

[News story: Defence Minister and Prince Harry celebrate 200 year relationship with Nepal](#)

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster, who served with the Queen's Gurkha Engineers himself, was at a special ceremony at the Nepali Embassy in London this afternoon to celebrate the end of the 200th year of UK-Nepal relations by the Nepali calendar.

The Minister and His Royal Highness Prince Harry met Gurkha families and watched Nepali cultural performances, including a traditional Khukuri dance by a Brigade of Gurkhas.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Having served in the Brigade of Gurkhas myself, I'm particularly proud of our brave Nepali Gurkhas and the key part they play in our Armed Forces and Britain's role on the world stage. This bicentenary year has been a unique chance to celebrate this and, as well as looking back, we can look forward our special relationship continuing long into the future.

With formal relations between the countries ratified in March 1816, the Brigade of Gurkhas of the British Army has recruited soldiers from Nepal since the 19th century. Gurkha soldiers fought bravely in both the First and Second World Wars, the Falkland Islands and more recently in Afghanistan and Iraq. Gurkha servicemen from Nepal have won 13 Victoria Crosses, the highest British award for gallantry.

They remain a fully integrated part of the British Armed Forces and, with a unique set of local knowledge, language skills and engineering experience, they also played a vital role in the humanitarian relief effort after Nepal suffered a devastating earthquake in 2015. They, along with the UK's C-130 RAF Hercules aircraft which delivered vital aid to vulnerable people, contributed to the UK's overall response to the disaster.

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[Press release: Foreign Secretary's Nowruz message 2017 \(1396\)](#)

Boris Johnson wishes those celebrating in Britain and around the world a happy new year

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

“I want to give my best wishes to all those celebrating Nowruz around the world.

“People from many countries, communities and backgrounds will be gathering with their loved ones to celebrate the New Year and mark the start of Spring.

“Nowruz is an opportunity to look back on the year that has passed and look ahead to the year to come. So, however and wherever you are celebrating the New Year, I wish you health and happiness for the future. Nowruzetan piruz.”

Further information

[Press release: Planned roadworks in the North East: summary for Monday 20 to Sunday 26 March 2017](#)

The following summary of planned new and ongoing road improvements over the coming week is correct as of Friday 17 March 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.

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 20 and Tuesday 21 March there will be a carriageway closure northbound between junction 50 and Scotch Corner, and southbound between Scotch Corner and junction 51 as well as a southbound closure of the carriageway over Barton interchange with a diversion down and under the interchange.

On Wednesday 22 March there will be a carriageway closure northbound between junction 50 and Scotch Corner, and southbound between Scotch Corner and junction 51 as well as a southbound closure of the carriageway over Barton interchange with a diversion down and under the interchange and a partial closure of Scotch Corner interchange.

On Thursday 23 March there will be a carriageway closure northbound between junction 50 and Scotch Corner, and southbound between Scotch Corner and junction 51 as well as a southbound closure of the carriageway over Barton interchange with a diversion down and under the interchange. Then on Friday 23 March there will be a southbound closure of the carriageway over Barton interchange with a diversion down and under the interchange and a closure of the carriageway under Scotch Corner interchange with a diversion up and over

the interchange and 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 20 to Friday 25 March there will be a carriageway closure southbound between 8pm and 6am. From 8pm on Saturday 26 March until 6am on Monday 27 March the southbound carriageway will be closed for the bridging plates to be removed. 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 Monday 20 and Tuesday 21 March there will be traffic signals in place southbound between 8pm and 6am.

A1 Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland

There will be a carriageway closure with traffic signals in place north and southbound for resurfacing work. This will take place on Monday 20 and Tuesday 21 March between 8pm and 6am, with diversions in place.

A1 Warreners House to Earsdon, Northumberland

There will be convoy working in place north and southbound for resurfacing work. This will take place from Wednesday 22 to Tuesday 28 March between 8pm and 6am.

A19 Silverlink, North Tyneside

From Monday 20 March for five nights the A19 will be closed between 8pm and 6am with diversions in place for interchange improvement work. There will also be a 24 hour 30mph speed restriction with narrow lanes. This project is due for completion in March 2019.

A66 Long Newton, Stockton on Tees

There will be an off-peak lane closure in operation along the A66 westbound between Elton Interchange and Long Newton Interchange until Friday 24 March. It is anticipated that the works will be completed by Friday 31 March.

A66 Blands Corner, Darlington Bypass, County Durham

The circulatory will be closed for resurfacing work. This will take place from Saturday 18 to Monday 20 March between 8pm and 6am.

A66 Rokeby to Scotch Corner, North Yorkshire

There will be a carriageway closure east and westbound for barrier work. This will take place on Wednesday 22 March between 8pm and 6am, with diversions in place.

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.

[Bharatiya Mahila Bank \(BMB\) to be merged with State Bank of India \(SBI\) to ensure greater banking services outreach to a larger number of women, at a faster pace](#)

The Government of India has decided to merge the Bharatiya Mahila Bank (BMB) with the State Bank of India (SBI) to ensure greater banking services outreach to a larger number of women