

Common Platform live in more courts in the midlands and north-west England

Common Platform is now live at courts in Chester, Warrington, Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stafford and Cannock. These steps mark the start of the move from the early adopter phase of introducing the system to rolling it out nationally across England and Wales.

The latest sites to go live with Common Platform are:

- Chester Crown Court
- Warrington Magistrates' Court
- Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Magistrates' Court (North Staffordshire Justice Centre)
- Stafford Crown Court
- Cannock Magistrates' Court

Common Platform went live in these courts on Monday 29 March 2021, with the first overnight cases being managed on the system from 30 March 2021. Initially, it will be used for a small number of cases with case volumes building over time. System performance will be closely monitored, making sure everything works as anticipated, before gradually increasing capacity.

Our Courts and Tribunals service centres (CTSCs) will support the magistrates' courts using Common Platform with pre and post-hearing administrative support.

HMCTS has recently contacted defence firms and chambers in these regions to remind them to register for Common Platform accounts before attending any of these courts to join hearings.

Paul McGladrigan, Head of Crime for the north-west, said:

Working with Common Platform in Chester and Warrington gives us the opportunity to play an important role in the early stages of the use of this unique new system. Our operational experience and feedback will be fed into future development, and into the training and support which will benefit colleagues in other courts. We can make a real contribution to further national rollout over the rest of this year, which will bring such benefits to the criminal justice system as a whole.

I'd like to thank all of my colleagues – those using the system locally in Warrington and Chester, and those in the Common Platform implementation team – all of whom have worked so hard to make this possible. Making a change of this significance is never easy, but their dedication to making it a success even in the context of the pandemic, and such uncertain times for all of us, makes us all

proud.

Common Platform is a new digital system designed to transform the way the criminal justice system uses, manages and shares case information. It allows the participants in a criminal case – including the police, the judiciary, court staff, defence and prosecution, probation and witness services – to access the most up-to-date case details and documents, through a user-friendly, secure web application.

The rollout of Common Platform will continue throughout 2021, with more courts set to go live in April in the midlands, Wales, the north-west, the north-east and the south-west.

We regularly update the [full the list of courts where Common Platform is now operational](#).

[Fusion research partnership agreed between UKAEA and The University of Manchester](#)

News story

The agreement will see new research groups in the key areas of tritium and digital engineering.



Online signing ceremony between UKAEA and The University of Manchester

UKAEA is expanding its research links with The University of Manchester with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two organisations.

UKAEA CEO Professor Ian Chapman took part in an online ceremony today with officials from Manchester, including Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell, the

university's President & Vice-Chancellor, and Professor Francis Livens, Director of the Dalton Nuclear Institute.

The partnership will see new research groups established by Manchester in the key areas of tritium and digital engineering. Tritium – one of the two fuels commercial fusion devices will use – is a growing area of study, boosted by UKAEA's new H3AT tritium research facility at Culham. Digital engineering is a highly promising computer-based approach that allows engineers to arrive at final versions of systems quicker and cheaper than traditional methods.

UKAEA works with more than 25 universities around the country on physics, materials science and engineering areas. The research generated by these collaborations is playing an important role in accelerating progress towards commercial fusion.

Manchester has a long history of excellence in nuclear research, and its [Dalton Nuclear Institute](#) is one of the largest and most advanced of its type in the UK.

Professor Francis Livens, Director of the Dalton Nuclear Institute at The University of Manchester, said: "This agreement in fusion complements and builds on our long-term strength in nuclear research. It will allow us to undertake important new research and training activities in Tritium Science & Technology and Digitalisation, and extend our exciting collaboration with UKAEA."

Martin O'Brien, Head of University Liaison at UKAEA, said: "Many universities already work with us on a wide range of research topics. We are excited that The University of Manchester will now expand greatly its work with us in two key areas where progress is needed to deliver a fusion power station."

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[Kick-start for summer school and activities](#)

Young people in England will benefit from a series of summer activities and academic opportunities targeted at those who have suffered the most disruption to their education as a result of the pandemic.

The government has today (Tuesday 30 March) published new guidance for secondary schools to help progress plans for summer schools once they return from the Easter break, using the £200 million funding announced in February.

