

VIP seal of approval for £43 million M6 junction improvements

The newly-transformed M6 Junction 19 at Knutsford opened on Saturday (20 November) and after a week of systems testing is now fully-operational. Lead contractor AmeySRM delivered the 20-month project for National Highways as part of the Government's road investment strategy.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

I'm delighted to see these vital improvements to the M6 completed, which will not only boost connectivity for communities in Cheshire and beyond, but also improve journey times and safety at the junction. "This is a major investment from our roads programme and it's so rewarding to see these projects materialise as we continue to level up the whole of the UK.

Earlier today (Friday 26 November) Tatton MP Esther McVey, senior regional officials from National Highways and Councillor Craig Browne, deputy leader of Cheshire East Council and chair of its highways and transport committee, saw the improvement for themselves.

The new junction arrangements include a brand new 'through-about' bridge through the junction roundabout and over the motorway – one of the first of its kind in the country.

After visiting the site today Ms McVey said:

I was pleased to be able to see the work that has been going on at Junction 19 and am equally pleased that we are seeing Government investment in Tatton. I am hopeful this will make a significant improvement to the experience of travellers in the area.

Ms McVey pictured at the new 'through-about' bridge at M6 Junction 19 earlier today

The new bridge provides a direct link between the southbound M6 and Cheshire East Council's section of the A556 running south of the junction roundabout at Tabley Hill where National Highways has also delivered a major improvement to the Pickmere Lane and Tabley Hill Lane staggered junction. The roundabout has also been tweaked with better access and safety for cyclists and pedestrians using and travelling between the A556 and B5569 local roads.

Councillor Browne said:

This is excellent news for road users in Cheshire East as it will improve journey times, boost connectivity and decrease congestion around this key junction for our road network. It is also good to see the improved access and safety for cyclists and pedestrians at the roundabout.

The whole project team are to be congratulated on delivering this important and complex scheme under the twin pressures of poor weather and Covid working restrictions, while keeping travel disruption to a minimum.

The project has included junction improvements along Cheshire East Council's section of the A556 south of the M6 Junction 19 roundabout as well as improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists between here and the B5569 on the far side of the busy junction.

Stewart Jones, North West delivery director for National Highways' regional investment programme, said:

This is a vital investment in the important Midlands to Manchester and Manchester Airport corridor. The new junction arrangements will help to provide a vastly-improved link to our motorway upgrades along the M6 and M56 as well as the new Knutsford to Bowdon bypass.

We were delighted to show Ms McVey around the site today a week after the scheme was completed and opened to traffic. While we've worked hard to deliver this complex construction project without causing too much disruption to people's motorway journeys and local people's lives we would like to thank everyone for their patience over the last 20 months.

Pat Cumming, senior project manager for AmeySRM, lead contractor for the project, said:

This is a very proud moment for the whole project team. Today we celebrate the successful completion of a significant improvement scheme for the region.

The work that we've done over the last 20 months will provide long-lasting benefits for the local community, as well as the tens of thousands of people who pass through the junction each day. We've already received messages of thanks from motorists and residents who are using the junction and enjoying the improved connections it offers.

The whole project was delivered during the pandemic and National Highways

project manager Khalid El-Rayes (left) and AmeySRM senior project manager Pat Cumming are pictured with a fist-bump celebration on the northbound carriageway of the new bridge just hours before it opened to traffic on Saturday of last week.

The new bridge over the motorway also provides a direct link between the northbound M6 and A556 Knutsford to Bowdon bypass reducing the number of vehicles using the roundabout itself, cutting congestion and improving traffic flow and safety.

Construction of the new bridge and the other junction improvements started in March last year. Planning and continuing work around the Covid-19 pandemic, severe weather and a world-wide shortage of micro-chips were just some of the challenges faced by the construction teams over the last 20 months.

A new 'drive-through' video has been produced to show how the new motorway-to-A556 links work.

Day and night aerial images show drivers using the bridge and new roundabout arrangements

Pictures from the construction feature in a new ['Connecting the country' video](#) National Highways has produced to showcase the importance of the 530 miles of major A roads and motorways in the North West – and how National Highways is investing in improvements.

More information on the project is available on the [scheme webpage](#).

General enquiries

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

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[The importance of training and good recruitment](#)

Press release

A recent case saw an operator almost lose their licence due to a lack of awareness and bad recruitment decisions.



Following a public inquiry on the 16th November, Solid Scaffolding had their licence curtailed to just one vehicle, had the licence suspended for January 2022 and their reputation was found to be severely tarnished after it was found that a disqualified operator was helping to run the business.

