment worth £15bn to build a modern and resilient road network.

Highways England project manager David Cooke said:

Drivers currently experience congestion and unreliable journey times at busy periods and traffic is predicted to increase, particularly with the growth expected at East Midlands Airport.

By upgrading this stretch of motorway, Highways England will reduce congestion and improve travel times and make journeys more reliable.

This work will also support the economy and boost economic growth within the region by improving traffic flow on the motorway reducing the cost of economic delay to commuters and business traffic.

The M1 is a strategic route that carries more than 130,000 vehicles per day between Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. It will be upgraded to smart motorway between Diseworth (junction 23a) and Risley (junction 25).

The scheme will also introduce new CCTV cameras and electronic information signs and signals on gantries – these will show the variable mandatory speed limits and manage traffic flow and incidents.

Emergency refuge areas will also be installed throughout the length of the scheme with the installation of a reinforced barrier and hardened central reserve to further improve safety.

Between Diseworth and Kegworth (junction 24) the hard shoulder will be used at peak times, and between Kegworth and Risley it will be permanently converted to a fourth traffic lane.

The work is due for completion in winter 2018.

Elsewhere, motorists are also being reminded that there will be a contraflow in place on the M1 between junction 24 for Kegworth to A453/ A42 Finger Farm

Roundabout (near East Midlands Airport) while development work starts on the East Midlands Gateway scheme.

For more information about the smart motorway upgrade, [visit the scheme website](#).

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.

[News story: £100 million a year boost for energy intensive industries](#)

Regulations to save heavy electricity users like steel and chemical companies around £100 million a year in energy costs have been laid in parliament today.

The government expects the new measures to benefit over 130 eligible energy intensive companies across the UK in sectors including steel, chemicals, glass and cement. The new measures will exempt these companies from a proportion of costs of the [Contracts for Difference scheme](#), which is designed to encourage investment in low-carbon energy generation.

Contracts for Difference are won through a competitive process which drives down costs and guarantees companies a certain price for the low-carbon electricity they produce for a set number of years. This gives them the support and certainty they need to attract investment and get projects off the ground.

The costs of funding the scheme are recovered through a levy on energy suppliers which is passed on to domestic and business energy bills. This only makes up a minor part of most electricity bills, but has a more significant impact on those industries that use a lot of electricity.

The government committed in the [Industrial Strategy green paper](#) to minimise business costs and commission a review of the opportunities to reduce the cost of achieving our decarbonisation goals in the power and industrial sectors.

Energy Minister Jesse Norman said:

We want the UK to be one of the best places in the world to build and grow a business, and that means creating the right conditions for companies to thrive and succeed.

These industries are worth £52 billion to the UK economy, support 600,000 jobs and produce essential products that people use every day. That is why we have taken this action to support them.

Although energy costs on average account for 3% of UK business expenditure, there are 15 sectors where this reaches 10%.

In addition to the support announced today the government is continuing discussions with the European Union about securing further exemptions from policy costs for energy intensive industries. In the meantime a compensation scheme for the policy costs of the Renewables Obligation and Feed-in Tariff schemes remains in place.

1. The government launched a [consultation into the proposed Contracts for Difference exemption for energy intensive industries](#) last year. The response to this consultation has been published today.
2. The other policy costs the government is seeking exemptions for energy intensive industries from are the Renewables Obligation and Feed-in-Tariffs. Discussions with the European Union are continuing about securing these exemptions and we will make a further announcement in due course.
3. The energy intensive companies receiving relief are typically located in areas with above average unemployment. Over half of energy intensive industry compensation is paid to sites in the bottom 18% of local authorities by claimant count.

[Press release: Talented graduates wanted for career in social work](#)

Graduates across the country are being encouraged to apply to a fast-track programme to become the next generation of child and family social workers.

[Applications open today for Step Up to Social Work](#), a 14-month programme that combines real-world experience in a local authority social work team with high-quality university training.

Successful candidates will be awarded a postgraduate diploma in social work when they graduate, allowing them to register and practice as a social worker.

The government is working hard to make this a country that works for everyone, and social work is at the heart of this fairer society. This includes making social work a career that many more people will aspire and have the opportunity to join.

This is backed by an over £800 million investment in social worker training and improvement, including through teaching partnerships, bursaries and our fast-track programmes [Frontline](#) and Step Up.

Edward Timpson, Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families, said:

Whether you are a recent graduate or someone whose student days are long behind you, this is a fantastic opportunity to begin a new career helping children and families. We want all young people to be able to go as far as their talents will take them, and part of that is making sure childhood is a happy and safe time in their lives.

I have been inspired by previous graduates of the programme, and I'm sure this year will be no different. I look forward to meeting the next generation of social workers who will be transforming children's lives.

Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, said:

I know from my own experience what a challenging and fulfilling career child and family social work is, and I'm pleased to see that this programme is encouraging more people to consider it. Programmes like this one are attracting hundreds of talented graduates each year, who could make a real difference to the lives of children and families.

The Step Up to Social Work programme runs every 2 years, with more students qualifying as social workers each time. In 2015, 300 students completed their training and we expect over 420 students to graduate in June this year. Many of those graduating will be offered a trainee social worker role with the local authority where they trained.

This year more than 550 funded places are available to support trainees. After applications close in May, students will start training in January 2018.

