

Construction nears on major A303 upgrade in Somerset

Ahead of construction starting on the scheme between Sparkford and Ilchester in September, Highways England will be updating communities and users on the latest progress and plans.

A virtual exhibition will be held this week where residents along the route can find out more and put questions to the project team.

Hannah Sanderson, Programme Manager for Highways England, said:

The scheme is incredibly important for Somerset's future, vital to the A303 / A358 corridor, and is part of the biggest investment in our road network for a generation alongside the A303 Stonehenge tunnel project.

From a project perspective, it's exciting that we are now close to works starting in September, with the scheme supporting economic growth and facilitating a growth in jobs and housing by creating a free-flowing and reliable connection between the south east and south west.

It will also tackle a long-standing bottleneck, reduce journey times to the south-west and improve traffic flows in that area at peak times and during peak seasons.

While closures will be kept to a minimum, I'm sure local residents will have questions around the latest plans and traffic management, so we encourage everyone to join the virtual exhibition.

The virtual exhibition will run from midday to 8pm on Thursday 22 July and Friday 23 July, where people will be able to post questions on a live chat.

You'll be able to visit the virtual exhibition with a link that will be available from Thursday 22 July on our [A303 Sparkford to Ilchester web page](#).

Anyone unable to log in on the day can leave a comment on the exhibition or contact us by emailing A303SparkfordtoIlchesterDuallying@highwaysengland.co.uk or calling 0300 123 5000. The exhibition will remain live and be regularly updated throughout the scheme build.

Lee Nathan, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) South West Regional Chairman, said:

Upgrading the single carriageway sections of this important route is key to supporting the south west economy, particularly as the

only alternative route via the M4 and M5 into the south west is already heavily congested.

FSB believes that more investment should be directed to improving key links on the A road network across the UK as a way of supporting our local regional economies.

As a result, we are wholeheartedly in support of this new scheme.

On an average day the road carries 23,500 vehicles, but numbers increase significantly in the summer, particularly at weekends, making journeys unreliable and unpredictable.

The upgrade, costing £130 to £160 million, is scheduled to be open to traffic in 2024 and further information events are planned in the future.

In the meantime, newsletters will be issued throughout the scheme and updates will be available at the [A303 Sparkford to Ilchester web page](#).

The upgrade aims to:

- improve the capacity of the road to reduce delays and queues that occur during peak hours and at key times of the year i.e. the height of summer
- support economic growth, facilitating growth in jobs and housing by providing a free-flowing and reliable connection between the south east and the south west
- make the road safer, by providing additional capacity and reducing driver stress. We'll make routes safer for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders in the area
- protect the environment and look for opportunities to improve it, minimising any unnecessary impact of the scheme on the surrounding natural and historic environment and landscape
- work with local communities to reduce the impact of the road on a sense of community severance, and look for ways to improve local peoples' quality of life
- make journey times more reliable and resilient, by providing more capacity it will become easier to manage traffic when incidents occur

In September, work will commence with site clearance and earthworks, and preparing the ground for construction, with traffic management not planned until early next year and minimal disruption to 2021 holiday traffic, especially around half term.

Main construction work will get under way in 2022, with closures kept to a minimum throughout the scheme. For those wishing to remain informed, a text alert system will be launching next year.

Further along the A303 corridor, archaeological fieldwork and preliminary work is due to start later this year on Highways England's transformational Amesbury to Berwick Down scheme past Stonehenge, with the five-year main construction phase expected to start by late 2022, early 2023.

In the meantime, we've been progressing the procurement process for the main works contract for the A303 Stonehenge scheme, and a preferred bidder is expected to be announced in early 2022.

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.

Clean Up, Green Up and Level Up: how to build a future city

Introduction

In 2007 the world passed a little-noticed but critical landmark: the point at which for the first time in history, more humans were living in towns and cities than in the countryside. In England 80% of us now live in urban areas, and the populations of many towns and cities have doubled over the past 20 years. Both England's urban environments, and our urban population, are continuing to grow.

In praise of cities

Cities are good things. They are more efficient at using resources, so they are a critical ingredient in securing a sustainable economy. They put out less carbon per person than rural areas, so they are critical in tackling climate change. They are centres of economic activity, knowledge and innovation. They produce most of the resources we need to create the cleaner, greener world we all want. And they offer social, educational, cultural and other opportunities that can be hard or impossible to access in many rural environments. It is not for nothing that the word civilisation comes from the Latin for city.

So what we want in future is not fewer cities but better ones: using resources much more efficiently, creating much less pollution for all, with more green and blue spaces to which all city-dwellers have equal access, so that our cities are a joy to live in for everyone. In short we need to make our cities what the UN Sustainable Development Goals say they should be: "inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

The state of the urban environment: good news – it's better than it was....

