

# The drive to improve motorway journeys for disabled people in the South West

National Highways has partnered with AccessAble, the UK's leading provider of detailed accessibility information, to help motorists plan where to stop for a break at any one of the 114 motorway service areas across England, including 15 services across the South West.

Lifestyle and disability blogger, Ross Lannon visited the Moto services on the M5 at Exeter to test out the guides. Ross, from Truro in Cornwall, has a condition called Spinal Muscular Atrophy and is a fulltime wheelchair user. He loves driving his adapted vehicle as it gives him so much freedom to work, socialise and travel but says that in the past he has been an anxious traveller, particularly on longer journeys, due to uncertainty about facilities on route.

Ross explained:

There's nothing more stressful and embarrassing than getting to a location and there's poor access, not having information in advance can be a very worrying time.

The access guides have been incredible, having detailed information takes away the anxiety. The information has been tried and tested by a genuine person who has spent time keeping the details up to date – from toilets to parking and width of doorways it covers all the information you need.

For many years, disabled people and carers using AccessAble have said how much they would value having access guides for motorway services, and what a difference comprehensive accessibility information would make to planning a trip.

The new guides, available online or via the free AccessAble app, are 100 per cent facts, figures, and photographs to help motorists plan their visit to the services. They cover key areas including parking, toilets, petrol stations, shops, and restaurants, with detailed information on everything from parking and hearing loops, to walking distances and accessible toilets.

In addition, National Highways and AccessAble have worked together to create virtual route guides for the services. This new type of guide, which uses 360-degree imagery, will enable visitors to 'virtually' explore routes to key facilities like accessible toilets and Changing Places, so they can find out exactly what to expect when they arrive.

Ross added:

The virtual walkthroughs have been a game changer, being able to see the layout in advance, see where you have to go and the facilities available makes the journey so much more relaxing. Virtual routes are the future, such a simple way to improve accessibility.

National Highways Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, Julian Horsler said:

We're committed to ensuring our disabled customers can travel safely on our roads. That's why we're introducing new services to break down barriers and help people reliably plan and feel confident about their journeys.

Whatever the nature of your disability, the access guides for motorway service areas take the guesswork out of journey planning, giving you the information you need about facilities along your route.

Moto Hospitality Chief Operating Officer, Nick Tatum said:

Our vision is to transform the UK's rest stop experience, this starts with giving our customers the ability to plan their journey in advance of their trip.

The National Highways and AccessAble guides for motorway services give disabled people and carers the ability to plan their journey with confidence.

From the insight we gained working with National Highways and AccessAble, we've also adapted our website to allow customers to plan their journey via facility ie Changing Places.

## **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.

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# More businesses to offer apprenticeships

Large businesses will be able to easily pledge funds to smaller businesses through a new government service, to help create and recruit for more apprenticeship opportunities.

The [online service](#) will be rolled out from today (13 September) to make it easier for large employers that pay the Apprenticeship Levy to spend their levy funds.

Large employers can already transfer up to 25% of their annual levy pot to support other employers to take on apprentices. Many employers have already taken advantage of this opportunity including Amazon, Co-op and Lloyds Banking to support other businesses with a funding boost.

The new service will simplify the process for both employers looking to transfer funds and businesses wanting to access funding. Now, levy paying employers can advertise their funding pledges on a dedicated gov.uk page, enabling a much wider range of businesses to browse and apply for available funds.

It will mean levy funds can be used more easily to support apprenticeships in both larger companies and in smaller businesses in their sectors or regions, helping to address skills gaps in sectors such as construction, health, digital and the creative industries.

Apprenticeships are a crucial way of providing people with the chance to retrain, update their skills and move into the growth sectors. By making it easier for employers to benefit from apprenticeships, the new transfer service will contribute to the levelling up agenda, supporting young people to reach their career goals. It will also mean businesses will be able to choose to target their pledges towards sectors and communities they want to support.

Levy paying employers including Mace Group, Amazon and University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust have already pledged £635,000 for the 2021/22 financial year with many more expected to pledge in the coming weeks.

