

Seaweed from the Scottish seas to global markets

Seaweed sourced from the pristine waters of the Scottish Outer Hebrides will now be distributed throughout Europe by Univar Solutions – a leading global ingredients distributor.

Univar Solutions was selected by Seaweed & Co. to distribute its PureSea® range of natural seaweed ingredients to the food and beverage markets in countries including Denmark, France and Germany. PureSea® ingredients are easy and convenient to use in almost any food, beverage and nutrition product, and are a natural source of iodine.

Established in 2015, Seaweed & Co. is a leading supplier of seaweed sustainably sourced in the Scottish Outer Hebrides. Its products are processed in a factory on the Isle of Lewis which employs 15 people and is expanding to accommodate increased demand for seaweed production.

The new distributor agreement with Univar Solutions will see Seaweed & Co.'s PureSea® ingredients shipped to food and nutrition manufacturers and brands across Europe, providing consumers with the many health and nutritional benefits of seaweed.

HM Trade Commissioner for Europe, Andrew Mitchell CMG, said:

I am delighted to see businesses like Seaweed & Co. expand their reach throughout Europe by tapping into the growing demand for high quality UK produce.

There are numerous opportunities for UK companies overseas, which is why the Department for International Trade is committed to boosting UK trade and prosperity across the continent of Europe and not just the European Union – whether that's by providing advice on market opportunities, connections to buyers or overcoming market access barriers.

Seaweed & Co. has supplied seaweed for 'Off the Eaten Path' – a range of vegetable snacks made by PepsiCo, the second largest food and beverage business in the world. Its ingredients have also been used in the M&S Smoked Hebridean Seaweed Mayonnaise.

The company also sells directly to customers through its Weed & Wonderful range which helps individuals easily incorporate seaweed into their everyday life and reap its health benefits. Co-founded by Kaiser Chiefs lead singer Ricky Wilson, the Weed & Wonderful range includes seaweed infused oils and seaweed capsules – all of which are available in health food stores across the UK including Holland and Barrett and Whole Foods Market.

Seaweed & Co. currently exports to countries including Israel, South Korea, Australia, Canada and the US, but will now expand further into Europe with support from Univar Solutions and cater to emerging consumer interest in plant-based diets. The business also plans to expand into Asia where food products from Scotland are recognised and valued for their premium quality.

The global commercial seaweed market is set to reach £17.5 billion by 2024 thanks to increased demand for organic, natural and sustainably sourced products. Seaweed not only supports thyroid health, metabolism and cognitive function, but also adds flavour to food and is often used as a replacement for salt.

Dr Craig Rose, Co-founder and Managing Director of Seaweed & Co., said:

Seaweed is undoubtedly the future. It ticks so many boxes for food, health and nutrition, and is absolutely on-trend. We have spent the past 4 years developing a supply chain and PureSea® range of ingredients that can meet the rapidly rising demand on a large and global scale.

Working with Univar Solutions is opening up a vast opportunity and network for my company, into Europe and beyond. As a partner they bring a huge amount of expertise, credibility and knowledge, which we are all extremely excited about.

[Extra motorway lanes saving drivers 40 minutes each week](#)

Highways England completed the biggest ever upgrade of the M6 in Cheshire earlier this year, and figures from the first few months of operation show that peak-time drivers are now travelling up to 15 miles per hour faster than before work started.

Drivers travelling towards Crewe after 9am and leaving the office after 6pm are seeing the biggest improvement to their journeys – saving more than eight minutes along the 19-mile route every day.

Commuters working a nine-to-five shift near Manchester are also spending over 30 minutes less time on the road each week. They are now able to travel at an average speed of 66 miles per hour on their way home from work – 15 miles per hour faster than before work started on the upgrade.

And businesses are benefitting from faster and more reliable journeys

throughout the day, with drivers travelling southbound previously facing average speeds of 50 miles per hour between midday and 1pm. They are now able to travel 14 miles per hour faster, saving almost six minutes along the route and cutting journey times by over a quarter.

Haulage firm Arclid Transport is based close to junction 17 of the M6 near Sandbach and delivers raw materials for a wide range of industries across the UK and Europe, including pharmaceutical, food manufacturing and detergent.

Managing director Andy Brookes said:

The upgrade of the M6 has made a significant improvement to journey times for our fleet at Arclid Transport. We carry out more than 300 movements a week and a large percentage of these originate from Sandbach, which is at the heart of the improved stretch.

The most noticeable factor is the reliability of the flow of traffic, meaning we are now more certain of estimated arrival times for our customers because there are far fewer delays.

Initial statistics from the first three months following the M6 smart motorway's completion also show that the number of collisions along the route has fallen by around 30%. There were 97 incidents reported from April to June 2015 compared to 68 incidents during the same three months this year – an average of 10 fewer collisions every month.

Overall, safety has improved by over 25% on England's 'all-lane running' sections of motorway where electronic signs display red Xs and variable speed limits to close lanes and control the flow of traffic, and emergency areas provide a safer place to stop.

