

# Groundbreaking new digital system to help keep motorists better informed and traffic moving

New technology is being introduced into National Highways' National Traffic Information Service (NTIS) which will make sure consistent and reliable information is available on the nation's motorways and major A roads.

The service provides information that is vital to help both National Highways' operations teams and the emergency services respond to incidents as efficiently as possible and to keep traffic moving.

It also helps road users plan their journeys, avoid delays and stay safe by supplying the latest information to electronic message signs on the network and journey planning digital platforms.

Under the new digital infrastructure, National Highways' operations data is being transferred from a legacy to cloud infrastructure for the first time. Harnessing the power of the cloud will enable National Highways to better collect the data needed to transform how the network is operated.

Alongside this, National Highways (formerly Highways England) will be able to share accurate and up-to-date information with road users regarding planned works, delays or any other congestion which may impact their journey.

National Highways' Customer Service Director Melanie Clarke said:

This groundbreaking digital transformation will allow us to make positive changes to the way our roads are run and to vastly improve the journeys of road users both today and on the roads of the future.

This is a small part of our Digital Roads strategy which is reverberating across National Highways fundamentally changing how our roads are designed, built, operated and used.

Digital transformation leader Sopra Steria has been appointed to introduce the new system for NTIS over the next five years.

As well as the operational benefits and giving road users better real-time route planning, the new system, introduced by Sopra Steria, will support the creation of an innovative digital twin representation of the strategic road network.

This will be used to map out motorways and major A roads in England digitally and will use machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) to accurately predict the conditions of the roads up to 24 hours in advance.

This will help to reduce the impact of both planned events, such as roadworks and football matches, and unplanned incidents such as road collisions both by improving the management of the road network through increased automation and enabling road users to better plan their journeys.

Adrian Fieldhouse, Managing Director (Government), at Sopra Steria, said:

We're delighted to support National Highways' vision to digitally transform its strategic road network and provide better information to road users to enhance their journeys. Sopra Steria's proven experience in road traffic management and digital transformation, as well as agile methodology, will help National Highways in this significant evolutionary leap to ensure the continued efficiency and safety of our road network both now and long into the future.

Meanwhile, TRL – the UK-based global centre for innovation in transport and mobility – has secured the contract to migrate National Highways' Smart Motorway Calibration and Optimisation (SMCALO) software and services toolkit to the cloud. It will be working with IT service provider Version 1.

SMCALO is a web-based service that enables National Highways to visualise traffic and signal data and monitor parameters such as traffic speeds and flow. It also helps calculate the thresholds for automatic signals to ensure variable speed limits are only on when needed. SMCALO also identifies performance issues with detectors and records when signals are showing.

The new cloud-based solution will enable new data sources to be incorporated and offer easy access to SMCALO data for all stakeholders.

The digital transformation of this system will support optimised traffic flows, reduced vehicle emissions, safer journeys and reduced journey times.

Ryan Hood, Head of Digitisation of Transport at TRL, said:

This contract win demonstrates TRL's commitment to support our clients with their digital transformation activities, combining TRL's decades of domain expertise with leading Cloud First organisations like Version 1. Improved monitoring of the network is a key component in the integrated approach to road asset management being championed by TRL, which combines a myriad of connected tools to help understand and manage highway assets.

Commenting on the two contracts, National Highways Chief Data Officer Davin Crowley-Sweet added:

"We are ensuring people using our roads are better informed and have trust in the journey information they access from us, so that they feel safe and in control of their journeys.

“While today most of our customers are humans informed by data and technology, the increasing amount of connected and autonomous vehicle (CAV) technology used in private and commercial vehicles could mean a future of providing data to self-driving systems. We must understand this direction and be prepared.”

The contracts are important steps in National Highways’ Digital Roads strategy.

National Highways has set out its Digital Roads strategy on a new website and ‘virtual learning environment’. The web pages clearly set out the company’s Digital Roads 2025 vision for safer and greener roads and how the growth of digital technology and the move to electric, connected and autonomous vehicles will fundamentally change roads in the future.

Visit the [Digital Roads website](#).

### **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.

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## **[New Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government](#)**

Press release

John-Paul (JP) Marks has been appointed as the new Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government.



