

Press release: Motorists urged to make plans for major M5 scheme

Concrete repairs and waterproofing work at the Oldbury viaduct, between junctions 1 and 2, get under way at the end of this month.

The scheme, valued at more than £100 million, finishes in autumn 2018, with some minor work continuing into spring 2019.

To keep the M5 open a contraflow system is being put in place. From the end of July all traffic will be diverted onto the northbound carriageway, with two lanes operating in each direction, along with a 30mph speed limit. Slip roads will be kept open throughout, to ease effects on the local network, but drivers are advised to expect long delays.

Motorists travelling from across the country are urged to consider routes such as the M42 and M6 to keep congestion to a minimum on the M5 and surrounding roads while work takes place.

To help with this there will be changes at key junctions in the area, including at M6 junction 8 southbound and M5 junction 4a northbound. This is to increase capacity where the M5 joins the M6 and M42 and reduce the amount of traffic heading towards the roadworks.

These measures are essential to manage the volume and flow of traffic through this busy part of the network and reduce the potential impact on local roads.

Changes include:

- from early July: At the link between the M6 and the M5 southbound, one lane will lead onto the M5, with three lanes continuing onto the M6, to encourage drivers to take the alternative route around Birmingham.
- from mid-July: At M5 junction 4a northbound, the layout will be changed to provide 2 dedicated lanes to the M42 and 2 dedicated lanes to the M5. The link between the M42 and the M5 northbound will also be changed to one lane
- from mid/late July: The M5 northbound at junction 4a will be further changed to provide one lane to the M5 through the junction while still providing 2 lanes to the M42. The M5 will be reduced to two lanes in each direction at Oldbury/West Bromwich in preparation for the contraflow
- end of July/start of August: Installation of contraflow on Oldbury viaduct

At those locations motorists will see a mixture of cones, lining on the road surface and barriers and there will be a 50mph speed limit on approach to the 30mph speed restriction between junctions 1 and 2.

For the first time upgraded travel information signs linked direct to the regional control centres that monitor traffic flows will provide real time

travel advice.

These digital signs are being rolled out in the Midlands to coincide with work starting on the viaduct and can suggest multiple alternative routes with up to date travel times and distances.

Highways England project manager Alastair Warnes, said:

We're doing everything possible to plan and manage the roadworks in order to keep traffic moving, minimise disruption and maximise safety.

That includes using the latest technology to help motorists adapt their journeys, using real time travel information to reduce delays as much as possible.

A network of early warning strategic travel advice signs will be deployed many miles from the junctions to allow drivers to choose alternative routes at earlier steps in their journeys.

Some of the suggested alternative routes for motorists include:

- southbound M6 traffic north of junction 16 (A500) heading South East use A50 / M1
- southbound M1 traffic north of junction 23A (A42/M42) heading South West use M69 and A46
- northbound M1 traffic south of junction 19 (M6) heading North West use M1 / A50
- westbound A14 traffic east of M1 heading North West use M1 / A50
- clockwise M25 traffic south of junction 16 (M40) heading North West use M1 / A50
- northbound M5 south of junction 8 (M50) heading for North Wales use M50 / A49
- northbound M5 south of junction 9 (A46) for North East use A46

Highways England has liaised with local authorities to minimise clashes with other works. It is also keeping the haulage, freight and distribution industries informed of the essential work to allow their lorry drivers to plan ahead and seek alternative routes.

Motorists are urged to plan journeys in advance, allow extra time and consider alternative modes of transport, car sharing or working from home where possible.

The viaduct structure itself is safe but, as it was built in the late sixties, the work needs to be carried out to protect it for the future.

Large stretches of both the M5 and M6 in the Midlands are elevated and repair work is essential to protect the structure, with a £4.7 million concrete repair scheme at the iconic Spaghetti Junction on the M6 also taking place this summer.

The work is part of a major government investment to build a modern and resilient road network. By maintaining this key corridor Highways England is delivering a huge investment that will support economic growth locally and in the wider West Midlands.

For more information about the work visit the [Oldbury viaduct project pages](#) and for information about the work on the [Spaghetti Junction project pages](#).

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.

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

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: £100 million Rutherford Fund to attract best researchers to the UK](#)

Universities and Science Minister Jo Johnson today (4 July 2017) confirmed the government is investing £100 million to attract highly skilled researchers to the UK through its new Ernest Rutherford Fund.

The Rutherford Fund will provide fellowships for early-career and senior researchers, from the developed world and from emerging research powerhouses such as India, China, Brazil and Mexico, helping to maintain the UK's position as a world-leader in science and research.