Successful towns and cities depend on the state of the urban environment. That is why it is the focus of a new report the Environment Agency is launching today. In many respects the environment is much better in our towns and cities than it was fifty years ago.

Cities are much better now at recycling and reusing the waste they create rather than dumping it in rivers or landfill: in 2019, waste recovery or reuse at the sites regulated by the Environment Agency improved to a record 74%. Urban air is far cleaner now than it was due to better regulation, legislation and technology. So is the water: the industrial revolution turned the rivers in our cities black and killed off most of their wildlife. Most urban rivers are now blue again and trout have returned to them.

There's more. Surprisingly large parts of our cities are not concrete-grey but grass-green. What is called "natural land cover" – grassland, scrub, parks, allotments, public gardens, playing fields, golf courses and other 'green' spaces – makes up some 30% of the urban area in England.

These green spaces aren't just places for city-dwellers to play, relax and enjoy nature. They also have major practical benefits. They remove air pollution, reduce noise, provide wildlife habitats, support biodiversity, absorb and store carbon, help keep cities cool, reduce flood risk by absorbing rainfall, support the local economy by attracting customers and investors to businesses near green space, provide a greater sense of place, foster social cohesion, and – partly by providing opportunities for recreation but mostly just by existing – improve people's mental and physical wellbeing. It would not be too fanciful to say that for the amount of good they do for cities and their inhabitants, there is literally nothing that beats a good green or blue space.

Bad news: things are not as good as they should be, and some are getting worse

But we shouldn't overdo the celebrations. Much of that progress has stalled in the last decade or so, and big challenges remain. Air pollution in some of our cities is still exceeding World Health Organisation guidelines. The quality of the water in our urban rivers is under new pressure from pollutants, population growth and the climate emergency. And the amount of green space in our cities is going down: in our urban areas in England it dropped from 63% in 2001 (including domestic gardens) to 55% in 2018.

Green and blue inequality

It gets worse. Whether you are benefiting from the green and blue space in most of our cities depends largely on who you are and where you live. Deprived communities have much less access.

Many city-dwellers do not live within easy walking distance of a local park, playing field, garden or other green space. Those who do tend to be the rich ones: 59% of households in the top 10% income bracket are within a 10-minute

walk of a publicly-accessible green space compared with just 35% in the bottom 10% income bracket. Moreover, the quality of parks, other green spaces and rivers is often lower in deprived areas, which means people derive less benefit from them. They are also less likely to visit them at all, because people will naturally avoid going to places which are unsafe, unloved or run-down.

There are also racial disparities: city communities with 40% or more residents from minority ethnic backgrounds have access to 11 times fewer green spaces locally than those comprising mainly white residents. It's not just green space: other disparities

It is no surprise that the benefits of city living are not equitably shared: since the first cities were built thousands of years ago, they never have been. Having money gives people the power to choose where they live, and given the choice most of us would prefer to live in clean green environments.

But the disadvantages poorer urban communities now suffer are not just lack of access to good quality green and blue space. In modern cities poorer communities also have higher exposure to air pollution, flood risk, poor water quality in rivers, and to the smell, noise and pollution that comes from industrial or waste sites. So poorer urban communities aren't just disadvantaged economically: they are also disadvantaged environmentally.

And because of the link between your environment and your health, poorer communities are also disadvantaged in health terms too. There is a clear correlation between life expectancy in the least and most deprived areas of the country. The gap in healthy life expectancy (years lived in good health) between the different areas of England is around 19 years. According to the Office of National Statistics, a man born in Richmond-upon-Thames can expect to live 71.9 years, compared with only 53.3 years for a man in Blackpool. A woman born in Wokingham can expect to live 72.2 years, compared to only 54.2 years in Nottingham.

Most of these inequalities are being exacerbated by the climate emergency as it brings more extreme weather, more damage to the environment and so more harm to people's health. We know that in developing countries, climate change does most damage to the most vulnerable, because they have the least capacity to adapt to its consequences. We also know they are also the people who bear least responsibility for causing the problem in the first place. A similar injustice is happening here. Deprived communities who have smaller carbon footprints and pollute less than wealthier communities often live in areas of higher pollution which are less resilient to the effects of climate change.

The solution: clean up, green up, and level up

So we are not yet where any of us wants to be. How then can we create cities that are genuinely inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable? Answer: clean up, green up, and level up. Clean up: while our towns and cities are much cleaner than they were, there is a lot more still to do to improve air quality, stop the pollution of rivers, tackle offensive waste sites and remediate land previously contaminated by industrial use. The responsibility

for pollution, and for making sure it doesn't happen, lies with those who pollute. But the Environment Agency is playing its part in tackling all those issues alongside the local authorities and others.

