

# £200 million Mottram bypass reaches major milestone

A public consultation on the scheme is now being planned for this winter, and a planning application is due to be submitted next year. If the plans are approved by the government then work on the project could start by spring 2023.

Around 25,000 vehicles currently travel along the A57 through Mottram every day, including over 2,000 HGVs. The village is on the key 25-mile trans-Pennine route between Manchester and Sheffield, connecting the M67 in the North West to the M1 in Yorkshire.

The new dual carriageway would run from the end of the M67 (junction 4) and through a new underpass to the north of Mottram in Longdendale. The road would then join the A57 east of the junction with the A6018 (Black Moor).

A new single carriageway road is also being planned to link the A57 from Mottram Moor to Woolley Bridge, taking traffic away from the current route of the A57 along Woolley Lane.

Andy Dawson, Highways England's project manager, said:

We're pleased to have a contractor on board for the bypass which will take traffic away from Mottram in Longdendale, and provide quicker, safer and more reliable journeys for thousands of drivers every day.

The bypass is part of a series of improvements we're planning to improve journeys on the trans-Pennine route between Manchester and Sheffield, along the A57, A628 and A616.

We can now start the detailed design work for the bypass and expect to be able to hold a public consultation on our proposals this winter.

Last week Highways England unveiled plans to deliver £14bn of projects over the next five years, increasing the quality, capacity and safety of the motorways and major A roads that have helped keep the country going during Covid-19 pandemic.

Almost £11bn will also go into improving everyday journeys by repairing and replacing parts of the strategic road network which connects the country, largely built in the 1960s and 70s.

Four major road schemes are due to be completed in the North West by spring 2025, and another five major projects are planned to start construction including the Mottram bypass.

Phil Clifton, Managing Director of Balfour Beatty's Highways business, said:

We are pleased to contribute to the development of the local area by connecting communities and bringing additional social value through the use of local suppliers and supporting employment opportunities within the area; helping to leave a lasting legacy in the communities in which we work.

Work also started earlier this year to improve the flow of traffic and increase capacity at Westwood roundabout in Tankersley, on the stretch of the Manchester to Sheffield route near the M1 in South Yorkshire.

Highways England is widening the approach roads at the junction and adding an extra lane on the roundabout to increase capacity, as well as installing traffic lights to help reduce congestion and make journeys more reliable.

New electronic road signs are also being installed along the A628 (Woodhead Pass) to provide drivers with early warnings of closures due to bad weather or other incidents.

See our website for more details on the schemes taking place along the trans-Pennine:

[A57 Trans-Pennine upgrade](#)

[A628 maintenance and improvement programme](#)

### **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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## **[Stephen Lightfoot to become Chair](#)**

Press release

Stephen Lightfoot will become Chair of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) from 1 September 2020.



Stephen Lightfoot has been appointed as the Agency's new Chair from 1 September 2020. He succeeds Prof Sir Michael Rawlins GBE, Kt who has been the Chair of the Agency Board since December 2014.

Stephen has been a Non-Executive Director of the Agency since September 2015 and is also Deputy Chair of Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust and Non-Executive Chair of Sussex Primary Care Limited.

Before joining the Board, Stephen had a 30-year career in the life sciences industry working on the development and commercialisation of a wide range of medicines and medical devices in UK and global healthcare companies. His most recent executive roles were General Manager of the global pharmaceutical diagnostics business of GE Healthcare, Managing Director of the UK pharmaceutical business of Daiichi Sankyo and Commercial Director of the UK pharmaceutical and medical device business of Schering Healthcare.

Stephen Lightfoot said:

I feel very privileged to have been appointed as the fourth Chair of the MHRA Board and to follow in the illustrious footsteps of Sir Alasdair Breckenridge, Sir Gordon Duff and Sir Michael Rawlins, as we embark on the next chapter for the Agency.

The Agency has a world class reputation and my ambition is for us to become an "enabler" in the UK health system by developing new regulatory processes which are proportionate, evidence-based and transparent, so that patients can gain earlier and safer access to new medical products than ever before.