Speaking at the launch event in London, Jo Johnson said:

Research and innovation is at the heart of the government's Industrial Strategy. At the 2016 Autumn Statement, the government announced a significant increase in public research and development spending, totalling £4.7 billion.

In her vision for the UK as the go-to place for scientists, innovators and tech investors, the Prime Minister has made clear she wants us to be a country that attracts the brightest and best minds.

To that end, I am pleased to announce today that we are investing £100 million in a Global Talent Research Fund that will be used to

attract highly skilled researchers to the UK.

It will be named after Ernest Rutherford. He is one of our most distinguished scientists, the father of nuclear physics, a Nobel Laureate, holder of chairs at the Universities of Manchester and Cambridge, and, crucially, an immigrant – who came to the UK at the age of 24 from New Zealand.

Rutherford and his immense contributions to science exemplify our vision of a Britain that is open to the best minds and ideas in the world, and stands at the forefront of global collective endeavours to understand, and to improve, the world in which we live.

We look forward to welcoming these talented Rutherford research fellows to the UK. The Rutherford Fund will send a strong signal that, even as we leave the European Union, we are open to the world and will reinforce our ambition of making the UK the go-to country for innovation and discovery.

Research and innovation is at the heart of the government's Industrial Strategy. At the 2016 Autumn Statement, the government announced a significant increase in public research and development spending, totalling £4.7 billion. This will provide an additional £2 billion a year by 2020 to 2021 – an increase of around 20% to total government spending, and more than any increase in any Parliament since 1979.

In April 2017 the Business Secretary Greg Clark announced the creation of the [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#) (ISCF) with £1 billion of support over the next 4 years. To support delivery of the ISCF, the government announced at the Spring Budget it will invest £250 million over the next 4 years to continue to build the pipeline of high-skilled research talent.

The ISCF was created to ensure research and innovation takes centre stage in the government's Industrial Strategy, with investment earmarked for technologies where the UK can build on its world-leading strengths and help innovative businesses to tap into large and growing global markets, as well as the industries of the future.

The fund is being administered by Innovate UK and the Research Councils until the new body UK Research and Investment (UKRI) is formed in 2018. UKRI, under the leadership of its recently appointed Chief Executive Sir Mark Walport, will play a key role in strengthening the UK's competitiveness through the Industrial Strategy.

Speech: Association of British Insurers long term savings conference

Thank you for that introduction, and to the Association of British Insurers and its Chairman, Andy Briggs, for inviting me to speak here this morning. I am delighted to be addressing you in my first speech as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

In my previous roles as Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Chief Secretary to the Treasury, I witnessed great advances being made in the pensions industry; therefore I hope that I'm already familiar with some of the key issues you face.

I am also somewhat familiar with the ABI. Indeed, there was a period when I was Financial Secretary that no day felt complete unless I had had a meeting with Huw and his team.

I intend to build on my Treasury experience in my new role as Secretary of State; I hope you will feel the benefit of consistency, and my commitment to working with you to secure long term objectives.

I know, all too well, that pensions reform is a long term game. We need a well thought-out approach, built on a solid evidence base.

As we consider the repercussions of increased life expectancy on future generations, I welcome the contributions of John Cridland, and the Government's Actuary Department, to our thinking on the future State Pension Age. It represents exactly the sort of longer-term approach I want to cultivate within my Department, and across wider Government.

I should also mention Andy Briggs's excellent work to support the Government as our Business Champion for Older Workers, because employers are crucial in helping secure those prizes.

Government's Ambition

We should be ambitious about improving our pensions saving system.

We've already had some notable successes where Government and industry have collaborated to achieve positive outcomes for both consumers and pension providers.

A good example is the new prototype of the Pensions Dashboard. We believe this tool has genuine potential for making our financial lives much simpler.

The dashboard presents a clear picture of all a person's pension entitlement in one secure online location, and will make it easier for savers to plan ahead.

A cross-section of the industry worked with us to develop the working prototype. The successful demonstration of the prototype last April showed the feasibility of providing information from different pensions schemes in one place; and was met with enthusiasm by technology start-ups, financial advisors, and the media.

Such a tool would encourage people to properly consider their retirement arrangements earlier in their working lives, and could help savers reconnect with an estimated £400 million in lost pensions accrual – something which we'd all like to encourage.

Pension freedoms is another example of Government and industry successfully working together. In an expanded pensions market, we are giving savers more control over their money to use in ways that suit them – while supporting financially sound decision-making through Pension Wise, the Pension Advisory Service, and the Money Advice Service.

And I await with interest the Financial Conduct Authority's 'Retirement Outcomes Study' report, and look forward to continuing to collaborate with you to ensure that reforms deliver for both consumers and the industry.

And I must mention the major success story that is Automatic Enrolment. By automatically enrolling people into workplace pension-saving, we have reversed a decades-long decline in participation, and improved millions of workers' future prosperity.

Latest estimates show that over 8 million individuals have already been enrolled, a figure that is projected to grow rapidly. 600,000 businesses and employers have got behind the scheme, fulfilling their duties so their workforce can start saving – often for the first time.

The bedrock of this success has been the sustained consensus between industry, Government and other stakeholders.

Challenges faced and still to face

It has not all been plain sailing to reach our current position. Not so long ago, engaging employers on such a large scale was considered an insurmountable challenge. Without the industry's backing and support, the programme would have struggled to leave the planning room. From working together on the high-level design, to fine tuning the detailed requirements, Automatic Enrolment's success flows from sustained collaboration across the many sectors to deliver the programme on the ground.

In particular, I'd like to recognise the role the Pensions Regulator has played in supporting, encouraging, and (where necessary) ensuring that employers met their duties. And also the part played by NEST, in providing access to a pension for all employers, regardless of their size.

That is why we have worked hard to ensure that employers are prepared and able to enrol their workers. And that is why we will continue to work with the ABI, its member organisations and the wider industry as we try to build

on our success to date. Not just in terms of pension providers but also the wider eco-system – payroll, intermediaries and many others have an essential role to play.

Our original forecast was that around a third of people would opt out of the pension they were automatically enrolled into. In practice, we have seen incredibly low opt-out of the workplace pension automatic enrolment scheme – something to be celebrated.

We have seen particularly low opt-out rates amongst young savers. Getting people to save from the very start of their working lives is a tremendous result to build on. However, we won't see people who have saved through automatic enrolment for their whole careers until the 2050s.

We still have a lot to achieve. The Conservative Party manifesto commits us to expanding pensions entitlements to include workers who are self-employed. Just as before, this may feel an overly-ambitious challenge, but I have reason to feel positive.

Look at what we've already achieved: workplace pension saving is set to increase by £17 billion every year by 2020. And an estimated 10 million workers will be newly saving, or saving more, as a result of automatic enrolment by 2018.

And the current review of automatic enrolment will help us to explore the best solutions for self-employed savers. In partnership with employers and industry, we are now in a strong position to build on the successes we have already seen, and set the future direction of the automatic enrolment scheme.

I'm also looking forward to the findings of Matthew Taylor's review of modern employment practices. It will tie-in with work that is already going on across Government on the issue.

Encouraging the industry to adapt

Looking ahead, it is apparent that we must do more to encourage new savers, many of whom are young, to engage with their pension provision.

Both Government and industry must look closely at the ways in which we can support this new type of saver to devote more of their earnings to their workplace pension, or a private pension provider.

I think it is worth reflecting on the opportunities an improved private pensions landscape will present.

I would encourage the pensions sector to see the potential that new savers will bring. By adapting your services to emerging trends you will better serve individual savers, by increasing the value-for-money they will reap from their retirement saving – a goal that we all share.

Get to know the new pensions landscape – your industry and society can prosper from its success. It is about informing consumers and supporting them

to make the right choices. Look at how you communicate with your customers, and consider adapting your products to the new types of saver entering the market.

Government is fulfilling its end of the bargain

As I said at the start, I am keen to provide the consistency and continuity that your industry is seeking. But I am also keenly aware of Government's responsibility to help and support new savers. And it is clearly also in the interests of the pensions industry to ensure that savers are properly supported, and informed in their choices.

That is why we have announced that we will be introducing a single body for the provision of public financial advice, which will replace the three existing public advice services. Streamlining to a single body will make it easier for people to seek advice, and make effective financial decisions.

Setting up the new single financial guidance body will require legislative changes, and we have already commenced introducing the Financial Guidance and Claims Bill to Parliament, which took place last week as part of the Queen's Speech.

Yet another issue on which the Department is working closely with industry is the sustainability of Defined Benefit Pension schemes. What recent cases have shown is that, even in difficult circumstances; better outcomes are achieved when all parties – members, sponsors, regulators and Government – play their part.

My Department will continue to work closely with industry to develop sensible policy proposals in this space for the long term which will work for both Government and industry to protect members and business.

Conclusion: Together, let's get this right.

Industry has been instrumental in what has been achieved so far.

We have overcome some really challenging situations in the past, which is part of the reason that I have great confidence for the future pensions landscape.

I have spoken about the challenges we anticipate, such as increasing savers' engagement, finding sustainable solutions to an ageing society and ensuring peoples' security in later life.

And we will have to overcome these challenges against the backdrop of a legislature intensely focused on delivering Britain's successful withdrawal from the European Union.

Now more than ever, building consensus across the sector, and across party-lines will be absolutely key.

But I feel confident that with your support we can substantially widen

individuals' engagement with the pensions industry – wake them from their pension-inertia to invest more in their future prosperity from a younger age.

I have set out both the challenges and the opportunities facing the industry and I look forward to working together in charting the new pensions landscape.

Press release: New Foreign Office booklet published on its historic ban on homosexuality

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has today published a new booklet which for the first time provides insight into one of the most controversial parts of its history – the ban on diplomats being homosexual which was only lifted in 1991.

The booklet reveals the human cost of the ban, detailing specific cases of individuals whose lives – professionally and personally – suffered. Based on recently discovered archive files, it includes the various historical definitions of “acceptable” and “unacceptable” homosexuality circulating among British diplomats; the pressure from campaign groups and the press on the Foreign Office to alter its policy; and the lengths to which officials went to identify and remove anyone suspected of defying the ban. The foreword has been written by Sir Stephen Wall, a former British Ambassador who concealed his homosexuality for his entire diplomatic career.

It also demonstrates how times have changed. Today the Foreign Office takes a prominent role in promoting equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people around the world and since 2014, British embassies and consulates have held marriages for over 400 British same sex couples in countries where such marriages are not recognised. The Foreign Office takes part in Pride celebrations around the world and there is a very active staff association (FLAGG). The Afterword to the booklet is written by John Kittmer, an openly gay diplomat and former British Ambassador to Greece.

By highlighting these contrasting times, the Foreign Office hopes to use its own experience to show how attitudes can change and use this to support the work of British diplomats around the world to promote tolerance and end discrimination.

James Southern of FC0 Historians who wrote the publication said:

If we are to make today's FC0 a tolerant and open institution, then it is vital we understand its past. I hope this publication and

event go some way to help all of us realise that we have a shared history and a shared responsibility to shape the present.

Simon McDonald, Head of the British Diplomatic Service said:

I am proud to lead an organisation with a diverse workforce which stands up for people persecuted around the world because of their sexuality. But it's important we don't hide the past and are honest about our mistakes. We changed our attitude to homosexuality, and now set an example for others.

Lucy Monaghan of the Foreign Office's network for LGBT Staff, FLAGG, said:

This report shines a light on the history of the sexuality bar in the FCO and the significant struggles many LGBT officers experienced. We hope it will enable the FCO to learn from its history and continue to stand up for LGBT rights within the FCO and across the world.

The report is available online [here](#)

Further Information:

Foreign Office staff who declare themselves as LGBT now represent the UK all around the world and at all grades. We have openly gay ambassadors in countries including Ukraine (Judith Gough), Israel (David Quarrey) and Thailand (Brian Davison).

Further information on the FCO Historians and their publications can be found [here](#) or on Twitter [@FCOHistorians](#).

FLAGG tweet the latest news about the FCO's work to promote LGBT equality on twitter [@FCOflagg](#)

[News story: Primary school tests show schools rising to the challenge](#)

Results published today (4 July 2017) show that the percentage of children achieving the expected standard in primary school has risen

The national Key Stage 2 results show that 61% of primary school children in

England achieved the expected standard, compared to 53% last year.

This year's [results](#) are the second to be released following the introduction of a more rigorous curriculum in September 2014 that raises the bar in terms of expectations of young people's mastery of literacy and numeracy, bringing the primary school curriculum in line with the best in the world.

Today's results show

- 61% of pupils met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, compared to 53% last year
- 71% of pupils met the expected standard in reading, compared to 66% last year
- 75% of pupils met the expected standard in mathematics, compared to 70% last year
- 77% of pupils met the expected standard in grammar, punctuation and spelling, compared to 73% last year
- 76% of pupils met the expected standard in writing, compared to 74% last year

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Today's results show sustained progress in reading, writing and maths and are a testament to the hard work of teachers and pupils across England. Thanks to their commitment and our new knowledge rich curriculum, thousands more children will arrive at secondary school having mastered the fundamentals of reading, writing and maths, giving them the best start in life.

The new national curriculum and reformed qualifications – at primary and at secondary – are designed to ensure pupils receive the education that they need to go as far as their talents will take them.