John-Paul (JP) Marks has been appointed as the new Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government. JP, who is currently Director General, Work and Health Services at the Department for Work and Pensions was chosen following an open competition. The appointment has been made by the First Minister of Scotland in agreement with the Cabinet Secretary. JP will take up the post on 5 January 2022.

**The First Minister of Scotland, Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon said:**

I am grateful to Leslie Evans for her leadership of the Civil Service over over almost seven years. The expertise and insight that Leslie has applied in leading the organisation through the notable and significant challenges of our day – such as EU Exit and the COVID-19 pandemic – has been admirable. I join with so many across the Scottish public sector and beyond in wishing Leslie every success for the chapter ahead.

I am delighted to agree the appointment of John-Paul Marks as Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government. JP brings a wealth of experience to this senior leadership role from his career in the civil service working across a range of policy and delivery priorities. I look forward to working with him over the years ahead as we recover from COVID-19 and deliver on the government's ambition to build a fairer, greener Scotland.

**The Cabinet Secretary, Simon Case, said:**

I would like to congratulate JP on his appointment. His experience at Senior Civil Service level in building teams, delivering complex system reforms, major projects and improving services at scale in the public sector will be invaluable in his new role. I very much look forward to working with him as part of the senior leadership of the UK Civil Service.

I would also like to thank Leslie for her leadership of the Civil Service in Scotland over almost seven years, and for her significant contribution to the leadership of the UK Civil Service. I wish her all the best for the future.

I am delighted to take up the role of Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government. I am grateful to the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for this exciting opportunity. I would like to thank all the teams at the Department for Work & Pensions for their support and public service over the years. I look forward to joining the team in Scotland in the New Year as we do our very best for Scotland in these important years ahead.

## Notes to Editors

- JP has been Director General (DG) Work and Health Services at DWP since 2019.
- Prior to that he was DG Operations at DWP from 2018 to 2019.
- His other posts include Operations Director, Universal Credit Programme and Work Services Director at DWP and Head of Corporate, International Relations at the UK Pensions Regulator.

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# UK and US defence conduct Cyber Management Review

News story

Commander UK Strategic Command and Commander US Cyber Command met to discuss combined cyber capabilities



On 9 November 2021, UK and US representatives met face to face for the first time in 2 years for a headquarters-level forum to discuss combined cyberspace campaigns and capabilities, called the Cyber Management Review.

The Cyber Management Review is a collaborative forum between the leadership of UK Strategic Command, GCHQ, and the US National Security Agency, US Cyber Command. It is supported by ongoing interactions across multiple levels of the organisations, and provides guidance for future military and intelligence efforts in the cyber domain.

This close collaboration enables both nations to develop world-class cyber capabilities while ensuring the different organisations can work seamlessly together by using technology, insights, and activities to support shared objectives in cyberspace.

The Cyber Management Review is one way in which the UK and US can leverage and enable partnerships to generate shared insights, improve collective defence, and impose common costs for malicious cyber activity undermining the international rules-based order.

The 2021 Cyber Management Review provides the following statement, reaffirming the joint commitment to a bi-lateral relationship in cyberspace, and a shared focus to address new and emerging threats in an era of strategic competition:

As like-minded allies for two centuries, the United Kingdom and the United States share a close and enduring relationship. Our two nations today face strategic threats in an interconnected, digital world that seek to undermine our shared principles, norms, and values. We agree that strategic engagement in cyberspace is crucial to defending our way of life, by addressing these evolving threats with a full range of capabilities. To carry this out, we will continue to adapt, innovate, partner and succeed against evolving threats in cyberspace.

We will achieve this by planning enduring combined cyberspace operations that enable a collective defence and deterrence, and impose consequences on our common adversaries who conduct malicious cyber activity. As democratic cyber nations, the UK and US are committed to doing so in a responsible way in line with international law and norms, setting the example for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace.

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## [Levelling up boost for landmark cultural asset in Peterborough](#)

- Chancellor Rishi Sunak visits Peterborough to see how £20 million Government investment will help build part of new bustling university campus to boost the economy and create more than 500 jobs .
- Local community and 1,700 students set to benefit from new interactive science lab and education space – which has been awarded funding as part of £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund
- Regeneration of city centre brownfield site forms centrepiece of the new University Quarter Cultural Hub, expected to attract 50,000 visitors a year.