Mr Benson, the actual operator had previously been invited to attend new operator seminars but had failed to attend. As a result of this, he was unaware of the mistake he made in recruiting Vincent Larkin to help run Solid Scaffolding.

The operator deferred to Mr. Larkin due to his experience and this led to numerous mistakes, such as hiring a driver with undisclosed driving offences, operating with another operator's disc in the windscreen and a lack of brake testing.

The deputy traffic commissioner for the South East and Metropolitan area, John Baker said "Mr Larkin, who is a person with a long adverse history in operator licensing appears to have been given responsibility for the transport operation and Mr Benson deferred to him without properly checking on his background or finding out for himself what he should be doing on behalf of his company as a newly appointed operator.

"Mr Benson assures me Mr Larkin will not be involved going forward and I have concluded that I am prepared to give him the chance to show that he can carry through on that promise. I am therefore able to step back from revocation of the licence but nevertheless do need to take significant regulatory action bearing in mind the seriousness."

The operator was also directed to attend an Operator Licensing Awareness Training Course within two months of the date of this decision, employ a transport consultant for not less than four months and have an audit conducted in April 2022. Vincent Larkin is to play no part in the management of the transport operation.

All new operators receive a suite of advice through the first four months of operations in order to remind them of important tasks.

Further details can be found [here](#).

Joint statement from UK-China Health Dialogue

The UK's Health Secretary Sajid Javid and China's Health Minister Ma Xiaowei concluded the virtual meeting of the UK-China Health Dialogue on 26th November 2021.

The two sides recognised the contribution made by the UK-China Health Dialogue since its establishment in 2007 in promoting mutual understanding and trust between the UK and China. They agreed to strengthen exchanges and develop a joint health plan for collaboration in key areas.

During this meeting, the two sides acknowledged the challenges both countries had faced in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and looked ahead to cooperation in future domestic and global challenges and opportunities in the coming years.

Both sides recalled the 2020 UK-China Health Dialogue and agreed the good progress made over recent years. In particular: policy exchanges on the COVID-19 pandemic, global health collaboration, antimicrobial resistance, medicines regulations, and working together on health in Africa.

Both sides agreed to collaborate on knowledge exchange and implementing evidence based practices in providing high quality healthcare to their people in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, emerging infectious diseases, ageing populations, and the growing burden of non-communicable diseases.

Both sides agreed to cooperate on global health security through the UK-China public health agencies, specifically on infectious disease control, emerging infectious diseases, emergency response and antimicrobial resistance, food safety risk surveillance and assessment.

Both sides noted the significance of supporting opportunities for sharing and learning from addressing COVID-19 and future pandemic preparedness such as scaling up support for global COVID-19 surveillance, genomic sequencing capacity, and variant assessment capabilities to ensure a global recovery from Covid-19.

Both sides agreed to cooperate on multilateral engagement in the health space and work together to strengthen the WHO, particularly with regard to pandemic preparedness and response. Both sides agree to cooperate across the wider multilateral landscape on international protocols and with international organisations, specifically supporting countries to comply with International Health Regulations and international standards across all hazards; and taking

action on global health threats such as antimicrobial resistance and the health impacts of climate change. Both sides agreed on the importance of taking concrete measures to improve pandemic preparedness and response

Both sides agreed continuing to strengthen the dialogue and exchanges on policy and enhance collaboration, specifically on health care for ageing populations, and to continue dialogue on health development in Africa.

Both sides agreed to work together to enable vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to be rapidly developed, tested and deployed both in public health emergencies and for ongoing global health challenges, including through strengthening clinical trials infrastructure.

Both sides agree to work together on medical education and training.

The two sides acknowledged the contribution made over the last year in the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic in sustaining UK-China relations and undertook to build on the progress made at the 2021 UK-China Health Dialogue. Both sides agreed to review progress and renew a Memorandum of Understanding on Health Cooperation between The National Health Commission of China and UK Department of Health and Social Care at the next Health Dialogue in 2022.

Signed in Beijing and London on 26th Nov 2021 in duplicate, each written in Chinese and English, both texts being equally valid.

Sajid Javid, Secretary of State, Department of Health & Social Care of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

MA Xiaowei, Minister for Health, National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China

Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Tunisia: Ms Helen Winterton

News story

Ms Helen Winterton has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Tunisian Republic.



Ms Helen Winterton has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Tunisian Republic in succession to Mr Edward Oakden CMG.

