

# [New video gives insight into scale of M6 bridge works](#)

The M6 will be closed in both directions at junction 10 on the weekend of 16 to 19 July to enable the beams to be put in place, creating a new bridge over the motorway.

The work marks a significant milestone in the £78 million transformation of the Walsall junction which will replace the 50-year-old bridges currently in place across the M6 and double the number of lanes around the junction from two to four.

A [video animation](#) shows the work that will take place which involves a 50m-high crane dropping the 130-tonne beams into place to help form the new north bridge.

Highways England and Walsall Council, supported by the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, have joined forces to fund the congestion-busting upgrade. Contractor John Sisk & Son is carrying out the work.

Both carriageways of the motorway will be closed from 8pm on Friday 16 July until 6am on Monday 19 July while the beam lift takes place to ensure the safety of workers and road users.

There will be an 'up and over' diversion for traffic which will leave the motorway at junction 10, travel over the roundabout and then re-join the M6 on the other side.

The work was due to place at the beginning of July but was postponed due to unforeseen circumstances impacting on the delivery of the beams.

Highways England Project Manager, David Reed, said:

We know this is a very busy junction and we would only close the motorway if absolutely necessary.

There are likely to be significant delays at times and would urge anyone travelling along the M6 this weekend or in the local area to look at alternative routes if possible and to allow extra time for journeys.

We are grateful to people for their understanding while we carry out these important improvements that will tackle the congestion that has plagued drivers, businesses and local communities for some time.

The beams for the south bridge will be lifted into place later in the summer and will also require the M6 to be closed. The old bridges will be

demolished later in the scheme.

The congestion at junction 10 was identified as one of the main transport issues facing the region in the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan.

As well as work on the junction itself, the westbound carriageway of the busy Black Country Route is being widened from two to three lanes from junction 10 to Marshlands Way.

For live traffic updates follow the [@HighwaysWMIDS](#) Twitter feed. The Highways England 24/7 customer contact centre team can also provide up-to-the minute information on 0300 123 5000.

## **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 than 80 million vaccines administered across the UK**

- More than 86% of adults have been vaccinated with a first dose
- All adults are eligible to get their second dose of a vaccine earlier after eight weeks

More than 80 million vaccines have been administered across the UK through the largest and most successful vaccination programme in NHS history.

A total of 80,072,121 doses have been administered in the UK, with 45,697,875 people receiving a first dose (86.8%) and 34,374,246 people receiving both doses (65.3%).

This includes over half (54%) of young people aged 18 to 24 in England who have received a first dose – just three weeks after the programme was opened to this age group.

Every adult in England has been offered at least one dose and the Prime Minister announced this week that the vaccination programme is accelerating further, with all adults able to reduce their vaccine dose interval from twelve to eight weeks. This will mean every adult has the chance to have two doses by mid-September.

The government announced this week that people who have been vaccinated with both doses will not have to quarantine on their return to England from an amber list country from 19 July, providing they received their second jab at least 14 days prior.

From 16 August, double vaccinated people will also no longer be legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We have now delivered over 80 million vaccine doses across the UK – this a phenomenal achievement. Thank you to everyone who has come forward for their jab. It is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones

Analysis from Public Health England (PHE) and the University of Cambridge suggests that vaccines have so far prevented an estimated 8.5 million infections and 30,000 deaths in England alone.

Data from PHE shows COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against hospitalisation from the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant. The analysis suggests the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 96% effective and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is 92% effective against hospitalisation after two doses.

PHE data released today shows that vaccines are around 74% effective against getting symptomatic COVID-19 for people who are immunosuppressed. This provided similar protection to those not in an at risk group.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

This is an astonishing accomplishment – in around seven months the NHS in every corner of the country has administered 80 million vaccines.

The success is down to the incredible dedication of NHS staff, GPs, pharmacists, volunteers, local authorities, civil servants and the armed forces – the country applauds your commitment to saving lives.

As we begin to fully reopen society, it's absolutely crucial everybody gets their first and second jabs so we can return to normality as quickly as possible.

The UK government secured access to more than 500 million doses of the most promising COVID-19 vaccines early on behalf of the entire UK, crown

dependencies and overseas territories. The UK's medicine's regulator, the MHRA, was the first in the world to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines, allowing the rapid deployment of vaccines across the country and ensuring the UK has one of the fastest vaccination programmes in the world.

Vaccinated people are far less likely to get COVID-19 with symptoms and even more unlikely to get serious COVID-19, to be admitted to hospital, or to die from it and there is growing evidence that they are less likely to pass the virus to others.

YouGov polling also shows the UK continues to top the list of nations where people are willing to have a COVID-19 vaccine or have already been vaccinated and ONS data published on 2 July shows that more than 9 in 10 (96%) adults reported positive sentiment towards the vaccine.

Vaccines are available free of charge and from thousands of vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England and vaccinations are taking place at sites including mosques, community centres and football stadiums.

