

News story: Congestion-busting scheme to benefit millions of drivers

A scheme which has halved disruption to drivers caused by roadworks in Kent and London will continue to deliver better journeys in the future, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling announced today (26 December 2017).

The 2 pioneer Lane Rental schemes, where utility companies are charged up to £2,500 a day for carrying out roadworks on busy roads at the busiest times, were due to end in March 2019 but, due to their success, both Kent and Transport for London will carry on implementing their schemes.

The Department for Transport is considering rolling out the Lane Rental scheme to other areas in England following a [consultation](#) earlier this year.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Roadworks cause no-end of problems for drivers when they're done on busy roads and at peak times.

We've seen disruption to road users severely drop when works are carried out on quieter stretches away from heavy traffic.

Allowing Kent and London to continue with their Lane Rental schemes will mean millions of drivers will have better journeys.

In England, 2.5 million roadworks are carried out each year costing the economy £4 billion as business expenses are increased due to employees turning up late and delayed deliveries.

The Lane Rental scheme allows local authorities to charge utility companies at peak times or by the hour or day to carry out works on busy routes, encouraging firms to switch to quieter roads and to avoid peak times.

Businesses are also incentivised to collaborate on works to avoid the same stretch of road to be dug up twice. In London utility companies have worked together more than 600 times since the scheme began in 2015, up from just 100 beforehand.

Glynn Barton, Director of Network Management at TfL said:

Our Lane Rental scheme helps us improve how London's roads operate for everyone. By encouraging roadworks to take place away from the busiest roads at busiest times the scheme has been a resounding success in reducing the amount of congestion in London caused by roadworks – helping to improve journey times for bus passengers, cyclists and drivers, while tackling emissions.

Lane Rental is one of a number of tools we're using to tackle congestion in London such as reducing the time taken to clear up unplanned incidents, reviewing traffic signal timings, re-routing bus routes to avoid the busiest central London streets, and ensuring utilities and roadworks are better coordinated.

Matthew Balfour, Kent County Council's cabinet member for Highways, said:

Kent County Council is pleased that with the removal of the sunset clause it is able to continue its successful Lane Rental scheme.

The scheme has incentivised a change in how work is carried out on the busiest parts of Kent's road network so that disruption is minimised by: working differently with new technology; thinking differently about how work is carried out; working at different times of day; and better planning of work.

The scheme is an important tool helping Kent to fulfil its network management duties and to keep Kent moving.

Currently, most highways authorities use a permit scheme to oversee road works. If the Lane Rental scheme is rolled out across the country, it would give councils extra powers to manage works on the busiest routes and at peak times. Changes could be introduced in 2019.

[News story: The AAIB is sending a team to Turks and Caicos](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]The AAIB is sending a team to Turks and Caicos to investigate a light aircraft accident.

[Press release: New guidance on the use of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)

New guidance on the use of anti-social behaviour powers will help police and

councils continue to take appropriate action against nuisance behaviours while ensuring the most vulnerable, including the homeless, are not disproportionately targeted.

The guidance will:

- make sure powers are used as intended – to tackle behaviour which is genuinely anti-social
- help to prevent instances of rough sleepers, buskers or small groups gathering to chat in town centres – without causing a nuisance – being unfairly targeted

Published today (Sunday 24 December), the [revised statutory guidance](#) on the use of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 will give police, local authorities and other front-line workers greater clarity on how best to use powers such as Public Spaces Protection Orders.

It follows feedback from charities and other groups who raised concerns that the orders were being used to disproportionately target certain groups in some areas rather than focusing on behaviour that is genuinely anti-social and causing others distress or alarm.

Particular concerns were raised around the use of the orders against the homeless, buskers, dog walkers and, in some cases, people simply gathering together in small groups in town centres who were not engaged in anti-social behaviour.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Victoria Atkins said:

Anti-social behaviour harms communities and can severely impact people's way of life, which is why this government introduced powers to make it quicker and easier to take action against the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

We know that these powers are being used to very good effect by the police and local councils across England and Wales, and we are very keen to encourage their continued use. But we are also clear that the powers should be used proportionately to tackle anti-social behaviour, and not to target specific groups or the most vulnerable in our communities.

The revised guidance published today will empower local agencies by providing even greater clarity on where and when these powers should be applied, helping them to keep our public spaces, communities and families safe.

