

Press release: Big changes to motorway upgrades set to improve drivers' journeys

Following feedback from road users, the government company is changing the timing of some of its roadworks. It means that work on projects to add extra lanes and better technology to the M56 near Manchester Airport and the M6 between Warrington and Wigan, which had been due to start this spring, will now start after current major motorway upgrades have been completed.

Highways England has also set out plans to improve how smart motorway projects are carried out on the North West's motorways in the future.

They include changes to the layout of roadworks to reduce the need for overnight diversions and finish schemes sooner. Temporary speed limits will also be increased to 60mph when it is safe for drivers and road workers, and three lanes will be maintained in each direction during the day throughout upgrades.

Mike Bull, Highways England's smart motorways programme manager for the North West, said:

Hundreds of thousands of people across the North West will benefit from a huge investment on the road network over the next few years and we're keen to help keep drivers moving while the upgrades take place.

We've listened to what people have been telling us about roadworks and have decided to reschedule two major schemes, benefitting drivers who use our roads to get to work and businesses who deliver goods across the region. We're committed to the upgrades; we are simply changing the timetable for projects on the M56 and M6.

We're also reviewing how we carry out major upgrades so that we can minimise disruption as much as possible and maintain connections for drivers using the road network.

Highways England is committed to carrying out the biggest upgrade of the North West's motorways in a generation and has already completed major schemes on the M62 and M60, as well as opening a new link road between the M56 and M6, since 2015.

The company has also completed almost half of a smart motorway upgrade on the M6 in Cheshire, opening a fourth lane on both carriageways between Holmes Chapel and Knutsford last month.

The temporary speed limit was increased to 60mph before Christmas while

testing took place on new technology, and variable speed limits have now been introduced up to 70mph to improve the flow of traffic. The entire 19-mile upgrade between Crewe and Knutsford is on schedule to be finished by the end of March.

Work on a major upgrade of the M62 near Warrington is also due to be completed by spring 2020, increasing capacity by a third. The scheme will benefit commuters who had previously faced average speeds as low as 36mph on their way home from work.

A project to upgrade a four-mile-stretch of the M56 near Manchester Airport will now start by spring 2020 after the M62 scheme has been completed, and work will begin as planned this autumn to upgrade another stretch of the M62 between Rochdale and Brighouse in West Yorkshire.

Other major motorway projects, including a scheme on the M6 between Warrington and Wigan, will be staggered to start between 2020 and 2025.

Contraflow roadworks layouts, where one lane is moved onto the opposite carriageway with a temporary barrier between traffic, will also be introduced where possible to cut the duration of schemes.

The change to the road layout will allow bigger construction areas to be created at the side of motorways so that more work can be carried out in one shift. Traffic will also be able to continue to travel in both directions on the motorway when one carriageway is closed for major construction work overnight, reducing the need for diversions.

Get more details on the [North West smart motorway upgrades](#).

[Press release: Millions invested to help people get active in their communities](#)

- £3 million to be spent in 16 boroughs, towns and cities across England
- Funding utilised to encourage more people to get involved in local issues
- Investment builds on promise in the Civil Society Strategy to make it easier for people give back at a local level

People across England will find it easier to invest time, skills and money to make their local areas better places to live through a multi-million pound programme, Mims Davies, Minister for Sport and Civil Society, announced yesterday.

Ten organisations will receive a share of £2.3 million – through the Place Based Social Action programme funded jointly via the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and The National Lottery Community Fund – to devise programmes that enable people to take action on the issues they care about.

These projects include increasing jobs and training for young people in Somerset; improving green spaces alongside new housing developments in Bristol and building community cohesion in Lincoln led by Lincoln City FC.

A further £770,000 will be invested in six areas across England over the next two years. Barking and Dagenham, Bristol, East Manchester, Stanley in County Durham, Stoke and the Yorkshire Coast will use the funding from the Growing Place-based Giving Programme to establish giving schemes that make it easier for people and businesses to invest in their communities and address areas of local concern.

They will work with the Charities Aid Foundation to develop giving schemes that bring together residents, philanthropists, corporate donors, public sector organisations, and civil society organisations to raise money and address local priorities.

Mims Davies, Minister for Sport and Civil Society, said:

We know that people want to give back to their communities and the issues they care about the most. This fund will stretch across the length and breadth of the country, helping even more people to take action – whether that be volunteering their time, skills and expertise, giving money to good causes, or through simple acts of neighbourly kindness.

We are committed to creating real change. I am looking forward to working alongside communities, organisations and local authorities to ensure we implement these plans and help people reach their full and true potential.

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For further information contact the press office on: 0207 211 2210.