Ms Winterton will take up her appointment during December 2021.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name	Helen Winterton
2020 to present	Full-time Language Training (Arabic)
2018 to 2020	FCD0, Deputy Director, Arabian Peninsula, Middle East and North Africa Directorate
2015 to 2018	Cairo, Deputy Head of Mission
2012 to 2014	Department for International Development (DFID), Deputy Director, Middle East and North Africa
2009 to 2012	Jerusalem, Head DFID
2007 to 2009	DFID, Private Secretary to Secretary of State / Deputy Head, Top Management Group
2006 to 2007:	DFID, Iraq Programme Manager
2005	Baghdad, Deputy Head DFID
2004	Addis Ababa, Deputy Programme Manager

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[UK Government announces biggest investment into Welsh tidal power](#)

The UK Government will invest £20 million per year across the UK in Tidal Stream electricity as part of its flagship renewable energy auction scheme, kickstarting a brand-new chapter for Wales's tidal industry and creating jobs across Welsh coastal regions.

Today's announcement will unlock the potential for a thriving Welsh tidal power sector, with the cash boost supporting marine technologies which could

benefit the whole of the Wales and the rest of the UK.

As part of the fourth allocation round of the Contracts for Difference Scheme due to open next month, the UK Government will ensure that £20million per year will be ringfenced for Tidal Stream projects, giving Wales's marine energy sector a chance to develop their technology and lower their costs in a similar way to its world-leading offshore wind industry. This will bring the total funding for this allocation round to £285million per year UK-wide.

Wales already has excellent tidal stream resources and is well positioned to play a global leading role in marine energy. The Menter Mon Morlais project, based off the coast of Holy Island, has major potential to put Ynys Môn on the map in terms of tidal stream energy. Anglesey could benefit from a ringfenced tidal stream budget, along with the high skilled employment opportunities this project could bring to the region.

Over time Wales's marine technologies have the potential to significantly contribute to the UK's decarbonisation commitments and will support hundreds of green jobs across the country, with projects currently in development in North-West Scotland, North Wales and the Southern coast of England.

Tidal energy has the potential to be a very reliable source of generation, given the clockwork predictability of the tides. Including this in Wales's low-carbon energy mix will make it easier to match supply with demand, building on the UK Government's commitment to build a strong, home-grown renewable energy sector to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels and exposure to volatile global gas prices.

Welsh Secretary Simon Hart said:

Wales is ideally placed to be a major source of the clean and renewable energy of the future. Harnessing the power of our seas is a vital step in our transition to Net Zero by 2050 and underlines the UK Government's commitment to create and protect highly-skilled jobs while doing so.

With strong wind and solar power industries in the UK it is the natural next step to explore our tidal energy capabilities. With this investment, Wales can continue to develop its potential as a leader in renewable technology and industry and contribute to the greener global economy of the future.

Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

With 1,200km of coastline and excellent tidal resource, Wales is perfectly placed to capitalise on clean marine energy, building on our booming offshore wind sector which is now a British industrial success story.

We hope to see marine energy follow in the successful footprints of

other renewable technologies, where we've seen costs fall dramatically in recent years thanks to UK government support.

The investment today provides a major push for Welsh tidal power to become a key part of the next generation of renewable electricity projects needed to strengthen energy security as we work to reduce our dependency on volatile fossil fuels.

Full details of all Contracts for Difference scheme announcements will be released on Thursday 25 November where the UK Government will outline plans to launch the biggest ever Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation round, with this new ringfencing for Tidal Stream expected to bring the total budget for the fourth allocation to £285 million per year.

The Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme is the Government's primary method of encouraging investment in low-carbon electricity. The scheme has helped to deliver substantial new investment and reductions in the costs of capital for some renewable technologies, such as helping to reduce the price of offshore wind by 65%.

This fourth round of the Contracts for Difference Scheme will open on 13 December 2021. The UK Government will launch this auction process with the ambition of supporting up to 12GW low-carbon electricity capacity – more than the last three rounds combined.

The costs continue to fall as green technology advances, with solar and wind now cheaper than existing coal and gas power plants in most of the world. This is thanks to clear government signals and investment made ahead and during the COP26 climate change summit, along with targeted support that boosts private sector investment, creates high-quality jobs and builds industries and technology as the UK builds back greener from the pandemic.

History has illustrated the effectiveness of the scheme's design in keeping costs down – between the first allocation round in 2015 and the most recent round in 2019, the price per unit (MWh) of offshore wind fell by around 65%.

Energy Minister Greg Hands, said:

Wales has a real opportunity to be at the forefront of a major emerging industry, with our renewable energy auction scheme playing a vital role in the UK becoming a world leader in clean electricity generation and helping to bring down prices for consumers.

Today's dedicated backing for tidal stream power is opening up a new chapter for Wales's coastal communities and advancing the possibilities for the Welsh marine energy sector to play a significant role in delivering the UK's green industrial revolution.