Sir Michael Rawlins said:

It has been my honour to chair an Agency whose work touches the lives of everyone in the UK and which makes a major contribution to safeguarding public health across the UK and beyond. This has been clearly demonstrated over recent months with our staff using their wealth of talent and commitment to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Foreign Sec to press for renewed dialogue in Israel and OPTs

- The Foreign Secretary's official visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories will involve meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders – Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas.
- Dominic Raab will emphasise the UK's strong and enduring commitment to Israel's security and stress the necessity of a negotiated two-state solution to realise justice and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. He will also stress the need for a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and wider cooperation on development, trade and coronavirus.
- This week's visit comes following the historic normalisation of UAE-Israeli relations and the suspension of Israeli annexation plans.

In light of the normalisation of relations between the UAE and Israel and the suspension of the annexation of the West Bank, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is visiting Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories this week to press for renewed dialogue between their governments and reinforce UK commitment to preventing annexation and pursuing a negotiated two-state solution.

He will also use his trip to Israel to emphasise the UK's commitment to Israel's security and to our strong and enduring relationship. The visit comes following the announcement that the UAE and Israel would normalise relations; a move the UK welcomed as a much-needed boost for peace in the region.

Israel also announced earlier this month that it would suspend plans to annex parts of the West Bank. The UK had been calling for this for some time, with the Prime Minister warning that annexation would jeopardise the progress that Israel has made in improving relations with the Arab and Muslim world.

The UK has consistently encouraged a solution that allows justice and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. Ahead of his visit, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

"The UK remains committed to Israel's security and stability, and the recent normalisation of relations between Israel and the UAE was an important moment for the region.

"Israel's suspension of annexation is an essential step towards a more peaceful Middle East. It is important to build on this new dynamic, and

ultimately only the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority can negotiate the two state solution required to secure lasting peace.”

In Israel, the Foreign Secretary will meet his counterpart, Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, after which he will hold bilateral talks with Minister of Defense and Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz, followed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Mr Raab will reiterate the UK’s commitment to Israeli security and welcome the recent suspension of annexation plans.

In Ramallah, the Foreign Secretary will meet the Palestinian leadership, President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh. He will reaffirm UK opposition to annexation – which is illegal under international law – and call on the Palestinians to resume co-operation with Israel and pursue direct negotiations, as a step towards a negotiated two-state solution and a viable, sovereign Palestinian state.

The UK does not underestimate the challenges to reaching a negotiated two-state solution, but the Foreign Secretary’s visit will affirm Britain’s willingness to help facilitate a return to Israeli-Palestinian dialogue as a step towards achieving a lasting, peaceful solution for both peoples.

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## [Deal between Visa and Plaid given the go-ahead](#)

The decision by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) follows a Phase 1 review in which it investigated several possible ways the deal could harm competition.

Visa International Service Association (Visa) is a global leader in electronic payments. Plaid Inc. (Plaid) is a US-based technology platform provider that builds connectivity infrastructure, which enables digital apps to connect with a user’s bank accounts.

In the UK, Plaid offers payment initiation services (PIS). These enable a consumer to make real-time account-to-account payments directly from a merchant’s app or website, providing an alternative to paying online using a credit card or debit card.

Visa announced in January 2020 that it had agreed to buy Plaid in a deal worth \$5.3 billion. While Plaid is a relatively small player in the UK today, the CMA carefully considered its prospects for future growth within the payment services sector.

The CMA’s investigation primarily focused on how the deal could affect competition in the UK consumer-to-business electronic payments sector in which Visa, through its card-based payments and Plaid, through its PIS-

enabled payments, are both active.

PIS-enabled payments remain at a relatively nascent stage within the UK but are increasingly gaining traction, in large part as a result of the open banking regime.

The CMA found that Plaid would have been an increasing competitive threat to Visa in future, but that it is only one of a number of PIS providers already active in the UK, with several of these, such as TrueLayer, Tink, Token.io and Yapily, already possessing similar, or stronger, competitive capabilities than Plaid.

On this basis, the CMA concluded that in the UK Visa would continue to face sufficient competition from PIS-enabled payments, and other types of services enabling consumer-to-business payments, after the merger.

The CMA also considered whether Visa would be able to leverage its strong position in card-based payments to drive Plaid's rivals out of the market by supplying a combined offering for card-based payments and PIS-enabled payments.