The guidance puts greater emphasis on the need to ensure the powers are used to target specific nuisance behaviours and are not applied in a blanket way against specific groups or behaviour that is not in itself anti-social. It reminds councils that powers should not, for example, target normal everyday behaviour that is not having a detrimental effect on the community's quality

of life, such as standing in groups in a town centre.

The government wants to ensure that there is transparency and accountability in the use of the powers and has actively worked with a number of organisations including charities working to help the homeless in developing the refreshed guidance.

Elements of the guidance include:

- focusing on specific and actual problems rather than blanket bans of behaviour that are not in themselves anti-social – such as rough sleeping
- reiterating that before making a Public Spaces Protection Order councils must consult the police and community representatives to ensure specific groups have the opportunity to comment, including:
 - the local residents association
 - regular park users
 - those involved in activities such as busking
- highlighting how the Civil Injunction and the Criminal Behaviour Order can be used to tackle gang activity
- underlining the importance of local consultation, accountability and transparency in decision making

This latest action builds on the work government is already doing to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping including:

- spending over £1 billion until 2020 to address the issue
- implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act which will make sure more people get the help they need to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place
- £28 million of funding to pilot the Housing First approach for entrenched rough sleepers in the West Midlands Combined Authority, Greater Manchester, and the Liverpool City Region
- investing £9 billion by March 2021 to build new affordable homes
- a £20 million scheme to support homeless people and those at risk of homelessness to secure homes in the private rented sector

The government has also confirmed today the membership of the Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Reduction Taskforce led by Communities Secretary Sajid Javid, which brings together ministers from key departments to provide a cross-government approach to preventing rough sleeping and homelessness.

[News story: Prime Minister Theresa May's Christmas message 2017](#)

As we gather with our friends and family, I want to say thank you to all

those whose service to others means they will be spending time away from their loved ones this Christmas.

Men and women in our armed forces whose humbling bravery and daily sacrifices help to ensure the security of our nation and our allies around the world.

The heroes in our emergency services whose courage and dedication so inspired the nation in response to tragedy at Grenfell Tower and the abhorrent terrorist attacks in Manchester and London. But whose service saves lives in our communities every day, including Christmas Day.

And the thousands of volunteers in our country who will give up their time to make someone else's Christmas that little bit better: from faith inspired projects like the Churches Together initiative in my own constituency – to aid workers helping those in war-torn parts of the world.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us celebrate all those selfless acts – and countless others – that epitomise the values we share: Christian values of love, service and compassion that are lived out every day in our country by people all faiths and none.

Let us take pride in our Christian heritage and the confidence it gives us to ensure that in Britain you can practice your faith free from question or fear.

Let us remember those around the world today who have been denied those freedoms – from Christians in some parts of the Middle East to the sickening persecution of the Rohingya Muslims.

And let us reaffirm our determination to stand up for the freedom of people of all religions to speak about and practice their beliefs in peace and safety.

So this Christmas, whatever our faith, let us come together confident and united in the values we share. And wherever you are at this special time of year, let me wish you all a very Happy Christmas.

[Press release: How thousands of people spend Christmas Day](#)

Figures from popular public information site GOV.UK give an insight into what people were thinking about on Christmas Day last year, from taxing their cars to searching for a new job.

Top 10 pages viewed on Christmas Day 2016 were:

1. [Bank Holidays](#) – 41k pageviews

2. [Check UK visa](#) – 34k pageviews
3. [Dartford Crossing charge](#) – 28k pageviews
4. [Vehicle tax \(taxing your vehicle\)](#) – 22k pageviews
5. [Check vehicle tax \(checking if a vehicle has tax\)](#) – 22k pageviews
6. [Check state pension age](#) – 18k pageviews
7. [Job search](#) – 15k pageviews
8. [Check MOT history](#) – 14k pageviews
9. [Check child maintenance](#) – 13k pageviews
10. [Get vehicle information from DVLA](#) – 13k pageviews

Bin collection – Other popular information over the festive period included details on bin collection day, which hit a peak of over 20,000 visits on 27th December 2016 (compared to only an average of 3,000 visits per day during the rest of the year). For this sought after information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/rubbish-collection-day>.

Caroline Nokes – Minister for Government Resilience and Efficiency said:

“People turn to GOV.UK to check information at the click of a button. From taxing your vehicle, to checking local bin collections and renewing your passport – there are many services now available online, replacing laborious paperwork.

“And we intend to continue adding to the services available, and improving how we set them out clearly and simply – making it even easier for people to access what they need.”