Rishi Sunak visited the site of the new Anglia Ruskin University campus to see how £20 million of government investment will transform the derelict city centre brownfield site into a new interactive science lab and education space for 1,700 STEM students.

The new university campus will help boost Peterborough's economic recovery, creating more than 500 jobs and help develop the skills needed for the future.

Part of the space will also be open to the public, showcasing the city's net-zero future through events and exhibitions – including 'festivals of ideas', immersive displays and evening classes.

Peterborough is one of the five places in the East of England which received a share of £87 million from the first round of the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund, as announced by the Chancellor in last month's Budget.

**Following his visit, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:**

One of our key priorities is to level up the UK by spreading jobs, investment and opportunity.

So it has been fantastic to come to Peterborough and see levelling up in action, with £20 million from our Levelling Up Fund transforming the city-centre site into a vibrant cultural hub that local people can be proud of, all while boosting jobs and the economy.

**Professor Ross Renton, Principal of ARU Peterborough, said:**

This new Levelling Up funding will help us deliver state-of-the-art facilities which will be of enormous benefit to our students, the people of the Peterborough and the wider region.

The new development will include a publicly accessible science resource, called The Living Lab, which will be at the heart of the city's new University Quarter. This will improve Peterborough's cultural offering and create an exciting destination for both locals and visitors.

The Chancellor also met business owners on the high street including a florist and a clothes retailer who will also benefit from the increased footfall from the university site.

The Living Lab will be the centrepiece of the new University Quarter Cultural Hub, part of Anglia Ruskin University Peterborough due to open in in 2022 and is expected to attract 50,000 visitors a year.

The project also helps to upgrade, create and connect existing and new

museums, an arts venue, two theatres and two libraries in 50 acres of renewed, open, green space, part of the regeneration of the river embankment that will open up a key leisure area for the city centre.

This investment to create the University Living Lab and additional teaching space, builds on £23 million from the Towns Fund, which will fund a range of projects including 'The Vine' library, culture and community hub, that will regenerate the town centre.

As announced at the Budget and Spending Review, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will receive funding for 30 zero emission buses, in addition to millions of pounds of investment in local transport improvements and to fill potholes.

This is alongside improvements made to strategic roads in the region, such as the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet and six A47 dualling and upgrade schemes between Peterborough and Great Yarmouth.

### **Further information:**

- The first round of the Levelling Up fund announced at the Budget, will invest £1.7 billion in 105 local infrastructure projects across the UK.
- Photos are available on the Treasury's Flickr page.

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## **[Inspection Report Published: An inspection of asylum casework](#)**

I welcome the publication of this report, which explored the efficacy of the Home Office's ability to make timely and good quality asylum decisions. It examined resourcing, training, workflow, case progression and the prioritisation of cases, as well as the quality of interviews, decisions and quality assurance mechanisms.

The inspection began at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. While the pandemic had impacted asylum operations, most, if not all, of the issues identified by this inspection predate it. Primarily, the Home Office is still failing to keep on top of the number of asylum decisions it is required to make. The inspection found that the length of time asylum claimants had waited for a decision increased annually since 2011. In 2020, adult asylum claimants were waiting an average of 449 days. This increased to 550 days for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Delayed decision-making is caused by a number of factors, including workforce capabilities, inefficient workflow processes, a reliance on outdated IT, and routing asylum claims for inadmissibility consideration in the absence of any bilateral agreements with EU countries. In addition to timeliness concerns,



the inspection found problems with the quality of interviews and decisions, and with quality assurance mechanisms.

An efficient and effective asylum casework system is in the interest of all parties. It is clear that the current system pleases nobody, least of all asylum claimants who are currently in limbo awaiting a decision, or the Home Office itself who are having to fund asylum accommodation for those awaiting a decision and pay to defend poor quality decisions in court.

I made nine recommendations focusing on case progression, workplace culture, training and skills. I am pleased that the Home Office accepted eight recommendations in full, and partially accepted one. I am also encouraged to learn that work on their implementation commenced prior to publication of this report.