

Press release: M3 gets first 'orange' smart motorway emergency area

The redesigned emergency area has a highly visible orange road surface and better signs to help improve its visibility make it more obvious to drivers on smart motorways. It is also hoped that it will encourage drivers to only use them in emergency situations.

image of the new style emergency area on the M3

The first of the new emergency areas went live on the M3 near Camberley this morning (Friday 14 July). More upgrades are planned should the trial be successful. This change is part of an ongoing review into the design and spacing of emergency areas on smart motorways that is due to report in the autumn.

Highways England Chief Executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

We know that smart motorways are safe. But we also recognise that drivers need to have confidence when using them and be clear about where they can stop in an emergency.

That is why we are trialling these highly visible new style emergency areas. The bright orange colouring will make them as easy as possible to spot and should also discourage drivers from using them in non-emergency situations.

This is just one of the ways we are helping drivers to understand smart motorways and their benefits. I hope it helps drivers feel more confident about using a smart motorway.

Smart motorways use variable speed limits to manage traffic and tackle frustrating stop-start congestion, new technology to give drivers better information on road conditions ahead and – in smart motorway upgrades delivered since 2004 – convert the hard shoulder into an extra traffic lane. Evidence shows that smart motorways are successfully adding extra capacity, improving journey times and are just as safe as conventional motorways.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Our roads are some of the safest in the world but we are always looking at making them safer.

Smart motorways are adding extra lanes to our busiest motorways and – as recent evidence shows – reducing the rate of crashes.

We are making emergency refuge areas more visible to ensure

motorists in trouble can easily identify where to stop safely.

The redesigned emergency area supports Highways England's drive to improve awareness of smart motorway driving, including what to do in an emergency and when to use an emergency area. It sits alongside a national TV, radio and social media campaign covering key themes such as not driving in lanes closed by Red X signs, how to stop in an emergency and the importance of carrying out appropriate vehicle checks, like checking fuel levels, before setting out on a journey to avoid unnecessary breakdowns.

If the redesigned emergency areas are successful and drivers find the changes beneficial, more orange emergency areas will be introduced across England's network of smart motorways.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

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[News story: Bristol buses released from undertakings by CMA](#)

The undertakings, covering FirstGroup Holdings Limited, 'FirstGroup', and local authority bus services, were put in place following the 1989 merger of local bus companies Badgerline and Midland Red West, which was investigated by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC).

The MMC ruled in 1989 that the merger would remove competition for bus services contracted by the former Avon County Council. Local authorities tender for – and subsidise – unprofitable bus services to maintain important transport links for residents.

Badgerline was subsequently renamed FirstGroup Holdings Limited (a subsidiary of FirstGroup plc), which then became subject to the restrictions, including a cap on the amount they could receive from the local authority for running a tendered service – and a requirement to return any excess profit from such services.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has been [reviewing the undertakings](#) since January 2017 to consider if there has been any change of

circumstances which would justify the removal or variation of the undertakings.

During the investigation it was found that FirstGroup's share of tendered bus services in the region has reduced significantly since the MMC report and that in the most recent tender rounds, FirstGroup did not win any contracts at 3 of the 4 Local Transport Authorities. The CMA engaged with local stakeholders during the investigation, none of which argued that the undertakings were having a beneficial effect and should be retained.

In June, the CMA launched a consultation on its provisional decision to remove the undertakings. No representations were received and the CMA has therefore decided to release the undertakings. A notice of release of undertakings is published alongside the [CMA's final decision](#).

Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Flickr](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).
2. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6798.

[Press release: Schemes across the country to receive £15 million of natural flood management funding](#)

New allocations of flood management funding will allow homes, businesses and communities around the country to benefit from increased flood protection, [Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey](#) announced today.

34 community led projects have been named as winners of a [£1m government funded competition](#), the first of its kind, and will now be able to realise their innovative plans to use landscape features such as ponds, banks, meanders, channels, and trees to store, drain or slow flood water.

24 other catchment scale projects have also been allocated funding to develop larger scale projects which will benefit wider areas; with Cumbria, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire and Walsingham all receiving over £1m of funding.

Environment minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This funding will help more than 50 projects around the country take full advantage of innovative natural flood management measures. Flood defence technology and engineering is better than ever and by using a mix of natural and concrete defences, we can provide the best flood protection for individual areas.

Methods such as restoring floodplains and planting trees will not only help protect families, homes and businesses from flooding, they will also bring environmental benefits to the wider area and all the people who live in these many communities.

Minister Coffey announced the successful allocations in Sutton and Roxwell, where she visited two of the schemes which will receive funding.

Following flooding in Roxwell last year the community bid for funding to improve land and ditch management and reduce the risk of the local brook overtopping again. This project has been allocated £50,000 so the community can work with local landowners to help slow the flow of water down to the brook.

Sutton's sustainable drainage in schools project will receive £50,000 to improve the town's natural flood defences. This scheme will be run across seven of Sutton's schools, providing improved flood protection to over 100 properties.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

Natural flood management is an important part of our approach, alongside traditional flood defences and helping homeowners to improve their own property resilience. There is no 'one size fits all' solution to flooding and this scheme is a fantastic example of how we can use a variety of measures that work together to reduce flood risk.

These allocations come from the £15 million of natural flood management funding which was announced in March, following the Autumn statement.

Details of the allocations are available [here](#).

News story: Defence Secretary announces £120m investment in UK air power

The deals will create 330 British jobs and help the RAF to continue to perform at its best by improving training for fast jet pilots and making sure the Hercules C-130J aircraft can continue to support the UK's Armed Forces around the world.

The Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon, said:

These contracts demonstrate our commitment to supporting the UK's air power, through maintaining battle proven aircraft and training the next generation of fast jet pilots.

This substantial investment will ensure our Air Force can continue to perform at its very best. Backed by our rising defence budget and £178 billion equipment plan, these contracts will create high skilled jobs in Britain and > ensure that our Armed Forces have the best equipment and training available to keep the UK safe.

The first contract, worth £110 million, is with British company Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group. It will replace the centre wing box for the RAF's Hercules C-130J aircraft and will create 330 jobs in Cambridge, adding to the over 5,100 UK jobs Marshall already support in the region.

This replacement will extend the Hercules C-130J aircraft's out of service date to 2035, making sure this essential aircraft can continue to transport personnel and equipment around the world, having previously supported defence and humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq, Nepal and South Sudan.

The MOD has also signed a £9.5 million contract with QinetiQ to provide Typhoon pilots trained at RAF Waddington with the latest cockpit technology to prepare them for front line combat.

With the nature of global conflict ever evolving, it's vital that the Armed Forces are trained effectively to deal with a variety of scenarios. This technical update to RAF Waddington's training equipment will give Typhoon crews based at the station's Air Battlespace Training Centre 10 weeks of simulated battle training a year.

The trainee aircrew will be exposed to state-of-the-art, simulated battlefield situations and the training facilitators can develop scenarios, provide mission management support and post mission debriefs, ensuring the crews will be best prepared for deployment.

It will also allow instructors at RAF Waddington to connect to Typhoon

training devices at RAF Lossiemouth and RAF Coningsby, guaranteeing fast jet pilots based across the UK access to the latest cockpit and simulated training technology.

Press release: New A5-M1 link road in Bedfordshire hailed by business and civic leaders

The A5-M1 link road has created a new northern bypass for Dunstable, taking long distance traffic away from the town centre, and opened up opportunities for thousands of new homes and jobs. It connects the existing A5 to the M1 at a newly created junction – junction 11A.

Today, Highways England invited local public figures, partners and supporters to join the project team for the A5-M1 Link scheme to celebrate the new road, which opened early and on budget in May.

Iftikhar Mir, Highways England's major projects director overseeing the A5-M1 Link project, said:

Since it opened on 11 May, the A5-M1 Link scheme has been providing a vital new east-west connection between the A5 and the M1.

Early anecdotal evidence is very encouraging. The new link road, built to modern standards, is already providing road users with better journeys, and congestion through Dunstable's high street has also begun to ease.

We would like to thank local people and road users for their patience and support over nearly two and a half years while we have worked to deliver this new road on time and on budget.

The new A5-M1 Link road opened to traffic on 11 May 2017

Town Mayor of Dunstable, Councillor Gloria Martin said:

The Town Council and residents of Dunstable are pleased that after many years of suffering heavy traffic and poor air quality, we now have a northern relief road. "Since its opening the reduction in through traffic, particularly heavy lorries, has been noticeable.

We look forward to the de-trunking of the A5, the enforcing of a heavy lorry ban, improved air quality in the High Street and

continued regeneration of our town.

Tina Barnard, Hertfordshire LEP board member and chair of Strategic Infrastructure Board, said:

This short but absolutely vital link between the M1 and the A5 is critical to help economic development and jobs growth both in Central Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Not only will it reduce journey times for long-distance traffic by giving HGV drivers easier access to the M1, it will also help to relieve congestion for residents and businesses by taking pressure off local roads.

This is a prime example of where local authorities and LEPs have worked hand in hand with Highways England to identify the critical interventions needed to grow our local economy.

Houghton Regis Town Mayor, Councillor Joanna Hillyard said:

Houghton Regis has watched the progress of the A5-M1 Link with interest and many members of the town were fascinated to watch the bridge demolitions.

The difference it has made to the town since its opening has been quite remarkable. As more and more people start learning to navigate the new roads and junctions, it is hoped that the roads through the town will see even less cars and lorries, which will improve the air quality and noise. Houghton Regis has welcomed this project and has enjoyed working with Highways England and its joint venture contractor Costain-Carillion.

Stephen Catchpole, SEMLEP's Chief Executive said:

The completion of the A5-M1 link, together with the new Woodside Link road, is a major contributor to unlocking economic potential of the area. This vital road infrastructure enables new developments that will assist growth by freeing up prime employment and housing land.

Discussing the benefits of the newly opened A5-M1 link road at today's opening ceremony

The £162 million, 2.8 mile dual carriageway and new motorway junction opened shortly after 4am on 11 May 2017. The new road is also set to make journeys between the A5 and the M1 safer, faster and more reliable.

It will also make a difference to local residents by unlocking 40 hectares of land for new business development and jobs and providing the infrastructure

for 7,000 homes to the north of Houghton Regis.

The new M1 junction 11A, which is another key part of the scheme, is now linking the new road and Central Bedfordshire Council's Woodside link road to the M1, providing better access to the backbone of the national road network and opening the way for new and established businesses in Central Bedfordshire to faster connections with their customers in the UK and beyond.

The new road is the first major East of England project to be delivered in the Government's £15 billion investment in the strategic road network up to 2021. Now renamed A5, the A5-M1 Link road replaces a section of the A5 through Dunstable which has been handed over to Central Bedfordshire Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

The project included the building of a completely new dualled road, three new junctions including a new motorway junction, and six new bridges. Two old bridges over the M1 also had to be demolished to make way for the new junction 11A.

For more information about the A5-M1 Link, [visit the scheme website](#).

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