Green up: creating more and better green and blue spaces in our cities doesn't just have to mean creating new parks or public gardens. Often the best green and blue spaces, and the ones that tend to benefit the most deprived communities, are part of something else, and do many things at once. Putting grass on rooftops, creating ponds on small patches of grass between buildings, planting trees in the right place and so called Sustainable Drainage Systems all help reduce flooding, improve water quality in urban rivers and streams, enhance biodiversity and create wider benefits for people who live nearby. A flood defence doesn't have to be a concrete wall: it can be a green earth bank with flowers, trees, gardens, walkways and cycle tracks; or a grass-covered storage basin that turns from green to blue when it fills up in high rainfall, preventing nearby homes and businesses from flooding.

So more green and blue space would provide many benefits for those who live in cities. It would also help the whole nation's economy and health, because the NHS could save over £2 billion in treatment costs if everyone in England had equal access to good quality green space. And it would help the planet, because greener cities put out less carbon, helping tackle the climate emergency; and have more wildlife, helping tackle the biodiversity crisis.

Level up: the government is right to be focusing on levelling up. As I've sought to illustrate, the inequalities in this country are not just economic. Levelling up the environment so that it is better for everyone – rich and poor, black and white – is as important as levelling up the economic opportunities. And the two are linked: investing in a better environment, whether that's a park, a flood defence or a clean river, will also create jobs and growth. Since the worst environments tend to be in the poorest places, tackling them is a double win: it will make poorer communities both greener and richer.

How is as important as what

How we work is as important as what we do. We and other organisations like us must make sure that we pay full attention to fixing the problems where poorer urban communities live – because those problems tend to be worse and more harmful – and do not just focus on areas which are better off and better able to lobby the authorities. We need to be the Environment Agency for everyone in this country, not just for some.

And we can only create better places for local people if we actually listen to what they want, rather than simply impose what we think is the right answer. That is why the Environment Agency does a lot of consultation with local communities – on proposed new flood schemes, on plans for waste incinerators etc – and why we often do adjust our plans in the light of what we hear, sometimes radically.

But the Environment Agency is not yet listening as hard as we should to some

communities, particularly poorer, disadvantaged or ethnic minority communities. Nor – and this is part of the problem – are we yet doing well enough in recruiting, retaining and promoting staff from ethnic minorities. The EA is not alone in that: a 2017 report by the Policy Exchange think tank ranked ‘environment professionals’ as the second least ethnically diverse profession in England, after farming. We in the Environment Agency, and the environment sector as a whole, need to value workforce diversity as much as we value biodiversity.

The Environment Agency is trying to do something about that. We are seeking to ensure that we understand better the environmental threats that affect disadvantaged communities, like flooding and air pollution. We are seeking to build stronger partnerships with those communities, to help keep them safe when flooding happens and to design with them the better places to live that they and we want. Example: in Luton, we have constructed the Houghton Brook Flood Storage Area which directly benefits over 600 homes and businesses. Many of those benefiting are ranked within the 40% most deprived areas in the UK. And we are working to recruit more staff ourselves from urban communities, from disadvantaged backgrounds, and from ethnic minorities, so that we better represent, better understand and better serve the whole of modern Britain.

Conclusion

That’s over two thousand words. But I can sum up in only six words how our future cities should be: green and blue – and just too.

Jake Singleton: pioneering work in space

The 32-year-old US Air Force Captain from Utah, United States, is now preparing for his next adventure as was recently sworn in as a US Space Force Officer in the newly formed military service.

The dad-of-four said:

Sitting back and thinking about my job titles and what I do... I had several experiences over the past couple of years where I’ve just sat back and thought this is incredible.

I’ve got the greatest job in world and I can’t believe I’m doing this!

I don’t think I could have imagined this scenario and situation as just a kid interested in space.

The ceremony was particularly poignant as, due to pandemic restrictions, he was sworn in remotely at home with his wife and children on the sofa behind him.

He said it was extra special that people, who would not otherwise have been able to attend, could join on Zoom including his family in America. His father also served in the Air Force.

After completing his application for the Space Force the family man had their 4 year old son press the submit button while dressed up as an astronaut.

[The People Inside – Jake Singleton](#)

In his time with Dstl he has been working on space innovation projects that look to change the way the Ministry of Defence collaborates with companies and inventors of space technology.

Along with Dstl Space Programme lead Mike O'Callaghan, Jake was one of the leading forces behind the first International Space Pitch Day which aimed to utilise emergent technology and get new ideas to market as quickly as possible.

He said:

We worked with space start-ups and space ventures from all around the world, in a real Dragon's Den type style, we were able to receive these pitches and award these contracts.

Sometimes we can do it really quickly in months. Could we do it faster? Could we do it in a number of weeks? Could we do it in a day?

It was incredible working with Dstl and also the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA).

Ten companies from the UK, the US, India and Australia received contracts.