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## **Media Freedom Coalition statement on anniversary of inaugural Global Conference for Media Freedom**

Two years ago, the United Kingdom and Canada hosted the first Global Conference for Media Freedom in London, United Kingdom, to respond with a united front to ongoing challenges faced by journalists and media workers throughout the world.

The event marked the beginning of the Media Freedom Coalition, a significant international effort by governments to protect and promote media freedom. The first members of the coalition signed the Global Pledge on Media Freedom, a written commitment to promote media freedom domestically and work together internationally.

On the second anniversary of the Global Conference for Media Freedom, the undersigned members of the Media Freedom Coalition today reiterate their commitment to expand efforts to defend media freedom worldwide.

We acknowledge the impact of the pandemic on media freedom, in particular that this crisis has been used to put in place undue restrictions on free and independent media.

Co-hosted by Canada and Botswana, we reaffirmed our commitment to protecting

media freedom, including in the context of COVID-19, during the second Global Conference for Media Freedom on November 16, 2020.

We condemn intimidation, harassment and violence against journalists. We commend the crucial role played by journalists and media workers and pay tribute to those who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession.

We welcome the contribution of the independent High-Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom and appreciate its ongoing work to advise governments on preventing and reversing repression of media freedom. We recognize the work of the Global Media Defence Fund, administered by UNESCO, in enhancing journalists' legal protection and improving media freedom through supporting investigative journalism and strategic litigation.

Today, we recall and reaffirm the commitments we made in the Global Pledge on Media Freedom: to increase coordination locally through our diplomatic missions around the world, to defend media freedom and to increase support to and engagement with journalists and independent media under threat.

Our countries are committed to working together to protect media freedom.

Signed: Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Belize, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, the United States

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## [Cutting crime through family ties in north-east prisons](#)

Press release

Efforts to drive down crime in the north-east by helping prisoners and their children to maintain contact are underway, thanks to a funding boost from the Prison Service.

Prisoners who maintain family ties are nearly 40% less likely to reoffend.



- New project aims to cut reoffending by boosting parent-child contact
- Offenders who maintain family ties are less likely to commit further crimes
- Seven prisons to benefit in the region

More than £120,000 has been awarded to the charity [Nepacs](#), allowing children who want to sustain a relationship with a parent in prison, to stay in touch and helping cut reoffending from prisoners.

Evidence shows that offenders who maintain family ties are nearly [40% less likely to reoffend](#), demonstrating the role families can play in keeping the wider community safe.

Additionally, independent findings suggest better addressing the needs of prisoners' children would help [break the cycle of crime](#) in families.

Alex Chalk, Prisons Minister, said:

Keeping in touch with those closest to us can play a huge role in our wellbeing, and we know that prisoners who maintain those ties are much less likely to reoffend.

The funding for this work will help prisoners rehabilitate and in turn keep our communities safe.

Amanda Lacey, Chief Executive of Nepacs, said:

The impact of separation can be devastating for parents and children, while many find the legal implications surrounding child contact extremely difficult to navigate.

Our work helps women in Low Newton understand their rights and get the support they need to become informed and involved in decisions which affect them and their children.

The new scheme – the Parental Rights in Prison project – also helps prisoners understand complex issues, such as contact arrangements, through weekly drop-in sessions and monthly legal rights workshops with a family law solicitor.

The programme helps parents in prison understand the law on child contact, including the seriousness and potential implications of breaching child contact arrangements and help parents accept when a court has decided that total separation is in the best interests of them and their children.

The programme's workshops are based at women's prison HMP and YOI Low Newton, with learning and support to be provided across the region's seven prisons.

## Notes to editors

Published 9 July 2021

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# [Quality assurance of pension calculator tool](#)

## News story

GAD has completed a quality assurance exercise on an online pension calculator tool. It's from Money Helper and it helps calculate people's likely retirement income.



The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has completed a quality assurance (QA) exercise on [a pension calculator tool](#).

The online tool is provided as part of the guidance offered by Money Helper (formerly the Money Advice Service) and it calculates people's likely retirement income.

## Quality Assurance

Modelling is essential to work in government. There is increased emphasis on using appropriate assumptions and methodologies, and making sure the models are fit for purpose.

Successful QA exercises can lead to confidence in specific and varied models across a range of disciplines.

GAD has detailed expertise in QA work which is important as policy and decisions are based on models which are deemed to be successful.

## Checking and reviewing

The QA work in this instance was designed to check the pension calculator tool is working as expected for Money Helper. The GAD team:

- checked if the tool is accurate and consistent with the documented methodology
- reviewed the methodology, by checking if it's still suitable since the initial development and consistent with the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) conduct of business rules
- undertook user testing to improve the experience for people who are using the tool

## Provides Confidence

As a result of the QA exercise, the GAD team found the tool was largely fit for purpose. The QA exercise provides confidence to Money Helper that it can be used by the public on their website.

We provided some suggested ways to improve the tool which Money Helper is intending to action.

## Providing assurance

GAD actuary Chris Witney led on the project. He said: "It's great to provide assurance to clients that their models are fit for purpose and provides confidence in their future use.

"Actuaries are well suited to quality assurance work. This is because of the review process we undertake as standard for actuarial work."