Mike Bull, Highways England's smart motorways senior manager in the north-west, said:

Tens of thousands of drivers use the M6 every day to travel to and from work and this latest research shows that the extra lanes and new technology we've introduced are making a massive difference to people's journeys.

The motorway upgrade means businesses are also benefiting from quicker and more reliable journeys through Cheshire – supporting the regional and national economy.

We'll be starting work on several similar major motorway upgrades over the next few years and hope drivers will bear with us in anticipation of the long-term benefits these projects will bring.

Highways England completed the £255 million project to upgrade the M6 between Crewe and Knutsford in March 2019 – the most significant change since the M6

first opened in the county in 1963.

A fourth lane has been introduced in each direction and a total of 258 electronic signs, 104 traffic sensors and 70 CCTV cameras are helping to tackle congestion and improve journey times for around 120,000 drivers every day.

Construction work is currently taking place on a similar upgrade of the M62 near Warrington, and preliminary work is also due to start later this year on the stretch of the M62 over the Pennines which links the North West to Yorkshire.

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.

Safety on smart motorways

Highways England has released the following statement to the media in relation to recent commentary about the safety performance of smart motorways:

Chief Highway Engineer Mike Wilson said:

Motorways in this country are among the very safest roads in the world. Highways England would never carry out a major improvement scheme without being confident that we would maintain or enhance this position.

Evidence indicates that smart motorways are helping to improve safety. The first nine of the latest generation of smart motorways have reduced casualty rates by more than 25 per cent.

Smart motorways are good for drivers, adding vital extra lanes to some of our busiest motorways and making journeys safer and more reliable. As with other roads, we monitor the safety performance of smart motorways and are rolling out enhancements to improve the road user experience.

Background

Driving on a smart motorway is simple and intuitive, and are no different from other roads. The main things to remember are:

- keep left unless overtaking
- do not drive under a Red X
- stick within the speed limit
- know what to do if you break down.

There is more information available on safe motorway driving on [our website](#).

We are also working closely with recovery operators to operate safely on smart motorways; [view our advice](#).

Smart motorways are designed with safety in mind, to be at least as safe as the conventional motorways they replace. Our evidence shows that they are reducing casualty rates:

- a risk assessment of the design for the latest generation of smart motorways estimated an overall 18 per cent reduction in risk compared to a conventional motorway
- the evidence indicates that, since opening, across nine 'all lane running' schemes the casualty rate has reduced by 28 per cent.
- this figure is based on three years' data from two smart motorway schemes on the M25 and one year of data from seven other schemes across the country.

The hard shoulder is not a safe place – more than a hundred people are killed or injured on the hard shoulder every year, and people stopping on them unnecessarily is an issue. Smart motorways effectively eliminate this risk.

Smart motorways have emergency areas a maximum of 1.5 miles apart – around 75 seconds of driving. They have emergency telephones and are wider than hard shoulders to enable drivers to get further away from traffic.

Feedback from road users show a clear majority feel confident driving on a smart motorway, and that they are safer and improve journey times. The watchdog, Transport Focus, recently published the Strategic Roads User Survey for 2018/19 and reported that 94% of people feel safe on motorways.

There has been comment in some media outlets about smart motorways increasing risk by 216%. This is incorrect – smart motorways were predicted to reduce safety risk compared to conventional motorways and evidence has demonstrated this prediction to be correct:

- the figure is an estimate made before the schemes were built and relates to one specific hazard relating to the risk associated with stopping in a live lane when there is little traffic.
- this is one of over 140 hazards that exist on a motorway when driving. Other includes, driving too fast, driver fatigue and the risks associated with hard shoulders.
- many of these hazards are reduced by the introduction of smart

motorways, but as we have always said the risk around stopping in a live lane increases, but this represents less than 5% of the overall risk of driving on a smart motorway.

- this same analysis showed that overall there would be around an 18% reduction in risk – this has been shown in practice with a reduced casualty rate with completed schemes of 28%

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HS2 update: 3 September 2019

The Prime Minister and I have been clear about the potential for transport investment to drive growth, redistribute opportunity and support towns and cities across the UK. But we have been equally clear that the costs and benefits of those investments must stack up.

The government [announced on 21 August 2019 an independent, cross-party review led by Douglas Oakervee into whether and how HS2 should proceed](#). The review will consider its affordability, deliverability, benefits, scope and phasing, including its relationship with Northern Powerhouse Rail. I have [published the terms of reference in full on GOV.UK](#).

The Chair will be supported by a Deputy Chair, Lord Berkeley, and a panel of experts from business, academia and transport to ensure an independent, thorough and objective assessment of the programme. Panellists will provide input to, and be consulted on, the report's conclusions.

The review will report to me this autumn. I will discuss its findings with the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Its recommendations will inform our decisions on our next steps.