He said:

I think the most exciting thing is within the space programme today there is a lot of new exciting technologies emerging independent of government requirements in the commercial market.

We see these disrupting and changing the way we think about space.

Jake has always wanted to work in space and achieved a BS degree in mechanical engineering at Utah State University, then went on to get his MS degree in astronautical engineering at US Air Force Institute of Technology.

He added:

Coming out of my Masters programme and working at the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) on space technologies there, I actually found a resume that I put together for an English assignment in high school.

It said imagine where we will be in 10 years, what we will be doing and create a resume for it. So I had this astronaut's resume that said I was going to go and get a degree in aeronautical engineering and space and different things like that.

I don't think I realised what any of those meant and I think I looked up what the requirements were and I write those down on the resume.

It was really exciting as an adult to look at that and realise I was doing some of those things. I couldn't have imagined how cool and how incredible a job I could be doing today. It was kind of fun to see.

He added that, with NASA's recent commitment to having a permanent presence on the moon, space travel may be a realistic possibility for him in the coming years.

Last year, while at Dstl, Jake submitted his first application for the astronaut candidate program.

"This decade that we're in is the most exciting decade we will see in space. The advancement in technology is so rapid. We are breaking new boundaries every day, every year," he said.

[SIA publishes sector profile on recruitment and retention in the door supervision sector](#)

Press release

The SIA has today published a 'snapshot' profile of the door supervision sector. The report looks at employment issues in the sector. It draws on findings from recent surveys and past research conducted by the SIA. It also uses data from the SIA licensing system.



Security Industry Authority

Data from the SIA licensing system shows that the number of door supervisor licences and licence applications is the highest it has been in the last 10 years.

Responses to surveys undertaken by the SIA suggest that some companies within the sector have found it difficult to recruit and retain door supervisors.

Responses indicated that the main barriers to retention are:

- some door supervisors have found alternative work during the pandemic and are reluctant to return to the sector;
- some who have previously worked as door supervisors are reluctant to come off furlough pay.

Responses to surveys undertaken by the SIA also indicated that barriers to recruitment and retention are:

- low pay
- unsociable hours
- job insecurity
- high levels of physical and verbal abuse, training costs
- the licence application fee (application or renewal)

The full findings and data from this research can be found [here](#).

The report is the first in a series of private security industry profiles undertaken by the SIA. Further sector profiles will be published in due course.

Note to editors:

The Security Industry Authority is the organisation responsible for regulating the private security industry in the United Kingdom, reporting to the Home Secretary under the terms of the Private Security Industry Act 2001. The SIA's main duties are the compulsory licensing of individuals undertaking designated activities, and managing the voluntary Approved Contractor Scheme.

The SIA is not the employer of licence holders.

For further information about the Security Industry Authority or to sign up for email updates visit www.gov.uk/sia. The SIA is also on [Facebook](#) (Security Industry Authority) and [Twitter](#) (SIAuk).

[Government update on action taken to prevent deaths in custody](#)

News story

The update shows 65 recommendations have been implemented in full following Dame Elish Angiolini's 2017 Review.



The government has today (Tuesday 20 July) published an update on the significant work undertaken to prevent deaths in police custody in response to a major review.

The update shows that 65 recommendations have been implemented in full following Dame Elish Angiolini's 2017 Review of Deaths and Serious Incidents in Police Custody. A further 20 recommendations have been completed in part.

To date the government has:

- substantially reduced the use of police custody as a place of safety for people undergoing a mental health crisis, with a 98% reduction since 2012/13
- introduced a major package of reforms to improve the effectiveness of the police complaints and discipline systems in order to increase accountability
- rolled out liaison and diversion services to ensure the needs of vulnerable people in police custody are identified and addressed
- introduced legislation to increase the oversight and management of the use of force in mental health units, so that force is only ever used as a last resort.

Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice, Kit Malthouse said:

Every death in police custody is a tragedy which has a devastating impact on loved ones.

We have a zero-tolerance attitude towards these rare, but devastating incidents and I am pleased to see the substantive progress that had been made so far in tackling deaths in custody.

Dame Elish Angiolini's review has been a catalyst for change, and I am determined that we continue to hold organisations to account and improve support for families.

As part of the work to address Dame Elish's report, the Ministry of Justice has undertaken a range of work to make inquests more sympathetic to the needs of bereaved people, including updating materials to aid families throughout the coronial process.

The College of Policing has published guidelines for police on conflict management, including de-escalation and negotiations to promote safer resolutions to conflicts. The College has also updated their training to cover acute behavioural disturbance and introduced guidance on the role of a safety officer to monitor the use of restraint.

The government will continue to implement the Review's remaining recommendations, under the governance of the Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody (MBDC), and provide updates on progress to Parliament.

The full government update on our action to [prevent deaths in police custody](#)

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