

## Press release: Official opening for A556 Knutsford to Bowdon link road

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan and Tatton MP George Osborne, chair of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, marked the project's completion – on time and on budget – by planting a tree on the innovative Green Bridge which crosses the road south of the A50 at Mere and is a key feature of the new road's environmental mitigation measures.

The 4 mile new road, which opened on Monday 6 March, bypasses the old A556 and the villages of Mere, Bucklow Hill and Over Tabley – providing a quicker and more reliable link between junction 19 of the M6 and junction 7 of the M56 for the 50,000 vehicles, including 7,000 lorries, which rely on the motorway to motorway connection every day.

Jim O'Sullivan, Chief Executive, Highways England said:

The A556 is a key strategic route linking the West Midlands and Cheshire to Greater Manchester and Manchester International Airport. The old road was heavily congested and compromised by busy crossroads. This new road, built to modern standards, will provide faster and more reliable journeys between the 2 motorways – benefiting commerce and commuters alike.

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 road is the first major North West project to be delivered in the Government's £15 billion investment in the strategic road network up to 2021. With the new dual carriageway now open, work will focus on converting the old A556 to the B5569 – with a new single carriageway road for local communities alongside a segregated green corridor for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. Once this work is completed the new B road will be handed over to Cheshire East Council.

Work will also be taking place over the next few weeks to complete the unique Green Bridge – providing connectivity over the new road for farm animals but also for wild mammals, birds and other animals. The Green Bridge is one of 7 bridges provided to either carry key local roads such as the A50 over the new road or provide a link to the new dual carriageway for local communities.

In the last 28 months the project has also involved:

- digging out 1 million cubic metres of earth – all of it recycled to other parts of the project such as embankment and noise bund construction – enough to fill the Manchester Arena 3 times
- pouring 7,500 cubic metres (18,000 tonnes) of concrete for the 7 bridges

and underpass and other structures – enough to fill 3 Olympics-size swimming pools

- rolling out over 200,000 square metres of blacktop for the new road surface, enough to cover 30 football pitches
- making 100s of pre-cast manholes off-site and building an on-site concrete batching site to reduce ready-mix concrete deliveries and cut down lorry movements
- installing more than 30 kilometres of new drainage pipes along the route
- providing 4 large attenuation ponds to store water run-off from the new road to prevent flooding
- delivering 9 new habitats for legally-protected Great Crested plus a variety of other measures to enhance or protect wildlife including man-made badger setts, replacement bat roosts and ‘hop-overs’ to help the bats fly over the new road, a network of 21 ponds to provide new habitats for amphibians and small mammals, new barn owl boxes, and mammal tunnels to provide safe crossings for badgers, hedgehogs, voles and amphibians
- carrying out extensive landscape planting, which will also help support animal and bird habitats, including new species-rich grass, 280 semi-mature trees, around 60,000 whips and saplings, almost 117,000 square metres of shrubs (enough to fill more than 17 football pitches) and more than 7,000 metres of hedgerow with oak, birch, rowan, alder, cherry, crab apple and elm among the species planted
- securing work for around 4,000 people – including 14 apprentices – across a variety of engineering and project management disciplines
- hosting or supporting 100s of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematic days, giving students an insight into engineering
- registering 1.7 million accident-free working hours

The new road, which has already scooped a number of environmental and considerate constructor awards – including a gold award earlier this week – has been delivered as part of the Northern Powerhouse initiative.

## **General enquiries**

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## **Media enquiries**

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**[Press release: Planned roadworks in](#)**

# [the East of England: weekly summary for Monday 27 March to Sunday 2 April 2017](#)

The following summary of planned new and ongoing road improvements over the coming week is correct as of 24 March 2017 but could be subject to change due to weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances. All our improvement work is carried out with the aim of causing as little disruption as possible.

## **M11 junction 6 (M25) to junction 9 (A11), Essex: barrier repairs and litter clearance**

Work to maintain safety by carrying out barrier repairs and improve journeys by carrying out litter clearance continues this week. Lane closures will be in place in both directions overnight, between 8pm and 5am, from Monday 27 March for five nights.

## **M11 junction 8 (Bishop's Stortford) to junction 9 (Great Chesterford): congestion improvements**

Work to improve congestion on the M11 by installing sign to restricts lorries from using lane 2 between 7am and 7pm on uphill sections of the carriageway in both directions between junctions 8 and 9 will start this week and is planned for completion by the end of March after which the restrictions will come into force. During the work, lane closures will be in place in both directions overnight, between 10pm and 6am from Monday 27 March to Friday 31 March.

