

Press release: Motorway staff celebrate two million hours accident free

A-One+, who are Highways England's main operations and maintenance supplier in Kent and Sussex have worked since July 2017 without any of its employees on the road network suffering a work-related injury.

Chris Sheppard, general manager at A-one+, said:

This is a remarkable achievement. These records don't happen by chance. Every morning when our people go to work, they're armed with the best safety equipment, training, processes, and support in the business.

Each year we look back at our performance, and we don't just show a video or open a book. From the office to the field employees, the importance of safety and wellbeing is continually emphasized.

The introduction of staff champions, has also reinforced a zero tolerance of workplace dangers and this focussed time and attention has helped reinforce our commitment to safety with every employee.

Karen Davies, from Highways England, added:

Safety is Highways England's top priority, and we congratulate A-One+ on reaching this milestone. Working on a high speed road is a high risk environment, but by keeping a relentless focus on safety and sharing safe working practices across our road network we look to minimise the risk to all our employees and contractors.

Highways England continue to lead the way in showing how to minimise this risk, to increase the safety of our staff and ensure that everyone goes home safely at the end of their shift. We will be sharing this practice and looking to see it replicated across our road network.

The last reportable incident within this operating area was in July 2017. Since then A-one+ have continued to work hard to improve safety awareness and preventing harm.

The team has managed to achieve this feat through:

- embedding culture through a Wellbeing, Improvement, Safety and Environmental Strategy known as WISHES

- increasing daily engagement between management and key staff members to address the challenges faced by the teams and counter complacency
- groups reviewing innovative practice and then sharing it with operatives, encouraging them to take ownership of their safety and best practice
- last year A-One+ carried out 3,345 inspections
- A-One+ has 9 safety champions across their depots
- launch of a bespoke web enabled safety observation app to prevent harm, where all observations such as near misses or improvement ideas are discussed and actioned on a weekly call attended by around 60 people including supply chain
- supplementing the app with a mental health section providing 24-hour mobile access to resources and support and a traffic management incursion section allowing safety trends to be analysed

Over the next five years Highways England plan to invest over £11 billion to modernise and maintain the network including a range of safety measures: upgrading junctions, removing bottlenecks, upgrading barriers and verges, and improved signage.

Road improvements under construction along the Kent Corridor also include creating a new junction on the M20 near Ashford, upgrading the M20 to a smart motorway between junctions 3 and 5 and work to improve the resilience of the M20 to cross channel disruption. In addition, detailed plans have been published to upgrade two junctions on the A2 and a new flyover for the M2 at junction 5 near Stockbury.

And in the longer term, a new Lower Thames Crossing – the biggest road project in a generation – will create a brand new link between Kent and Essex, spur growth and relieve the congestion at the Dartford Crossing.

Highways England has a target of reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on motorways and major A roads by 40 per cent within 10 years.

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.

Press release: Regular e-cigarette use remains low among young people in Britain

Regular vaping among young people remains low in Britain and has plateaued among adults, an independent report led by researchers at King's College London and commissioned by Public Health England (PHE) has found.

The report is the first in a new set of 3, commissioned by PHE under the Government's [Tobacco Control Plan for England](#). It looks specifically at the use of e-cigarettes rather than health impacts, which will be the subject of a future report.

The findings show that while experimentation with e-cigarettes among young people has increased in recent years, regular use remains low. Only 1.7% of under-18s use e-cigarettes weekly or more, and the vast majority of those also smoke. Among young people who have never smoked, only 0.2% use e-cigarettes regularly.

Regular e-cigarette use among adults has plateaued over recent years, and remains largely confined to smokers and ex-smokers, with 'quitting smoking' the main motivation for adult vapers.

Professor John Newton, Health Improvement Director at Public Health England, said:

In contrast to recent media reports in the US, we are not seeing a surge in e-cigarette use among young people in Britain.

While more young people are experimenting with e-cigarettes, the crucial point is that regular use remains low and is very low indeed among those who have never smoked.

We will keep a close watch on young people's vaping and smoking habits to ensure we stay on track to achieve our ambition of a smoke-free generation.

Despite e-cigarettes now being the most popular quit aid, just over a third of smokers have never tried one. Only 4% of quit attempts through Stop Smoking Services in England are made using e-cigarettes, despite this being an effective approach.

The report recommends that Stop Smoking Services should do more to encourage smokers that want to quit with the help of an e-cigarette.

Smoking rates in young people have plateaued in recent years, while smoking rates among adults continue to fall, with just under 15% of adults in England

smoking, according to government figures.

A major UK clinical trial, published recently and not included in this PHE report has found e-cigarettes, when combined with face-to-face support, to be up to twice as effective for quitting smoking as other nicotine replacement products, such as patches or gum.

Professor Newton also commented:

We could accelerate the decline in smoking if more smokers switched completely to vaping. Recent new evidence clearly shows using an e-cigarette with Stop Smoking Service support can double your chances of quitting.

But with e-cigarettes currently used so rarely in services, it's time for change. Every Stop Smoking Service must start talking much more about the potential of vaping to help smokers quit.

If you smoke, switching to vaping could save you years of ill health, and even your life.

Professor Ann McNeill, Professor of Tobacco Addiction at King's College London, and lead author of the report said:

We are encouraged that regular vaping among young people in Britain who have never smoked remains low. However, we need to stay vigilant and in particular closely monitor youth smoking.

With just over a third of adult smokers having never tried an e-cigarette, there is a clear opportunity for more smokers to try a method which has helped many others to quit. Smokers should be advised to stop smoking as soon as possible and explore all available options for support, including e-cigarettes.

The report says that combining e-cigarettes with face-to-face support should remain a recommended option available to all smokers. It calls for stop smoking practitioners and health professionals supporting smokers to receive education and training, in the use of e-cigarettes in quit attempts.

Online training is now available, via the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training (NCSCT).

Background

More information can be found in Vaping in England: an evidence update February 2019, and in the previously published 2018 report [E-cigarettes and heated tobacco products: evidence review](#).

[Press release: Walkers to enjoy new 16-mile public path in Lincolnshire](#)

[Natural England](#) will today (27 February 2019) open the latest stretch of the [England Coast Path](#), increasing access to the magnificent Lincolnshire coastline with a new 16-mile route from Skegness to Mablethorpe.

Encompassing the tourist hotspot of Skegness, wild sand dunes and the world's first official cloud spotting area, Lincolnshire's first open stretch of the England Coast Path will enable people to explore the route's natural and diverse wildlife that have made the area their home.

Home to a long-established coastal tourism industry, the new Lincolnshire route will benefit from improved access and signposting to allow visitors and locals alike to enjoy the diversity of the coast, with a new boardwalk at Chapel Point improving access to the [North Sea Observatory](#).

Rural Minister Lord Gardiner, said:

England's beautiful coastline is a sight to behold, and I am delighted that more people than ever before will be able to enjoy its striking scenery during this Year of Green Action.

With Lincolnshire home to some of our most precious coastal habitats, the new stretch of path announced today will open up access while boosting valuable tourism for rural communities and businesses.

Interim Chief Executive of Natural England Marian Spain, who is attending today's event at the North Sea Observatory, said:

The England Coast Path plays a key role in helping people connect with and access nature and it is a privilege to open the first Lincolnshire stretch.

"From wild dunes to sandy beaches, the public will now be able to easily enjoy the countless beautiful habitats between Skegness and Mablethorpe.

The new route takes into account the area's important coastal habitats, including the seascapes and unique habitats of Anderby Marsh, Chapel Pit and Wolla Bank Reedbed. Walkers will be able to enjoy the adjacent sand dunes, clay pits and beaches, where a range of bird species such as the bearded tit and reed bunting thrive.

Users will also enjoy views of Woola Bank Site of Scientific Special Interest (SSSI) at very low tides – a submerged forest dating from the Neolithic Period – and access to the world’s first official cloud spotting area at the Anderby Creek Cloud Bar.

Natural England is currently establishing a 2,700-mile path around the entire English coastline, with today’s stretch the eleventh to open. When completed, it will be the longest continuous coastal walking route in the world. It will also become a National Trail – the nation’s finest and most popular long-distance paths.

Today’s launch comes during the government’s Year of Green Action, a commitment outlined in the 25-Year Environment Plan to inspire more people to engage with the natural world.

Colin Davie, Executive Councillor for economic development at [Lincolnshire County Council](#), said:

I’m delighted that the England Coastal path now runs from Skegness to Mablethorpe, through our beautiful Coastal Country Park. We have such a spectacular coastline with amazing wildlife, Blue Flag beaches and ‘excellent’ bathing waters – perfect for people to explore.

Tourism is vital to our county’s economy and our coastal strip attracts millions of visitors each year. I’m sure the new coastal path will encourage many more people to visit Lincolnshire and explore our brilliant coastline.

[Speech: Free and fair elections to support the people of Venezuela](#)

Thank you, Mr President. And let me begin by thanking Rosemary DiCarlo for her informative and timely briefing and thank you to the United States for requesting this meeting.

Mr President, let me begin by saying I agree with everything that the German Ambassador said today and, in particular, about the importance of the Security Council addressing this issue. And I note that the agenda for today’s discussion does not mention the situation in the region or wider threats to international peace and security. The agenda item which we’ve all agreed is the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr President, years of misrule and corruption have wrecked the Venezuelan

economy. The actions of the Maduro regime have led to economic collapse, which threatens the peace and security of the region. Over 3.5 million Venezuelans have left their country for other countries in the region. This is one of the greatest migrant crises ever faced by Latin America. It has placed huge strain on the social services of nations in the region. And that's why, together with the human rights situation mentioned by my German colleague, it is completely appropriate that this Council continues to address the issue.