Here, the CMA concluded that the combined Visa-Plaid business would not have the ability to push other providers out of the market, principally because customers often use multiple suppliers for their payment options. Rival providers of PIS would also be able to enter into arrangements, such as mergers or partnerships, with other payments providers to acquire customers.

As part of its assessment, the CMA examined a wide range of evidence, including thousands of internal documents detailing the companies' strategic plans, and submissions from numerous customers, competitors and merchants. To assist with its analysis, it also made use of the CMA's existing expertise from the Retail Banking Market Investigation and the implementation of open banking in the UK.

For more information, including a summary of the CMA's decision, please visit the [Visa International Service Association / Plaid Inc. merger inquiry page](#).

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## [Early years support package to help close Covid language gap](#)

Reception-age children will benefit from a multi-million pound package of funding to boost their early language skills.

Schools are being urged to sign up for an early years 'catch up' programme focused on raising outcomes in speaking and language skills among young pupils whose education has been disrupted by Covid-19 at a crucial time for

their development.

Up to £9 million is available for the programme to provide schools with training and resources, helping them deliver one-to-one and small-group support for five-year-olds whose spoken language skills may have suffered as a result of the pandemic.

The investment is part of the National Tutoring Programme, a key plank of the Government's £1 billion Covid catch-up package [announced in June](#). Every state funded school which has a Reception class [will be invited to apply for this support](#), with priority given to schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils.

Children's Minister Vicky Ford said:

Nurseries and other early years settings have played a huge part in keeping our youngest children safe and supported throughout the pandemic, but too many children have missed out on education at a crucial point in their development.

Ahead of every pupil returning to the classroom full-time in September, we're increasing the support available to get them back on track and ready to learn.

We cannot afford for our youngest children to lose out, which is why this package of support is focused on improving early language skills for the Reception children who need it most, and especially those whose long-term outcomes have been affected by time out of education.

Research shows that children who start school with poor vocabulary are twice as likely to be unemployed as an adult, so this investment adds to the significant body of work by the Department for Education to tackle this inequality and narrow the gap.

The programme being announced today (Monday 24 August) – known as the Nuffield Early Language Intervention – builds on work to improve the home learning environment in the years before a child begins Reception and raise the quality of early years education. 96% of childcare providers are now rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.

Alongside this, the Department has also confirmed supplementary funding of more than £23 million for Maintained Nursery Schools for the summer term 2021 to enable local authorities to provide them with stability while the Department confirms a long-term solution.

Maintained Nursery Schools often care for higher numbers of disadvantaged pupils most at risk of falling behind, and – as a result of being required to have a headteacher, a governing body and qualified staff – tend to have higher running costs. Confirmation of funding for the summer term will provide clarity for the full academic year ahead of longer-term arrangements

being set out in the Government's Spending Review.

It builds on the significant financial support provided by the Government over the past six months to provide stability and reassurance for the early years sector – including 'block-buying' childcare places for the rest of this year at the level they would have been funded before Covid-19, regardless of how many children are attending. Nurseries, childminders and preschools will also benefit from a planned £3.6 billion funding in 2020-21 for free early education and childcare places.

Josh Hillman, Director of Education at the Nuffield Foundation, said:

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention has been proven effective at improving children's language skills, which are essential for building the foundations of literacy and learning. It is necessary now more than ever, as schools try to help pupils most at risk of falling behind. Having supported the development and trialling of NELI and seen its positive effects, the Nuffield Foundation is delighted that the DfE is enabling children in so many primary schools across the country to benefit.

Professor Becky Francis, CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation, said:

Whether or not a child learns to communicate effectively at a young age directly impacts their life chances.

Our trials have shown the Nuffield Early Language Intervention to be a low-cost way to boost young children's speaking and listening skills. The proven strength of its impact makes it an exciting prospect to support young children whose language skills have been most affected by school and nursery closures.

The one-to-one support for Reception pupils is part of the Government's investment in tutoring, worth £350 million and part of the wider £1 billion Covid catch up fund to directly tackle the impact of lost teaching time. This package also includes a one-off grant of £650 million, to be shared across state primary and secondary schools over the 2020/21 academic year in recognition that all young people have lost time in education as a result of the pandemic, regardless of their income or background.