Summer schools will help pupils who have experienced the most disruption as a

result of the pandemic. Guidance will provide advice ranging from academic support to sports and activities, mental health and wellbeing advice, and guidance for accessing premises.

Alongside this, the government will also work with a national supply contractor to give extra support for councils to deliver the Government's expanded Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF), who will help to scale up plans for the summer, building on the foundations laid by councils, sporting organisations, charities and the voluntary sector when it kicks off during the Easter holidays from next week.

Following last summer's HAF programme, which supported around 50,000 children across 17 local authorities, the programme will launch in every council across the country next week in line with remaining national restrictions, targeted primarily at those who are eligible for free school meals.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I know many students, parents, carers and teachers are in equal measures anxious and excited about what this summer might bring.

That's why we're providing clarity, issuing guidance as early as possible, so we can make the most of these opportunities. It will give local authorities, parents, carers and teachers the notice they need so they can make their summer plans to prepare large numbers of incoming year 7s for their first experience of secondary school, and to make sure the most disadvantaged children can make the most of the school holidays through the Holiday Activities and Food programme.

I am confident this summer of enrichment and engagement in academic work will be a great success, tailored to local circumstances by their local authorities and also the wonderful heads and teachers who best understand the needs of their students.

The Department for Education is also publishing today the Conditions of Grant for schools and local authorities on how to use their Pupil Premium funding, expected to increase to £2.5 billion in total next year.

From September 2021, schools will be asked to show how their spending decisions are backed by evidence, and will need to publish an annual pupil premium strategy to make sure funding is targeted towards the most disadvantaged pupils.

Schools will be asked to sign up to run summer schools by the end of April, and confirm their plans in June. They will have the flexibility to target the funding to whoever they think could benefit most.

The government continues to encourage schools to consider summer school provision primarily for pupils making the transition into year 7, as this can be a challenging time for some students. A two week summer school can give

pupils the opportunity to kick start any education recovery before they start a new school, as well as supporting their wellbeing through sports and activities.

Guidance is also available for local authorities to help them make the most of their HAF clubs during the school holidays. While Easter holiday club provision has naturally been affected by the ongoing pandemic, many areas will be offering some valuable face-to-face provision, and other areas are supporting families remotely. This Easter provision is an important milestone as local authorities prepare for their major delivery of the programme this summer. Wider support for vulnerable families is also available from the £229 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme, which has been recently expanded to cover the Easter period.

[Taking to the roads for the first time in a while? Here's some advice from a Highways England traffic officer](#)

If you are using your vehicle for the first time in a while, Highways England Traffic Officer Dave Harford has some important advice.

Some cars have been rarely used in recent months, so it's essential to make sure they're fit for purpose. You may also feel out of practice if you haven't driven recently.

Any vehicle that hasn't been on the road for some time will need a thorough check to ensure it is roadworthy and safe and while you should minimise travel at Easter now is a good time to give your car a spring clean and make sure it's ready.

Dave, who appears in this [Highways England vehicle checks video](#) said:

Even though we should be minimising travel following the latest government advice, if you haven't driven for a while due to lockdown, you might feel a bit strange getting back behind the wheel.

Checking your tyres, oil, screenwash, lights and fuel doesn't take long – but it will help keep you and your loved ones safe.

If meeting friends and family outdoors this Easter, you should look to minimise your travel where possible. For example, you should avoid making unnecessary trips and combine trips where possible.

If you do need to travel, you should plan ahead, travel at quiet times, regularly sanitise your hands, wear a face covering unless exempt and, where possible, keep your distance to ensure you and others can travel safely. In a snap Twitter poll by Highways England, more than 84 per cent of respondents said that they last checked their vehicle between one to three months ago.

Here are some simple regular car checks that drivers can do to help avoid breakdowns:

Check tyres

Before setting off on a long/significant journey, check your tyre pressures are suitable for the load and the condition of your tyres, including the spare. Look out for cuts or wear and make sure that you change your tyres at 2mm because while tyres should have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm, which is the legal limit. Changing them ahead of that point is always good practice.

Check engine oil

Use your dipstick to check oil regularly and before any long journey, and top up if needed. Take your car back to the garage if you're topping up more than usual.

