

Time-saving road marking robot makes it a happy new year for drivers

The quirky machine uses precise positioning technology to mark out where white lines need to be painted on new or resurfaced roads.

The robot has already saved hundreds of hours of working time on various Highways England projects across the country, including Britain's biggest road upgrade, the £1.5 billion A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement.

It also recently pre-marked eight miles of the M6 in Staffordshire in four hours. This work would usually take two engineers over a week to complete.

Savings elsewhere include saving 27 hours of working time marking three miles of hard shoulder on the M4 in Berkshire, 77 hours covering five miles of the M6 in Warwickshire, and six hours working on two miles of the M1 in Leicestershire, with further work done on the M60 smart motorway at Manchester.

Besides helping drivers, it also has safety benefits for roadworkers and enables them to focus on completing other essential work on each project.

Julian Lamb, construction director on the A14, where the robot has been used, said:

We're always looking at innovative new ways of working, which can help road users, and make our projects more efficient while supporting improved engineering. With safety our top priority, the time savings the robot can provide, coupled with removing our operatives from a potentially hazardous situation, make it a great solution.

We've also been working with a self-driving dumper truck on the project, completing trials of these new technologies to help Highways England more deliver its ambitious programme of roads improvement quickly, safely and efficiently. These technologies are also supporting new jobs, with the engineers of tomorrow needing to learn new skills such as programming this autonomous equipment.

[Road marking robot's Happy New Year message](#)

Ordinarily, pre-marking road markings is a time-consuming job, calculating the positioning of the markings and walking several miles to spray or chalk them on the road. By using the robot, road workers spend far less time in the road and are at less risk of an accident – around 250 drivers illegally drive into roadworks every month, putting workers' lives at risk. Bending down to pre-mark roads by hand can also raise the risk of back injuries. The robot

also boasts improved accuracy and can mark the road faster.

The robot has been so successful that specialist contractor WJ, which adopted the technology for it to complete the pre-marking, has now invested in a second one to help complete more of its work. By completing roadworks faster, the robot will help contribute to the goals of reducing congestion, improving journey times, and supporting economic growth, while cost savings can be used to provide more or better-quality road-building materials.

Wayne Johnston, WJ Group Managing Director, said:

I am passionate about changing the way we work in this industry and the WJ Robotic PreMarker represents a real step change. However, it is just a starting point, we will continue to invest in research and development to find better, more efficient and safer ways of working.

The 12-mile Huntingdon Southern Bypass, which makes up around two thirds of the A14 upgrade, opened a year early, in December. Work on the rest of the project, between Swavesey and Milton, continues and is on schedule to completed as planned by December 2020.

For the latest information about the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme, including advance notification of road closures, visit the [A14 project website](#) follow @A14C2H on Twitter and like the [scheme Facebook page](#).

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.