Candidates are eligible to apply if they have a 2:1 degree, or a 2:2 plus a higher degree, which can include a master's degree or a Postgraduate Certificate in Education, in a discipline other than social work. They should

also have the equivalent of a GCSE grade C in maths and English, and experience of working with children, young people or families.

1. Ahead of the formal application process opening today, potential applicants were invited to register interest by providing an email contact. They received an automatic notification email informing them when the application process went live.
2. This will be the fifth cohort of the Step Up to Social Work programme.
3. More information about applying to [Step Up to Social Work](#) is available.

[Press release: Illegal boaters sunk with fines](#)

Five boaters who did not register their vessels have been landed with penalties totalling more than £5,000.

River inspectors found the boats moored on the Great Ouse, Little Ouse, Old West and Nene – all part of the Anglian Waterways network managed by the Environment Agency.

It is a legal requirement for boaters to register any vessel they keep, use or let for hire on Environment Agency waterways, and to clearly display a valid registration plate. Vessel owners must also have the appropriate Boat Safety Scheme certificates and insurance, as part of the registration process.

Glen Wheatley of Farcet in Peterborough, Geoffrey Turner of Holbeach in Lincolnshire, Stuart Baker of Hockwold in Norfolk, Phillip Sunman of Eynesbury in Cambridgeshire, and Anthony Hague of Soham in Cambridgeshire all failed to register their vessels, as required by law.

Their cases were heard at Peterborough Magistrates' Court on Wednesday 8 March, and resulted in fines and costs totalling £5,166.10. Mr Wheatley was ordered to pay a total of £827.99, Mr Turner £856.98, Mr Baker £898.71, Mr Sunman £1,208.71, and Mr Hague £1,371.71.

Nathan Arnold, partnerships and development team leader at the Environment Agency, said:

Our historic and precious waterways are an important part of our nation's heritage and are enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people every year," says Nathan Arnold, Partnerships and Development team leader at the Environment Agency.

A significant part of caring for them, protecting them, and ensuring people continue to enjoy them is funded by boaters paying

their way. Those who don't contribute as they should are threatening the future of our waterways – and we won't hesitate to take action against them.

As well as not contributing to the upkeep of waterways, unregistered boats can be unsafe, hazardous to other river users, and a pollution risk to the local environment and wildlife.

The Environment Agency looks after 353 miles of navigable waterways in the Anglian network, which includes the Ancholme, Black Sluice, Glen, Welland, Nene, Great Ouse and Stour, as well as associated locks and navigation facilities like moorings, showers and toilets.

More information about boating and waterways, including registering vessels, is available at <http://www.gov.uk/ea>. If you suspect a boat is illegal, please contact the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 or by emailing our [Waterways team](#).

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- Glen Wheatley of Peterborough Road, Farcet, Peterborough, pleaded guilty by post and was given a fine of £103, and ordered to pay costs of £250, compensation of £444.99 and a victim surcharge of £30. The total penalty was £827.99. His vessel is Lady Angela.
 - Geoffrey Turner of Fleet Road, Holbeach, Lincolnshire, was found guilty in absence. He was fined £220, and ordered to pay costs of £250, £343.98 compensation, and a victim surcharge of £43. The total penalty was £856.98. His vessel is Bianco.
 - Stuart Baker of Pearces Close, Hockwold, Norfolk, pleaded guilty in court and was given a 12-month conditional discharge. He was also ordered to pay compensation of £878.71 and a £20 victim surcharge (£898.71 total). His vessel is unnamed.
 - Philip Sunman of Washbank Road, Eynesbury, Cambridgeshire, pleaded guilty and was fined £200. He was also ordered to pay costs of £100, compensation of £878.71 and a £30 victim surcharge. The total penalty was £1,208.71. His vessel is unnamed.
 - Anthony Hague of Bushell Lane, Soham, Cambridgeshire, was found guilty in absence and given a fine of £220. He was also ordered to pay £250 in costs, £873.71 compensation and a victim surcharge of £30. The total penalty was £1,373.71. His vessel is Quest II.
 - Powered-vessel owners will require valid insurance to register their vessels and most will also require a Boat Safety Scheme Certificate.
 - Registration must be renewed each year for the waterway on which a person is keeping or using their boat. People can also buy a visitor registration for shorter periods.
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[News story: Laser Directed Energy Weapon \(LDEW\) testing](#)

Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) scientists are conducting trials that will enable Dstl to characterise the effectiveness of Laser Directed Energy Weapon (LDEW), in support of the LDEW Capability Demonstrator. The programme will culminate in a technology demonstrator in 2019.

The goal of the programme is to demonstrate a standalone laser directed energy weapon system that is capable of acquiring, tracking and engaging aerial and surface targets at various ranges and in different weather conditions.

The project will enable the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Dstl to advise the MOD on the future procurement programme requirements and to establish a road map to an in-service capability. If it is successful, the first laser weapons could come into service in the mid-2020s.

Watch the video of a test laser melting a mortar bomb.

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Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriet Baldwin has said:

“The UK has long enjoyed a reputation as a world leader in innovation and it is truly ground-breaking projects like the Laser Directed Energy Weapon which will keep this country ahead of the curve.

“The Defence Innovation Initiative and £800M Defence Innovation Fund aim to encourage imagination, ingenuity and entrepreneurship, in pursuit of maintaining a military advantage in the future.

“With a rising Defence budget, and a £178 billion equipment plan, our commitment to innovation will deliver a safer and more prosperous Britain.”