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Gillian Keegan said:

Apprenticeships are a fantastic way for employers to ensure they have a highly motivated and diverse pool of talent in their workforce, while also enabling people to get the skills and experience they need to get ahead.

I'm pleased we're making it easier for smaller and medium-sized businesses to offer apprenticeships, which will unleash exciting new opportunities for apprentices and ensure that every business

can benefit from the productivity and skills of apprentices.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

Our small and medium-sized businesses are the cornerstone of our economy, and so I'm thrilled that we're making it easier for them to take on apprentices.

Our Plan for Jobs is equipping people with the skills they need to find work, and I'm immensely proud to see these new reforms providing even more apprenticeship opportunities.

Global consultancy and construction company Mace Group took part in a pilot to test the new system last month, pledging £100,000 and will transfer a further £350,000 to £500,000 each year for other businesses to access. The funds will be advertised on the dedicated gov.uk page later this month so that businesses in the construction sector can access and create apprenticeship opportunities, addressing skills gaps in the sector.

Other employers that have pledged funds during the pilot include:

- Amazon (£50,000)
- University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (£200,000)
- Thurrock Council (£100,000)
- Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust (£75,000)
- HomeServe (£40,000)
- East Sussex County Council (£40,000)
- London Borough of Islington (£30,000)

Mace Group CEO Mark Reynolds said:

The transfer of apprenticeship levy fees to fund our supply chain training costs will help us develop a much stronger pipeline of skilled people across the construction industry.

Taking part in the pilot showed us the huge potential to support the recruitment of more apprentices to meet our skills shortages; and I would encourage every business that meets the criteria to take up the option.

Amazon UK Country Manager John Boumphrey said:

Amazon is proud to be a major supporter of apprenticeships in the

UK. Earlier this year we announced 1,000 new full-time apprenticeship roles in 25 different schemes from engineering to broadcast production, robotics to safety technician. In June, we launched a £2.5 million Apprenticeship Fund to help small businesses across England upskill their workforces through levy transfers.

We look forward to working with the Government to make apprenticeships more accessible and this flexibility will be a boost to many people looking to start and develop their careers.

Director of HomeServe Foundation Helen Booth said:

We welcome the Apprenticeship Levy transfer service and are delighted to be part of the Beta pilot.

We think it's more important than ever that some of the levy funding is used to support the micro and small firms in the trades industry so they can build the skills base they need to handle the increase in demand for their services across the sector. Apprentices are a brilliant way to bridge the skills gap in the industry.

British Chambers of Commerce Head of People Policy Jane Gratton said:

Businesses are crying out for more people with technical skills to fill job vacancies and boost productivity, and apprenticeships are a key part of the answer. Companies are supporting local economies, launching young people into exciting careers and helping working adults into good jobs.

Making it easier for employers to access and use apprenticeship funding will be a positive step towards increasing training opportunities and tackling skills shortages.

Steve Murrells, Co-op CEO said:

Talent is everywhere but opportunity at present is not. If we genuinely want to build back Britain different and better, then this must be a decade of collective action when it comes to apprenticeships, a decade that benefits all communities across the country.

As part of the Government's Plan for Jobs, apprenticeships are playing a vital role in ensuring people have the skills they need to get great jobs.

Today's announcement builds on the Prime Minister's commitment from September

2020 to make apprenticeships more accessible, with more funding for smaller and medium-sized businesses, and the Chancellor's pledge to improve the way the apprenticeships system works for businesses in last November's Spending Review.

Levy employers can advertise available funds for transfer from [today](#), with the option of specifying the types of apprenticeships they wish to fund, such as location and sector. The employer will create their transfer pledge through their apprenticeship service account, and this will be advertised publicly on the new gov.uk page.

Streamlining the levy transfer process is just one of several improvements the Government is making this year to help businesses to create apprenticeship opportunities, so more people can get on the path to a great career. Others include making apprenticeships more flexible for project-based industries via the introduction of flexi-job apprenticeships, and increased cash incentives for employers hiring new apprentices.