Check water

To ensure you have good visibility, always keep your screen wash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen.

Check lights

If your indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights or brake lights are not functioning properly, you are putting yourself and your family at risk. In addition, light malfunctions can be a reason for your vehicle to fail its MOT.

Check fuel

Before setting out, check your fuel levels and make sure you have enough to get to your destination.

Four million journeys are made every day on the country's busiest roads – motorways and major A-roads – and most are incident-free. But around 600 journeys per day involve a breakdown, and when you are on a busy motorway that can be frightening.

In 2019 there were almost 230,000 reported breakdowns across the Highways England network including around 207,500 on motorways. In the 12 months from June 2019, around 40,000 breakdowns were recorded as being due to tyre issues while more than 6,000 incidents were a result of vehicles running out of fuel.

To help people understand what to do in the event of an unexpected vehicle

breakdown, Highways England has recently launched a multi-million-pound public information drive, giving motorists clear advice about what to do in an emergency.

The Go Left campaign has been backed by leading road safety organisations.

The advice to drivers who experience a problem with their vehicle is to leave the motorway if possible. But if that is not possible, Highways England recommends the following:

Go left:

- put your left indicator on and move into an emergency area, onto a hard shoulder, motorway service area, left-hand verge or A-road lay-by
- switch your hazard warning lights on, even during the day. If it's dark, use side lights and in poor visibility use fog lights as well
- on a motorway without a hard shoulder, it should be possible for most vehicles experiencing a problem to reach an emergency area. These are regularly spaced and are marked by a clearly visible orange road surface and blue signs featuring an orange SOS telephone symbol

Get safe:

- if it is safe to do so, and you can get out with any passengers, exit your vehicle on the side furthest from traffic. If it is not safe to do so, stay in your vehicle and wait for help
- keep well away from moving traffic and your own vehicle. Get behind a safety barrier where there is one, and where it is safe to do so. If you're on a verge, be aware of any unseen hazards such as uneven ground or debris

Get help:

- contact Highways England on 0300 123 5000 and then a breakdown recovery provider
- if you are unable to exit your vehicle and get to a safe place, have stopped in a live traffic lane or feel your life is in danger, stay in your vehicle with your seatbelts and hazard lights on and call 999 immediately

Highways England's customer contact centre has people on hand 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to help. Drivers should keep the Highways England number – 0300 123 5000 – in their phones in case of emergency.

Visit our website for advice about [what to do in a breakdown](#).

Traffic Officer Dave Harford offers more advice about what to do in an emergency in the video [what to do in the event of a breakdown](#).

Find more advice online at the [Think! road safety site](#)

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.

[RWM celebrate success at industry awards](#)

News story

RWM is celebrating a prestigious industry award for our work to improve gender balance and diversity across the workforce.



At the annual Women in Nuclear event (WiN), held online, we were judged winners of the Industry Charter Signatory of the Year Award which recognises efforts to improve equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) in our organisation as well as across the industry.

We have previously been shortlisted for the award after introducing initiatives to promote ED&I. Our commitments include working alongside others in the industry to develop new policies such as flexible working, awareness-raising focused on bullying and harassment and embedding best practice. Our workforce is now 35% female, building towards the UK industry target of 40% by 2030, as outlined in the [government's Nuclear Sector Deal](#).

Karen Wheeler, RWM's Chief Executive, said:

Winning this award is a fantastic recognition of RWM's contribution

to improving gender balance both within our own organisation as well as across the nuclear industry. We consider diversity to be an essential part of creating vibrant and forward-thinking teams, where everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive and develop, and where a diversity of thought helps us to deliver innovative and high-quality work. This award recognises the huge strides we have been taking as an organisation and my personal congratulations go to all the whole team from RWM.

Separately at the event, volunteers on the Oxfordshire-based WiN central regional team collected the Regional Innovation Award. The team of volunteers includes four staff from RWM who work to attract women into the industry with outreach events such as school and college visits.

WiN UK, led by nuclear sector volunteers, aims to increase the number of girls and women studying science, engineering, technology or maths subjects and attract them to a career in the nuclear sector, support retention and progression of women already working in the sector and to promote dialogue with the nuclear industry, the public and government on gender balance issues.

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