HS2 is the single largest project of this government. One important aspect of the panel's work is to consider whether both the costs, and the benefits, of the scheme have been correctly identified. HS2's business case has been founded on increasing capacity on our constrained rail network, improving connectivity, and stimulating economic growth and regeneration. The current budget was established in 2013 and later adjusted to 2015 prices. Since that time, significant concerns have been raised.

I want the House to have the full picture. There is no future in obscuring the true costs of a large infrastructure project – as well as the potential benefits.

The recently appointed Chairman of HS2 Ltd, [Allan Cook, provided his advice to me on the cost and deliverability of the current scheme](#) shortly after my appointment as Transport Secretary – and I want the House to have the full details at the earliest opportunity. I am determined to set out everything that is currently known, so I have today placed a copy of the advice in the libraries of both Houses. This has only been redacted where commercially necessary, and the Oakervee Review panel will of course see the report in full.

Colleagues will see that the Chairman of HS2 does not believe that the current scheme design can be delivered within the budget of £55.7 billion, set in 2015 prices. Instead he estimates that the current scheme requires a total budget – including contingency – in the range of £72 to £78 billion, again in 2015 prices.

Regarding schedule, the Chairman does not believe the current schedule of 2026 for initial services on Phase One is realistic. In line with lessons from other major transport infrastructure projects, his advice proposes a range of dates for the start of service. He recommends 2028 to 2031 for Phase One – with a staged opening, starting with initial services between London Old Oak Common and Birmingham Curzon Street, followed by services to and from London Euston later. He expects Phase 2b, the full high-speed line to Manchester and Leeds, to open between 2035 and 2040.

He has also suggested that Phase 2a, West Midlands to Crewe, could be delivered to the same timetable as Phase 1, subject to Parliamentary approval. Finally, he is of the view that the benefits of the current scheme are substantially undervalued. HS2 Ltd continues to refine its estimates of cost, benefits and schedule. All these will be considered within the scope of the Oakervee review.

I said when I announced the independent review into HS2 that I now want Doug Oakervee and his panel to assess independently these findings from the Chairman of HS2 Ltd and other available evidence. That review will provide independent recommendations on whether and how we proceed with the project.

Furthermore, the costs and benefits of HS2 have been quoted in 2015 prices since the last Spending Review. While this allows a stable set of numbers to compare against, it also risks being misconstrued and understating the relative cost of the project, and indeed its benefits.

I therefore think it is worth also updating the House in current prices. Adjusting by construction cost inflation, the range set out in Allan Cook's report is equivalent to £81 to £88 billion in 2019 prices, against a budget equivalent to £62.4 billion.

To be clear, these additions do not represent an increase in the project's underlying costs, and are largely a point of presentation. Nonetheless, I

will discuss with the Chancellor the case for updating the costs and benefits of HS2 to current prices to ensure transparency. Again, this is another reason for an independent review.

During the short period in which the independent review completes its work I have authorised HS2 Ltd to continue the current works that are taking place on the project. This will ensure we are ready to proceed without further delay for the main construction stage of Phase 1 in the event that the government chooses to continue. Similarly, I intend to continue to progress the next stages of the hybrid Bill for Phase 2a, West Midlands to Crewe, in the House of Lords while the review is ongoing.

This update is intended to provide colleagues with the information they require about the current status of the HS2 programme. An independent review is now underway to give us the facts about the costs of the HS2 project. I want to be clear with colleagues that there is no future for a project like this without being transparent and open, so we will be candid when challenges emerge.

Therefore, as soon as I have a clear sense of the costs and benefits from Doug Oakervee's review I will update the House.

In the same spirit, my Permanent Secretary has today written to the National Audit Office, offering my department's support – in their inquiry already underway – in auditing not only the project's cost and schedule pressures, but the steps taken in response to these.

We all in this House know we must invest in modern infrastructure to ensure the future prosperity of our country and its people. We look back to past achievements with a sense of pride – from the canals and railways that ensured the UK led the world into the Industrial Revolution, to the space ports and launch sites we are now considering that will make the UK a global leader in space.

These endeavours both inspire and improve the quality of our everyday lives. It is therefore right that we subject every project to the most rigorous scrutiny; and if we are to truly maximise every opportunity, this must always be done with an open mind and a clean sheet of paper.

Information and events for British citizens in the Czech Republic

Published 21 December 2018

Last updated 2 November 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 2 November 2020

We've added information on new Facebook Q&A sessions which will take place on 4 and 10 November.

2. 24 January 2020

Added a new outreach event on 30 January in Prague.

3. 16 October 2019

We've added information on an event in Prague on 23 October.

4. 26 September 2019

We added the link to the recording of our event held in Prague on 19 September.

5. 3 September 2019

We added the link to the Facebook Q&A held on 5 August 2019.

6. 10 April 2019

Added link to the recording of the presentations given at the event in Prague on 9 April 2019.

7. 3 April 2019

Added information about an outreach event in Prague on 9 April 2019.

8. 1 February 2019

Added information on an outreach event in Brno on 19 February.

9. 21 December 2018

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