The changes come in response to feedback from employers.

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## [Law Officers re-appointed](#)

News story

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Commenting on her re-appointment, Attorney General the Rt Hon Suella

Braverman QC MP said:

I am honoured to be re-appointed as Attorney General for England and Wales. I am grateful to the Prime Minister and Parliament for making it possible for me to go on maternity leave in the way other women can and come back to a job I am honoured to do.

I can't wait to get back to work. One of my first priorities is to continue the Government's work in rebuilding confidence and trust in our criminal justice system, particularly with victims.

I want to thank everyone at the Attorney General's Office for their work during my leave and I look forward to working with them going forward."

Notes

- Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP was appointed as Attorney General on 10 September by the Prime Minister following her maternity leave.
- Suella Braverman was the first Cabinet-level minister to take maternity leave following the passage of the Ministerial and Other Maternity Allowances Act. During this time she was designated 'Minister on Leave'.
- The Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP was appointed as Solicitor General on 10 September by the Prime Minister following his time as Attorney General while Suella Braverman was on maternity leave.

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## **UN Human Rights Council 48: UK Statement for the Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's Oral Update on Human Rights in Tigray**

Thank you, Madam President.

The United Kingdom is grateful for the High Commissioner's update. We welcome the joint investigation by OHCHR and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

The conflict in Ethiopia has entered its eleventh month, with both sides continuing to pursue a futile military solution. Over 400,000 people are experiencing famine conditions, yet the Government is presiding over a de

facto blockade of Tigray, and the Tigray People's Liberation Front has expanded the conflict into Amhara and Afar states, causing more human suffering.

The UK is concerned by the many reports of brutal and systematic sexual violence, of massacres, of forced displacement of people along ethnic lines, and of the indiscriminate shelling of towns. There has been a growing incidence of hate speech and discrimination. Humanitarian workers have become targets, and 23 have been killed.

If the situation does not improve Ethiopia will be the scene of a human tragedy on a scale unparalleled this century. As a longstanding friend of Ethiopia, the UK calls for the fighting to stop, for unfettered humanitarian access, and for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law to be respected.

The UK welcomes the announcement that a robust report will be issued on 1 November. We call on the High Commissioner to hold an intersessional briefing for Members as soon as possible following the report's publication followed by a thorough process to enable the full implementation of recommendations.

How does the High Commissioner intend to achieve this?

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## [New labelling to fly the flag for our farmers and give shoppers better information](#)

Press release

Outside the EU, new food labelling could empower consumers to support British farmers and improve animal welfare



New food labelling could empower consumers to support British farmers and



improve animal welfare

Now we have left the EU consumers will be able to have clearer information on labels so they can make more informed choices about the food they eat. This could help them to better identify and support high welfare standards or more easily choose to buy products from British farmers and producers.

To ensure the public can shape this potential new system so it is simple, cost-effective for businesses and supports the environment, the Government is launching a new Call for Evidence to seek their views. By doing so this work will gather information on the potential scope, regulation, format, and enforcement of a new labelling scheme, as well as the actual welfare standards that might underpin it, building on the existing voluntary assurance schemes in the UK.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

British farmers produce food to an exceptionally high standard of animal welfare, and consumers have come to expect nothing less.

Now that we have left the EU, we have an opportunity to look at food labelling – and whether the information that we give to shoppers helps them make informed choices.

This call for evidence is a first step in ensuring that we fully meet consumers' needs, and fly the flag for the high standards for which our farmers are renowned.

The Call for Evidence builds on commitments made during the passage of the Agriculture Act 2020, and our commitment to examine what can be done through labelling to promote high animal welfare and food standards.

The [labelling for animal welfare Call for Evidence](#) will be open for 12 weeks. All evidence will be used to inform any future policy proposals on labelling for animal welfare, and will also feed into a wider review of food labelling to inform the UK Government's Food Strategy White Paper. Any future policy proposals will be subject to further consultation. It relates to England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

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