

Press release: Highways England 'suited and booted' for hazardous concrete repairs at Spaghetti Junction

As part of the £4.7m vital repairs to damaged concrete and waterproofing, Highways England is using high-performance jet washers that break up parts of existing concrete. The technique is known as hydrodemolition.

"Safety is always our top priority so our repair crews are wearing special body suits to protect them from flying debris which when it breaks off, can actually travel faster than a bullet," explains Highways England project manager Jessica Kenny.

"In fact, the water is so highly pressurised that operatives have to lean forward to about 45 degrees to counter the effects of the water jetting otherwise it would knock them off their feet.

"To put it into context, if you imagine the pressure washers that you use to clean the patio at home and multiply that by about ten times, you're still not even close to the water pressure we're using in this instance to complete this vital work."

As well as wearing the protective suits, those operating the machinery also need to work inside a special green cage which is designed to contain flying debris to a confined space.

Last weekend saw more than 356 people and 100 vehicles work on the 45-year-old structure that carries more than 220,000 vehicles a day.

Motorists travelling into Birmingham are still being reminded that key link roads will remain closed until 4 September.

For the duration of the scheme there is no access to the A38(M) from Gravelly Hill or Tyburn Road, with local diversions in place.

The M6 itself remains fully open during the work.

Local routes into the city centre are likely to be busier than usual. Drivers are advised to plan their journey and allow extra time.

Highways England provides live traffic information [via its website](#), local and national radio travel bulletins, electronic road signs and mobile apps. Local Twitter services are also available at @HighwaysWMIDS

Traffic management

Weekday restrictions:

- repairs to the inter-city route will be undertaken from Monday through

to early Friday evening

- there will be traffic management on the A38(M) Aston Expressway – the tidal flow lane will be closed for the duration of the work
- three narrow lanes on A38(M) out of city with a 30mph speed limit for safety reasons
- 24/7 closure of the Gravelly Hill and Tyburn Road approaches to the A38(M) into city carriageway – diversions will be in place
- Park Circus on-slip will remain open
- Salford Circus will remain open
- free recovery will be available

Weekend restrictions:

We also need to fully close the A38(M) Aston Expressway and the exit slips at M6 junction 6 each weekend until 25 August. The closures will be in place from 8pm on Friday to 6am on Monday.

No traffic will be able to access the Expressway to either enter or leave Birmingham during these closures.

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: Minister for Europe statement on Bulgaria-Macedonia Friendship Treaty](#)

On recent visits to Bulgaria and Macedonia I saw a strong commitment to improving relations between the two countries. I welcome the signing of the Bulgaria-Macedonia Friendship Treaty as a step in the right direction. Good neighbourly relations between Bulgaria and Macedonia are crucial to securing the stability of the region.

The UK fully supports the new Government in Macedonia as it introduces much-needed domestic reforms, and resets and improves its relationship with its neighbours. The UK and Bulgaria also share a deep friendship and we look forward to its Presidency of the European Council in 2018.

I hope that both Parliaments will now ratify the Friendship Treaty, to make the most of this opportunity for progress.

News story: Sellafield incident report – powder spillage (14 June 2017)

While carrying out analysis work in a Sellafield site laboratory, a worker spilled approximately 1kg of depleted uranium trioxide powder while moving a container.

The material is not harmful unless ingested or inhaled.

The correct safety procedures were followed and the immediate area was evacuated before returning to normal service on the same day.

Health checks confirmed the worker suffered no ill effects.

An internal investigation is being carried out.

The event has been rated 1 (anomaly) on the [International Nuclear Events Scale](#)

Sellafield is regulated by the [Office for Nuclear Regulation](#) and the [Environment Agency](#)

[See details of incidents at Sellafield before 1 August 2017](#)

News story: Companies House announces new Chief Executive

Louise Smyth has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of Companies House and The Registrar of Companies for England and Wales.

Louise Smyth has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of Companies House and The Registrar of Companies for England and Wales. She will take up leadership of the organisation in September 2017 and joins Companies House from a long career at the Intellectual Property Office, including roles as Director of IT, Director of Corporate Services and latterly as Chief Operating Officer.

Lesley Cowley, Companies House Chair said:

“I am delighted to announce Louise Smyth’s appointment as the next Chief Executive of Companies House. We are at the forefront of the Government’s agenda for economic growth by making it easy to start a company, simple to maintain company information and easy and quick for everyone to access company information. Louise will be tasked with leading the successful implementation of our challenging business plans, in order to make our vision of becoming the best registry in the world a reality”.

Louise Smyth said:

“I am absolutely delighted to be given the opportunity to be Chief Executive of Companies House. I am very much looking forward to working with the team to build upon the great reputation of Companies House and to deliver exemplary services and operations for all our customers”.

Notes

- The appointment of Louise Smyth follows an open competition overseen by the Civil Service Commission.
- Louise will take up her post in September. She replaces Ann Lewis, who has been Interim Chief Executive and Registrar since the previous Chief Executive and Registrar, Tim Moss left the organisation in April this year.
- Louise is currently Chief Operating Officer of the Intellectual Property Office.
- Companies House can trace its origins to 1844, when the first Register of Joint Stock Companies was created. Louise will be the 33rd Registrar.

[News story: Hexavalent 6-in-1 vaccine to be made available to newborn babies](#)

All babies born on or after 1 August 2017 will be offered protection against hepatitis B as part of our universal childhood immunisation programme, Public Health England has announced. This is in addition to continued protection against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and Hib.

The hexavalent vaccine replaces the existing 5-in-1 vaccine that children routinely receive. It is already widely used with around 150 million doses having been given in 97 countries in Europe and across the world.

There has been no change to the immunisation schedule or to the number of injections and children will continue to be immunised at the ages of 8, 12 and 16 weeks as part of the routine childhood immunisation schedule. The only change is to the components of the vaccine itself, which now provides extra

protection for hepatitis B.

Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at Public Health England said:

Until today, only children at high risk of hepatitis B would be immunised. The introduction of hexavalent vaccine means that all children will now be routinely protected against this serious infection, which is a major cause of cirrhosis and liver cancer in later life. The hexavalent vaccine has been extensively tested and shown to be safe and is widely used internationally with millions of doses being given around the world.

The UK government has signed up to the WHO global hepatitis strategy to work towards elimination of viral hepatitis as a major public health threat by 2030. People with hepatitis B infection may not be aware that they are infected as chronic infection mostly has no symptoms. As adults are the majority of infected individuals, vaccinating children will protect them in childhood from potential exposure to infected household or family members. Vaccinating infants will essentially reduce the risk of infection and will provide longer term protection against future exposure risks.