Place Based Social Action Programme

Place Based Social Action (PBSA) is a seven year, £4.5million programme jointly funded by DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund. It aims to create positive change in places through enabling citizens, civil society organisations, businesses, service providers and the local authority to work together to create a shared vision for the future of their place, and address local priorities through collective community action.

The funding announced yesterday will provide up to £240,000 to each of 10 partnerships, who will be supported over the next three years to put into their community plans into action.

20 Partnerships were supported in Phase 1 to develop their community action plan. 10 Partnerships are being funded in Phase 2 (2019-21) to put their plans into action. Further funding of £1.25m is available in Phase 3 (2022-24) to scale and sustain their work.

The 10 Partnerships to receive funding are:

Onion Collective CIC, Watchet (West Somerset) – The project will address five main issues: tackling transport difficulties faced by people at risk of social isolation; increasing training and education opportunities; helping local people find a voice in local decision making; supporting young people and promoting existing opportunities and support to the community.

Safe Regeneration (Sefton) – The project will bring together local organisations to deliver volunteering and social action activities to help local people contribute to the regeneration of Bootle. Funding will also be used to tackle social isolation and enhance the role of public and private business in supporting community engagement.

North East Lincolnshire VCSE Alliance (North East Lincolnshire) – This project will promote community action to address local issues such as drug dealing, anti-social behaviour and slum landlords. It will work with local people to support neighbourliness, to increase well-being, reduce health inequalities and create a central community hub.

Halifax Opportunities Trust (Calderdale, Yorkshire and Humber) – This project seeks to bridge divides between West Central and North Halifax by bringing the two communities together through social action and connecting organisations in the two areas.

Community360 (Colchester, East) – The partnership is comprised of voluntary, statutory, housing, education and health partners who will support residents with dementia through a referral and support pathway to create a “dementia friendly borough”.

Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire (Coventry, West Midlands) – This project will focus on children and young people by creating a series of ongoing activities to help them and their families become more integrated into the local community.

Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership (Bristol, South West) – This project will focus on bringing diverse communities together through a friendship scheme for new residents, the improvement of green spaces alongside new build developments and enhancing local facilities.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Hartlepool, North East) – This project aims to use social action to create a range of solutions to local social and economic challenges and help people escape poverty. This project would enable the organisation to develop programmes to support, strengthen and better connect existing social action initiatives, as well as identify new initiatives and making it easier for people in Hartlepool to engage in social action.

Lincoln City FC Sport & Education Trust (Lincoln, East Midlands) – This project seeks to increase community cohesion through the delivery of activities such as a street art project, regular litter picks, the maintenance of green spaces and the Sincil riverbank, and the development of a timebank.

Volunteer Centre Hackney (Hackney, London) – This project will establish a new community hub in Hoxton West providing a safe space for people to meet, talk and share their experiences. Residents will be encouraged to develop their skills with a view to eventually running activities for themselves.

Growing Place-based Giving

The local giving schemes to receive funding are:

Barking and Dagenham Local Giving, led by the London Borough Council of Barking & Dagenham

Bristol City Funds, led by Quartet Community Foundation

East Manchester Collaborative Funding Project, led by One Manchester

The Stanley Fund, led by the County Durham Community Foundation

Stoke Giving Bank, led by VAST Services

Yorkshire Coast Catalyst, led by Two Ridings Community Foundation

[News story: UK House Price Index \(UK HPI\) annual review 2018](#)

In 2018 the UK saw the slowest annual growth in house prices since 2013. While annual growth in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all strengthened in 2018 compared with 2017, England experienced a slowdown.

Annual house price growth (%), countries of the UK, 2013 to 2018

	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
2013	2.6	2.9	0.4	0.4	-2.8
2014	8.0	8.3	4.7	5.0	7.7
2015	6.0	6.8	4.0	2.8	7.3
2016	7.0	7.7	1.4	4.2	6.5
2017	4.5	4.8	2.9	4.3	3.8
2018	3.3	3.0	4.6	4.8	4.6

The North and the Midlands experienced a slight slowdown between 2017 and 2018, but this weakening growth was more evident in the South and East of England with house prices in London falling over the year in 2018.

Annual house price growth (%), by English region, 2017 and 2018

A similar picture is observed when looking at the local authority level. Strong annual growth in the Forest of Dean, Newport and Torfaen is likely linked to the abolition of the Severn Bridge tolls, making it more affordable for those who work in Bristol to live on the opposite side of the River Severn. In Scotland, strong growth in West Dunbartonshire may be due to the area's direct trains to both Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Top 5 UK local authorities, by annual growth, in 2018

Local authority	Average price (£)	Annual growth (%)
Forest of Dean	235,833	11.0
Newport	175,447	10.5
Na h-Eileanan Siar	107,787	9.5
Torfaen	141,055	9.4
West Dunbartonshire	106,795	9.4

London boroughs dominate the areas where prices have fallen over the year. The Bank of England [November inflation report](#) highlights that the slowdown in the London market since mid-2016 is probably due to the area being disproportionately affected by regulatory and tax changes, and also by lower net migration from the European Union.