Mr President, I was disappointed to hear the Russian Ambassador attempt to ridicule what he called the "moans and groans" about the humanitarian situation in Venezuela. No one on this Council should belittle the suffering of the Venezuelan people. I also note that the Russian Ambassador asked all of us a question, which I will attempt to answer. He asked which of us on this Council would have acted any differently faced with unwanted attempts to deliver humanitarian assistance. Well let me tell him that we would have acted differently and looking around the Council today I think a majority of Council members would have acted differently. We would not have used live fire against civilians attempting to deliver aid. We would not direct paramilitary thugs to attack civilians. We would not arrest and detain our political opponents and we wouldn't have mismanaged the country through years of misrule and corruption, causing economic collapse and a humanitarian crisis. I hope that goes some way to answering his question.

Mr President, the United Kingdom joins other members of this Council in condemning the violence that took place on Venezuela's borders with Colombia and Brazil at the weekend. Maduro's use of deadly violence against his own people and other concerning acts of aggression to block the supply of desperately needed humanitarian aid are simply repugnant.

Mr President, the Maduro regime's oppressive policies affect all sectors of the population – from the innocent civilians, including women and children, who lack access to essential medical and other basic supplies, to journalists whose work is censored by the regime. And as we heard from the UN just yesterday, renowned journalist Jorge Ramos was reportedly detained in the Mia Flores Palace, later to be released and deported while his team's equipment was confiscated. As with the lack of freedom given to journalists, other essential freedoms – such as democratic ones – are simply not present in Venezuela. Only a democratic solution will resolve this crisis.

The United Kingdom thanks the Lima Group and the Organization of American States for their clear words and strong action towards this goal. It is important that the region continues to take the lead. We stand with these regional bodies and with Juan Guaidó in pursuit of our shared goal to bring peace and stability to Venezuela.

Mr President, the only way to achieve peace and stability is by democratic transition is by free and fair presidential elections, as demanded by interim President Guaidó and the National Assembly, in line with the Venezuelan Constitution. Until this is achieved, the current humanitarian crisis caused by the Maduro regime's corrupt policies will continue.

The United Kingdom has committed to give \$8.6 million in emergency aid to treat malnourished children and provide vaccinations and clean water to the most vulnerable communities affected by the crisis. We encourage our partners in the international community and on this Council to consider what more can be done to send a clear signal to the Maduro regime that nothing short of free and fair presidential elections will do. This includes considering additional sanctions against individual members of the Maduro regime who have benefited from their corrupt policies. These should not negatively affect the dire humanitarian situation, which is solely the responsibility of the regime.

Mr President, the world cannot stand by in the face of this man made crisis. The Venezuelan people deserve a better future. They have suffered enough at the hands of the Maduro regime. Free and fair Presidential elections is the only solution. The Council and the international community should do our utmost to support the same. Thank you.

Press release: Lima Mayor Jorge Muñoz met with the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan

Jorge Muñoz, the newly-elected mayor of Peru's capital of Lima, met with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. Their first meeting, which took place in the context of the InPERU trade and investment roadshow to the UK, was an opportunity to share experiences in putting on major global sporting events such as the London 2012 Olympics and the Lima 2019 Pan American Games. The Games and Para Pan American Games will take place in Lima, Peru, in July this year.

The UK is Peru's main delivery partner for the Lima 2019 Games through a Government-to-Government Agreement and British expertise is helping Peru's organising committee to deliver the Games on time and on budget. This framework of government-to-government support and knowledge-sharing is widely seen as a successful model that could be replicated to other areas, such as major infrastructure or reconstruction projects.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said:

"The success of the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics was a proud moment for all Londoners as we showed the best that the UK and London has to offer on the world stage. I am confident that the 2019 Pan American and Parapan American Games will prove to be a similar showcase for Lima and I'm delighted that we can share our knowledge and expertise with our Peruvian friends. London has always been open to hosting the world's greatest sporting events and helping other cities to do the same."

Peru has an estimated infrastructure gap of \$160bn which creates an opportunity to contribute to sustainable growth of the Peruvian economy as well as an opportunity for British businesses seeking to export goods and services. A Joint UK-Peru Infrastructure Task Force will be meeting in London so that key public, private and third sector actors can discuss priority issues for infrastructure development.

This will be the second meeting of the joint Infrastructure Task Force. It will build on the previous meeting following its creation last year when former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson travelled to Peru. So far the task force has led to the UK delivering a workshop to Peru's audit office on contract models, a scoping visit on Building Information Modelling, the appointment of experts to provide advice on the development of Peru's National Infrastructure Plan, and the launch of terms of reference to share experience on delivery models for large infrastructure projects.

The purpose of the Task Force is to provide an effective mechanism for sharing experience and best practice on the prioritisation, financing, procurement, management and delivery of major infrastructure projects in Peru.