## **A1 Brampton Hut to Sandy: routine maintenance**

Work to improve safety by carrying out routine inspections of electrical equipment and structures begins this week. Lane closures will be in place overnight, between 8pm and 6am, until summer 2017.

## **A1 Sandy to Black Cat, Bedfordshire: drainage improvements**

Work to improve journeys by renewing drainage on the A1 continues this week. Lane closures will be in place overnight, between 8pm and 5am, from Monday 27 March for five nights.

## **A5 to M1 link (Dunstable northern bypass),**

## **Bedfordshire: major improvement**

Work to improve journeys by reducing congestion with the construction of a new dual carriageway running east from the A5 north of Dunstable and joining the M1 at a new junction 11a continues this week.

Lane closures will be in place on the M1 between junctions 10 and 13 overnight, between 10pm and 6am, from Monday 27 March for five consecutive nights.

Temporary traffic lights will be in place on the A5 and A505 overnight, between 8pm and 6am and during daytime between 09:30 and 15:30, from Monday 27 March for five consecutive days.

The scheme is due to be completed in June 2017. For further information, [visit the scheme website](#).

## **A5 Friars Wash Flamstead: resurfacing**

Works to place a high friction surface treatment to selected areas of the new road surface will take this week. We will be closing the A5 between Friars Wash and Chad Lane overnight, between 8pm and 6am. A clearly signed diversion for southbound traffic will be in place via B4540 Luton Road/ Markyate Road, A1081 Luton Road towards Harpenden, B487 Redbourn Lane, A5183 Dunstable Road to join the M1 at junction 9. For northbound traffic vehicles need to follow the diversion A5183 Dunstable road, B487 Redbourn Lane, A1081 through Harpenden onto Front Street towards Slip End, B4540 Markyate Road/Luton Road back to join the A5 at Markyate.

## **A11 Babraham, Cambridgeshire: resurfacing**

Work to improve journeys by carrying out resurfacing continues this week. The A11 eastbound will be closed between the M11 junction 9 (Stump Cross interchange) and the A1307 (Fourwentsways interchange) overnight, between 8pm and 6am from Wednesday 22 March until Saturday 1 April. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the M11 and A14.

## **A11 Red Lodge: carriageway retexturing**

Work to improve the quality of the concrete carriageway on the A11 northbound between Red Lodge and Barton Mills continues this week. The northbound carriageway will be closed between Red Lodge and Barton Mills overnight between 8pm and 6am from Wednesday 22 March for 10 nights. A clearly signed diversion route in place via the A14 towards the Bury St Edmunds, before leaving at junction 40 and then take the B1103 towards Fornham All Saints, then take the A1101 towards Lackford and Icklingham and then continue until re-join the A11 at the Barton Mills roundabout.

## **A12 Brentwood to Capel St Mary, Essex: routine maintenance**

Work to improve safety by carrying out routine inspections of electrical equipment and structures continues this week. Lane closures will be in place overnight, between 8pm and 6am, until summer 2017.

## **A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire: major improvements**

Early preparatory construction work on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon scheme has been underway for a number of months and main construction has now started. We are currently carrying out a variety of tasks for which we need to close lanes or carriageway on the A1, A14 and some local roads, usually overnight between 8pm and 6 am unless otherwise stated. The work includes:

- creating safe crossing points for plant on a number of local roads
- installing access points to our construction compounds
- taking core samples of the existing A1 and A14 carriageways to help us plan construction
- clearing sites next to the live carriageway of vegetation
- installing CCTV and average speed cameras
- installing information boards

For this week, the planned road closures are:

- Monday 27 March – A1307 inbound between A14 and Girton.
- Tuesday 28 March – A1307 inbound between A14 and Girton.
- Wednesday 29 March – A1307 inbound between A14 and Girton.
- Thursday 30 March – A1307 inbound between A14 and Girton.
- Friday 31 March – A1307 inbound between A14 and Girton.

For this week, the planned lane closures are:

- Monday 27 March – A14 eastbound junction 31 lane two closed and two way off peak traffic lights – Ermine Street
- Tuesday 28 March – A14 eastbound junction 31 lane two closed
- Wednesday 29 March – A14 eastbound junction 31 lane two closed
- Thursday 30 March – A14 eastbound junction 31 lane two closed
- Friday 31 March – A14 eastbound junction 31 lane two closed and A1 southbound between Alconbury and Brampton Hut lane one eastbound

## **A14 Spaldwick: safety fence upgrade**

Work to upgrade the verge side safety barrier at the side of the road in two locations around Spaldwick starts this week. There will be a temporary 50mph speed limit in place 24 hours a day and at weekends. The slip road at junction 18 (Spaldwick) will be closed from Monday 27 March for three nights overnight, between 8pm and 6am. Traffic will be diverted to travel to junction 18 and then to return eastbound to junction 18.

## **A47 Dogsthorpe, Cambridgeshire: junction improvements**

Peterborough City Council is continuing its junction improvements at the A47/A15 Dogsthorpe junction, Peterborough. Lane closures will be in place 24/7 on the A47 with some overnight full closures.

For further information, [visit the scheme website](#).

## **A47 Hockering to Easton, Norfolk: road surface repairs**

Work to improve journeys by resurfacing the A47 between Hockering and Easton continues this week. The A47 will be closed between Hockering and Easton overnight, between 8pm and 6am, (Monday to Friday) until Friday 31 March. A clearly signed diversion for eastbound traffic will be in place A1065 to Fakenham, A148, A1067 towards Norwich, A140 Norwich Ring-road, A1075 Dereham Road westbound to re-join the A47 at Longwater. For westbound traffic vehicles need to follow the diversion A11 south- west to A134 roundabout at Thetford, A134 , A1065 northbound to Swaffham to re-join the A47.

## **A47 Shoreboat to Pullover, Norfolk: safety improvements**

Work to improve safety on the A47 will start this week. Temporary traffic lights will be in place overnight, between 8pm and 6am, until Thursday 30 March.

## **A120 Panners interchange: resurfacing**

Works to replace lining and anti-skid surface on the A120 westbound entry slip road. The slip road will be closed overnight, between 8pm and 6am on Thursday 30 March for two nights. Traffic will be diverted eastbound along the A120 to Galleys Corner Roundabout and return westbound to Panners Interchange.

## **A120 Marks Tey to Marks Farm, Essex: Resurfacing and lighting**

Work to improve journeys on the A120 by resurfacing the carriageway continues this week. Full carriageway closures EB and WB (West Street to B1024 junction Coggeshall) Monday 27 to Fri 31. Temporary traffic lights will be in place on the A120 between Marks Farm and Marks Tey Monday 27 to Friday 31 overnight, between 8pm and 6am. Work is expected to be complete in May.

## **A120 Blackwater Bridge, Bradwell, Essex: Bridge re-waterproofing**

Work to re-waterproof and resurface the Blackwater bridge near Bradwell should be complete this weekend. If this is postponed due to the weather the works will continue this week.

If the works are postponed until the end of the month the A120 will be fully closed between Hollies Road junction and Blackwater Aggregates, between 8pm on Friday 31 March to Monday 3 April. Access will only be permitted to residents and businesses from Marks Farm (eastbound) and Marks Tey (westbound). All other vehicles must use diversion route. No traffic will be able to pass over the bridge. The footpath will remain open on one side.

Clearly signed diversions will be in place via the A12, A130 and A131 and reverse.

## **A120 Marks Tey junction 25 Slip Resurfacing**

The A120 junction 25 slip from the A12 will be closed for resurfacing Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 April overnight (8pm – 6am). The diversion will be to junction 24 of the A12.

## **A12 Chitts Hill Colchester, Essex: foot bridge maintenance**

Work to re-waterproof and resurface the Chitts Hill Footbridge continues this week. The bridge remains closed with a local pedestrian diversion route in place via Chitts Hill and Halstead Road. Work is due to be completed in April.

## **A120 Colchester to Hare Green, Essex: barrier maintenance**

Work to renew the central reservation barrier continues on the A120 between the A12 junction 29 and Hare Green. Overnight (8pm – 6am) full westbound closures between J29 and Hare Green will take place on Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 April. From Monday 27 March to Sunday 2 April, there will be narrow lanes on the A120 westbound 24/7. All vehicles must follow the diversion, A131, A1232 to junction 29 of the A12.

From Monday 27 to Friday 31 March there will be eastbound lane closures and a 50mph speed limit in place. Work is expected to be complete in early April.

## **A120 Wix, Essex: drainage maintenance**

Work to repair the drainage along the A120 near Wix continues this week. Temporary traffic lights will be in place overnight, between 8pm and 5am, from Monday 20 March for five nights. Work is expected to be complete in May.

## **A120 Porters Park bridge: bridge repairs**

Work to re-waterproof and resurface the Porters Park (Waltham Road) bridge continues. There will be a 24/7 full closure Monday 27 March to Sunday 2 April. The footway access will be maintained throughout. Vehicles need to follow the diversion B1137, A130, Essex Regiment Way, Wheelers Hill, Leighs Road, Drakes Lane, Boreham Road back on to Waltham Road, or reverse.

## **A120 Ewell Bridge: bridge repairs**

The bridge is closed for on-going repairs. The pedestrian diversion is via Highfields Lane, Maldon Road, Ewell Hall Chase and reverse.

## **A120 Parkeston roundabout: technology installation**

Work to improve traffic signals on the A120 at Parkeston roundabout will take place this week. Temporary traffic lights will be in place overnight, between 8pm and 6am from Wednesday 22 March for two nights.

## **A428 Eltisley, Cambridgeshire: street lighting and road markings**

Work to replace the studs in the centre of the road will be done this week. The A428 will be closed through Eltisley between both junctions with the B1040 overnight, between 8pm and 6am, from Monday 27 March for two nights. A clearly signed diversion for westbound traffic will be in place for drivers to take the A1198 at Caxton Gibbet, then, at Godmanchester follow the A14 westbound to junction 21, at Brampton Hut take the A1 southbound and then follow the A1 to Wyboston roundabout. Drivers heading eastbound will follow this diversion in reverse.

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**[Press release: Planned roadworks in](#)**

# [the North East: summary for Monday 27 March to Sunday 2 April 2017](#)

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## **A1 junction 56 Barton to junction 51 Leeming Bar**

There will be phases of overnight lane closures and full carriageway closures while work takes place to upgrade the road to motorway standards. There will also be narrow lanes and a 50mph speed restriction 24 hours a day. On Monday 27 March there will be a carriageway closure southbound at junction 56 Barton. There will also be a carriageway closure northbound and southbound at Scotch Corner interchange and a partial closure of Scotch Corner interchange.

From Tuesday 28 to Friday 31 March there will be a carriageway closure southbound at junction 56 and a partial closure of Scotch Corner roundabout. Then on Saturday 1 April and Sunday 2 April there will be a partial closure of Scotch Corner interchange. All these closures will take place between 8pm and 6am with diversions in place. From 8pm on Friday 3 March through to mid April the junction 56 northbound exit slip will be closed 24/7 with a diversion.

## **A1 Blaydon Haugh Viaduct, junction 73 to junction 74, Newcastle Upon Tyne**

There is a 50mph limit in operation over Blaydon Haugh Viaduct due to the installation of temporary plates over defective viaduct joints. From Monday 27 March to Sunday 2 April there will be a carriageway closure northbound between 8pm and 6am. All these closures will take place with a diversion in place.

## **A1 Morpeth, Northumberland**

There will be work ongoing until spring 2017 for the construction of a bypass. There will be various phases of daytime and night time lane and carriageway closures, with narrow lanes and a 40mph speed restriction in place. On Friday 31 March there will be a carriageway closure in place north and southbound between 8pm and 6am with diversions.

## **A1 Warreners House to Earsdon, Northumberland**

There will be convoy working in place north and southbound for resurfacing work. This will take place until Tuesday 28 March between 8pm and 6am.

## **A1 Warreners House, Northumberland**

There will be traffic signals in place north and southbound for horticultural work. This will take place on Monday 27 until Thursday 30 March between 9.30am and 3.30pm.

## **A19 Silverlink, North Tyneside**

There will be a 24 hour 30mph speed restriction with narrow lanes for interchange improvement work. This project is due for completion in March 2019.

## **A66 Long Newton, Stockton on Tees**

There will be 24 hour traffic signals in operation on the slip road and interchange for construction work. This will take place until Friday 31 March.

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## **[Press release: Planned roadworks in the North West: summary for Monday 27 to Sunday 2 April 2017](#)**

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## **M53 junctions 1 to 2 (Wallasey to Upton)**

Work to upgrade the safety barrier in the central reservation between junctions 1 and 2 on the M53 started on Monday 6 February. Lane closures will be in place overnight, with some full carriageway closures later in the project.

## **M56 junctions 10 to 11 (Stretton to Preston Brook)**

Work to upgrade the safety barrier and paint new road markings on the M56 near Warrington started on Monday 30 January. Lane closures will be in place overnight between 8pm and 5am, Monday to Friday. The project is due to be completed by the end of March.

## **M6 junctions 16 to 19 (Cheshire smart motorway)**

Work is underway to upgrade the M6 to a smart motorway between Crewe and Knutsford, converting the hard shoulder to an extra lane and introducing new variable speed limits. Narrow lanes and a temporary 50mph speed limit are in place for the safety of drivers and workers. Overnight lane closures are in place this week on both carriageways.

## **M6 junction 21a/M62 junction 10 (Croft Interchange)**

Construction work is taking place on a major project to tackle congestion and improve the flow of traffic between the M6 and M62 at Croft Interchange. A 50mph speed limit, backed by average speed cameras, will be in place along main carriageways of both the M6 and M62 and interchange link roads. Some overnight slip road closures will also take place.

## **M6 junction 21a to J23**

Northbound carriageway closure for carriageway surfacing works. Taking place on 25th and 26th March between the hours of 9pm and 5am.

## **M6 junction 22 to 23**

Northbound carriageway closure for carriageway surfacing works. Taking place on the 27th March between the hours 9pm and 5am.

## **M6 junctions 29 to 30 (M65 to M61 interchanges)**

Overnight resurfacing work is taking place on the M6 between 8pm and 5am, Monday to Friday. Clearly signed diversions will be in place, and the scheme is due to be completed in May.

## **M6 junction 38 Tebay**

Night time single lane running 8pm to 6am with 2 lanes open during the day

with a temp speed limit of 50mph Southbound. Works are for resurfacing and will be complete by the end of March

## **M6 Between Todhills and Junction 43**

Night time full closure of the Southbound carriageway for bridge impact damage repair. 8pm and 6am. Works to be completed by the end of March.

## **M60 junction 8 to M62 junction 20 (Sale to Rochdale)**

A major smart motorway scheme is taking place to cut congestion and improve journey times on parts of the M60 and the M62 in Greater Manchester. The scheme involves overnight slip road and carriageway closures, with narrow lanes and a temporary 50mph speed limit in place for the safety of drivers and road workers.

There will be a full carriageway closure on the M62 junctions 18 to 20 eastbound on Monday 27 March to Friday 31 March – 8pm to 6am.

## **M602 junction 2 Eccles**

The westbound entry slip road will be closed for three nights from Monday 20 March for maintenance work.

## **A56 Haslingden Bypass between M66 Junction 1 and A680 Bent Gate roundabout**

Work is due to start 27 March for approximately one week to include the replacement of traffic sensors and cables and renewal of road markings.. Road closures on the northbound and southbound carriageways, between 8pm and 5am (by 7am at weekends), Monday to Friday, will be in place on the A56 Haslingden Bypass between M66 Junction 1 and A680 Bent Gate roundabout. The A682 southbound carriageway will also be closed between the junctions of New Hall Hey Road and the A56. Localised signed diversion routes will be in place.

## **A585 West Drive to Fleetwood Cycleway**

Work is taking place on a new shared footpath and cycleway between West Drive and Fleetwood. Daytime narrow lanes and a temporary 30mph speed limit are being used along the route to help provide a safe space for workers constructing the new shared paths with night time traffic signal work. The project is due to be completed by the end of March.

## **A585 Amounderness Way, Thornton**

Temporary traffic lights will be in place between West Drive and Bourne Way until Saturday 8 April for maintenance and inspection work.

## **A590 Lindal in Furness**

Work is being carried out to tackle flooding between Pennington Lane and Bank End Cottages. 24hr temporary traffic lights are now in place until late March.

## **A590 Brettargh Holt to Newby Bridge**

Lane closures will be in place 24 hours a day while junction improvement work is carried out by the A5074. The scheme is due to be completed by the end of March.

## **A590 Foulshaw Moss**

There will be temporary traffic lights in place while construction work is carried out at the junction. The scheme is due to be completed by the end of March.

## **A66 Bassenthwaite Lake**

A contraflow system is in place while work is carried out on the embankment in the central reservation next to Bass Lake. The scheme is due to be completed in the spring.

## **A66 Keswick**

Work started on Monday (20 March) on a 6 week bridge repairs project on the bridge over the River Greta. This is a dual carriageway stretch of the road and 1 lane will be closed in each direction during the work – between Crosthwaite roundabout and Brierley Interchange – with a 40mph speed limit in place. Work will take place between 6am and 8pm each day. Laybys in the area and a footpath under the bridge will be closed throughout the scheme. There will also be a ban on vehicles over 44 tonnes using the bridge, again for the duration of the work.

## **A66 Thornthwaite (Osprey Site)**

Flood resilience work is continuing with overnight carriageway closures in place between 8pm and 6am until the end of March. Clearly-signed diversions are in place. During the day, temporary traffic lights are in use along with a 40mph speed limit.

## **A66 Marron Bridge**

Maintenance is underway on Marron Bridge, between Broughton Cross and Bridgefoot. Overnight closures are in place between 9pm and 5am, with a clearly-signed diversion. Due to the temporary bridging plates, a 30mph speed limit backed by speed cameras is required during the day. The project is due to be completed in March.

## **A66 Brough**

Resurfacing and drainage work is taking place on the eastbound carriageway at Brough. Overnight slip road closures will be in place between 8pm and 6am, along with lane closures 24 hours a day.

## **B6167 Lancashire Hill (M60 junction 1 to 27 Cycleway improvement scheme)**

A 24 hour lane closure and footpath closure will be place on the B6167 Lancashire Hill between the junctions of Nicholson Street and Knightsbridge from 8 March for ten weeks for a cycle improvement scheme.

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## **[Press release: Foreign Secretary Statement at the UNSC Briefing on Somalia](#)**

I'm grateful to President Farmajo for making his first address to this Council, to Michael Keating, the Special Representative, and Special Representative Madeira for their words.

Last week, I was fortunate enough to visit Somalia at a time which the Secretary-General has described as "tragic and hopeful". Today has been a chance for President Farmajo to describe how the Federal Government plans to bring peace and stability. And, I hope you will take a clear message from this meeting that while you work for the benefit of Somalia, Mr President, the Security Council will stand with you.

But we meet at a moment when Somalia faces the daunting prospect of its third famine in 25 years. We cannot forget that the last time Somalia was blighted by starvation, in 2011, no fewer than 260,000 people died. Today, over 6 million Somalis need help. The crisis also risks undermining the hard-won political and security progress that has been made.

The good news is that if we learn the lessons of 2011 and act early and decisively, then the famine can still be prevented. Britain has contributed over \$135 million of emergency aid to Somalia this year. This UK aid will provide more than a million people with food, water and emergency health care. I would urge all our partners to support the relief effort that is now underway. And I urge the Somali Government to deliver the commitments they have made to improve access and to remove logistical blockages, as part of their welcome focus on this issue.

In Mogadishu last week, I witnessed a military training session for the Somali National Army and AMISOM troops. A heavy responsibility rests on these brave soldiers to guarantee the security, the security on which every other form of progress depends. This is a critical time for security in Somalia. We must work together to agree a clear and long term plan for international security support in Somalia. We hope to make progress on a Security Pact during the forthcoming Somalia Conference in London.

The most urgent requirement is for a political agreement between the Federal Government and Federal Member States on the security architecture of the Somali security forces. Once this has been agreed, the international community should set out its comprehensive and coordinated support to Somalia on security sector reform.

We also need to agree on the shape of a conditions-based transition away from AMISOM to the Somali security forces. I cannot commend highly enough the prowess and bravery of AMISOM soldiers and their Somali counterparts in the struggle against Al-Shabaab. They have made a real difference to Somalia and to the security of East Africa as a whole – and we are all conscious of their sacrifice.

It is precisely because we must not allow their sacrifice to be in vain that we need to ensure a successful transition. The African Union is a central partner – and the forthcoming joint UN-AU review will be central in setting the future direction of that partnership. I hope that all members of this Council will be open minded, particularly as regards funding, so that Somalia's progress is not jeopardised by a hasty transition. Security is one urgent aspect of the broader constitutional settlement that a stable federal Somalia needs.

The Federal Government and Member States will also need to agree on how to share power and resources. Resolving these questions will be crucial for Somalia's long term stability. And I look forward to a one-person, one-vote election in four years time. I also welcome the focus of President Farmajo on promoting economic recovery and creating jobs for a new generation of young and ambitious Somalis.

For this to succeed, the Government will need to continue to make progress on important economic reforms, comply with the current IMF programme and improve the business environment. These steps will also be essential for Somalia to be able to make progress towards its aims of accessing multilateral finance and debt relief.

At this crucial time, Britain will join the UN and the Federal Government to host a Conference on Somalia in London in May. The Conference will assess the response to the humanitarian emergency, accelerate progress on security and adopt a new partnership agreement that sets the terms of the relationship between Somalia and the international community for the coming years.

A peaceful and prosperous Somalia is the aim we all share. And let me say to President Farmajo that the Security Council will stand alongside you as you strive to achieve that goal.