Bottom 5 UK local authorities, by annual growth, in 2018

Local authority	Average price (£)	Annual growth (%)
City of London	787,027	-7.1
Hammersmith and Fulham	728,072	-3.8
City of Aberdeen	159,243	-3.5
Wandsworth	597,641	-3.3
Tower Hamlets	445,004	-3.1

Note: The figures in this article are annual estimate and will therefore show different annual growth rates and average prices to our monthly statistics.

[News story: Trust and Brexit amongst priorities for CMA in annual plan](#)

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) will get to the heart of improving trust by prioritising work in markets that really matter to consumers, so they are reassured that what they are seeing is what they are getting.

The CMA will build on its track record of tackling issues that jeopardise trust, including recently [securing a victory](#) for UK holidaymakers by getting some of the biggest online hotel booking sites to change their ways.

The annual plan highlights how the CMA has already carried out sector-wide reviews to protect shoppers and make markets work in their favour. This includes recommending a package of reforms to government and regulators to address [concerns raised by Citizens Advice](#) that some companies are penalising millions of long-standing customers.

The CMA will also prioritise cases where people may be losing out because they are vulnerable to exploitation, or getting a poor deal due to their personal circumstances. In such cases, the CMA will not hesitate to take tough action on harmful business practices and to protect those who suffer most. In the coming weeks, it will publish the outcomes of its [in-depth programme of work](#) on vulnerable consumers, which it launched in 2018. The CMA is meanwhile consulting on proposals to refer the funerals sector for an in-depth market investigation because of concerns over large price increases.

The CMA is publishing its annual plan when the timing and nature of the UK's exit from the EU remain uncertain. The plan makes clear that CMA will be ready to step up to its additional responsibilities, including a new UK state aid function, whether at the end of March or later. Whilst a 'no deal' exit would present challenges in the short term, the period ahead also provides opportunities for the organisation to secure better outcomes for UK consumers and to take on a bigger role on the world stage.

Due to the continued uncertainty around EU exit, the CMA is publishing its priorities at a high level. It intends to continue to refine and explain its plans as clarity emerges.

The CMA enters 2019/20 with a substantial volume of ongoing work and at the time of publication has 23 competition enforcement cases; 6 consumer enforcement cases; 12 merger investigations, and 2 market studies under way.

Read the [annual plan here](#)

[News story: GC and IFST publish Information Statement on dietary fibre](#)

Diets low in dietary fibre may contribute to the development of diseases such as bowel cancer and heart disease. But what is dietary fibre, how is it measured and how much should we eat? [Michael Walker](#) from the Government Chemist team has collaborated with Julian Cooper of the Institute of Food Science & Technology, [IFST](#), to produce an Information Statement to address these and other questions.

Developed and peer-reviewed through the IFST Scientific Committee, Information Statements provide up-to-date and conclusive scientific opinions on matters of topical importance within food science and technology in one single document. The Dietary Fibre Information Statement is available on the [IFST website](#).

Understanding dietary fibre and using it has an important part to play in reformulating foods to address public health issues. Measuring dietary fibre for product quality control and to ensure accurate labelling as part of

nutrition information is also necessary for a wide range of food. The Information Statement aims to assist the food industry to innovate to provide attractive foods contributing to healthy eating. It also aims to help regulators and enforcement personnel understand the issues and protect consumers and responsible businesses.

What is dietary fibre?

Chemically, dietary fibre consists of carbohydrate polymers or oligomers that are neither digested nor absorbed in the human small intestine. More detailed definitions are given in the Information Statement. Fibre must be declared on pre-packed labelling if a claim is made (e.g. 'high in fibre') and is part of voluntary European nutrition labelling.

How is dietary fibre measured?

There are three basic approaches:

- analytical methods from [AOAC](#)
- methods pioneered by Hans and Klaus Englyst and colleagues
- hybrids of both methods.

Each starts with dispersion and enzymatic hydrolysis of starch, but they differ in the analytical 'finish'. For foods not containing resistant starch any of the methods can be employed with broadly similar results. The main exceptions are raw flours and foods that contain non-digestible oligosaccharides.

How much is enough fibre?

How much dietary fibre should I eat? The value for the average population intake of dietary fibre for adults should be 30g per day, measured using the AOAC methods.

For more information about the Government Chemist role, what we do, or if you have a food analysis related enquiry contact: