

Highways England puts the bins out for roadside collections in South West

The Government company, which is responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the country's motorways and major A roads, has pumped £80,000 into an initiative to help keep counties in the South West beautiful.

Councils are responsible for clearing litter from the majority of A roads, and after local authorities in the South West identified the worst littered laybys in their areas, Highways England has installed bins and 'keep it tidy' signs in 14 laybys, to encourage drivers not to litter.

The scheme follows the installation of layby signage along the A30 and A38 in Devon and Cornwall last year, and the initiative is not only targeted at reducing the amount of roadside litter, and improving the lives of both communities and motorists, but it is also aimed at providing a time and cost saving for local authorities.

Chris Regan, South West Head of Service Delivery for Highways England, said:

Litter is unsightly and a threat to wildlife and the environment.

It's a safety hazard for drivers and roadworkers risk their lives collecting it. That's besides the cost which would be better spent on maintaining our roads.

We're hoping this layby work will make a difference, for both communities and our local authority partners. And our advice to drivers is clear: please use the bins, heed the signage, and don't drop litter. Keep a bag in your car to store litter until you can dispose of it responsibly.

The partnership with Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire, Bath & North East Somerset, Tewkesbury Borough, Gloucester City and Forest of Dean Councils is tackling litter along the A36, A303, A46, A4 and A40.

Councillor Bridget Wayman, Wiltshire Council Cabinet Member for Highways, said:

We are pleased this initiative to reduce litter on Wiltshire's major roads has been completed and we look forward to seeing the impact these bins and signs have, as lockdown eases and people start to travel more.

Wiltshire is a beautiful county and we are committed to keeping it that way, so please, use these bins and help to keep our laybys litter free.

Councillor Steve Reade, South Gloucestershire Council Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and the Strategic Environment, said: "We share our residents' desire to see the South Gloucestershire countryside looking green and its streets clean, and we know that overwhelmingly people do the right thing when we make it easier for them.

This Highways England investment is most welcome as it further demonstrates that keeping our world clean and tidy is something we all need to play our part in. There can be no excuse for littering on the roadside, or anywhere else, as the financial cost to us as a council and the environmental cost to everyone is simply too high.

The scheme includes the following hot spots:

- A303: Longbarrow eastbound; Berwick St James westbound and eastbound
- A36: Berkley northbound; Crockerton northbound and southbound; Cley Hill southbound
- A40: Highnam westbound; Birdwood eastbound, Longford southbound; Churcham westbound
- A46: Bath northbound and southbound
- A4: Bath westbound

Around 200,000 bags of litter are collected from Highways England's motorways every year, figures have shown, and the company will be taking part in Keep Britain Tidy's Great British September Clean (11-27 September) following the cancellation of the Great British Spring Clean.

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.

[Contraflow keeps motorway open as huge gantries installed for M6 upgrade](#)

Press release

Six motorway gantries which will house up-to-date technology to improve

safety have been put up on a section of the M6 without the need for any road closures thanks to the contraflow system now in place.



The gantry is lifted into place in the overnight works on the M6 upgrade.

In just seven days the gantries, which weigh between 13 and 32 tonnes each, were installed on the northbound carriageway between junctions 13 to 14 in Staffordshire as part of a motorway upgrade.

Seventeen miles of the M6 between junctions 13 (Stafford) and 15 (Stoke-on-Trent) are being upgraded and when the work is completed the gantries will house electronic signs to alert drivers to changes in the speed limit, lane closures and incidents ahead.

Thanks to the contraflow system in place – which runs for almost the length of the works – traffic was able to travel in that lane enabling workers to carry out the installations safely without having to shut the motorway. The contraflow system was introduced last year and will cut the length of time the roadworks will be running as well as reducing the number of motorway closures needed.

A major motorway upgrade will usually require up to 200 full motorway closures to complete construction work. However, by using a contraflow, the number of full closures needed on this scheme has been reduced by up to half, benefiting local people and drivers.

Drivers still go through the roadworks at the same speed but the contraflows create larger construction areas at the side of the motorway enabling more work to be safely carried out in one shift, speeding up the project. Contraflows allow more space for working to be created at the verge which means contractors can carry out bigger works, normally carried out overnight, during the day.

Highways England Smart Motorways Sponsor Peter Smith said:

When completed, the upgrade of this congested stretch of motorway will bring much more reliable journeys. These gantries and the enhanced technology will give drivers better information to help with their journeys through Staffordshire and beyond.

We always try to get roadworks carried out as quickly as possible and with minimum disruption to road users so we are delighted that the contraflow is helping us to achieve that.

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[Bird's eye view of Cheshire's £43 million M6 junction improvement](#)

Press release

New aerial photographs of the M6 in Cheshire show how much progress Highways England has been making since it started a £43 million project at junction 19 near Knutsford to tackle congestion.



Aerial view of M6 junction 19 improvement project looking from southbound A556 Knutsford to Bowdon bypass and showing work at the roundabout underway and (right of picture) new construction compound between the A556 and M6.

Work to install a new bridge through the existing roundabout and over the M6 to link sections of the A556, began in earnest in March. And the first aerial pictures of the work show how one of the most challenging construction

projects in the region is literally taking shape – with the bridge foundations in the central reservation and carriageway verges being installed.

Aerial close-up of the centre of the roundabout and M6 carriageways showing verge and central reservation piers taking shape.

Highways England's senior programme manager Kennedy Muzira said:

This new bridge through the roundabout and over the M6 will create a better flow of traffic between the motorway and the A556. This will speed up journeys and reduce congestion around the roundabout. There will also be improvements for pedestrians and cyclists.

The aerial photos show how much progress we've made in the last few weeks. We'd like to thank users of the motorway and the A556 for the patience they have shown while we have installed traffic management to enable us to get this complex construction project underway.

The new bridge is due to open next summer after a complex operation this winter to lift the bridge beams into place and construct the new deck over the M6.

While preparation work like establishing a construction compound occupied the first weeks of the project, permanent work such as installing piled foundations for the bridge piers is now underway.

As part of the project planning process a graphic was produced to illustrate the site's tight working spaces.

The junction upgrade requires a large amount of heavy plant equipment at the site. The tight working spaces requires narrowed lanes and a 50mph speed limit which have recently been installed along a short section of the motorway under the roundabout to help create a safe working space for the construction workers.

All preparation and construction work will be done in accordance with the latest government guidelines related to the Covid 19 outbreak. All Highways England sites have strict safeguarding measures to prevent the spread of the virus and no sites are open to the public.

The improved M6 junction 19 will tie into the A556 Knutsford to Bowdon bypass which opened three years ago. It will also complement the smart motorways already completed or underway in the north Midlands and Cheshire.

Anyone seeking information about forthcoming traffic management arrangements can sign up for the project's weekly traffic management bulletin – [available](#)

[from the project webpage.](#) or by emailing the project team at m6junction19improvement@highwaysengland.co.uk

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Climate benefits of Marine Protected Areas revealed

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) could play an important role in offering 'nature-based solutions' to climate change, new research published today on World Ocean Day reveals.

The study conducted by the [Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#) (JNCC) on behalf of the government found that over half of Marine Protected Areas contain habitats vital for the nation's future climate resilience. 43% of MPAs contain habitats such as sand banks, seaweed and other plant beds that play a role in protecting the coastline from severe weather events. Climate change is predicted to lead to an increase in the frequency of storm surges together with rising sea levels.

It also found that 29% of MPAs protect habitats such as coastal saltmarshes, seagrasses, salt water reedbeds and muddy habitats, which support the absorption and storage of carbon dioxide.

The announcement underlines the importance of the government's commitment to create a 'Blue Belt' of marine protection for Britain's overseas territories and its own coast, as these habitats can be damaged by human activity like anchoring boats, dredging and trawling.

The study also provides new tools for scientists to measure the impacts of climate change such as increases in sea surface temperatures, ocean acidification, ocean heatwaves and rising sea levels on marine sensitive habitats. This could in future be used to help in inform future protection measures.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

Our Blue Belt of marine protection around our coast is now an area twice the size of England and truly a world-leading level of protection; however there is always more that can be done. We have a duty to ensure that our marine life recovers and thrives for future generations.

This research published on World Ocean Day gives us the tools to measure the impacts of climate change on some of our most sensitive habitats and provides an important insight into the benefits of Marine Protected Areas – not just for nature but for own resilience in the face of a changing climate.

Dr John Goold, Director of Marine Evidence and Advice, JNCC:

This collaborative research is a major step forward in helping us develop tools to explore climate smart decision-making in the marine environment.

Marine Protected Areas have the potential to act as nature-based solutions around the world.

The UK has today announced that seven new countries have joined the UK led Global Ocean Alliance, an initiative aimed at securing protection of 30% of the world's oceans by 2030. There are now a total of 20 countries in the Alliance following today's announcement. Germany and Italy are amongst the major new players to join, other joiners include Fiji, Cabo Verde, Monaco, Senegal, and Luxemburg.

The report [‘Developing the evidence-base to support climate-smart decision making on MPAs’](#) is now available on the Defra website.

Malaysia: first of its kind home-based activities to mark World Oceans Day

The British High Commission will mark World Oceans Day on 8 June 2020 with the Blu Hope campaign, a first of its kind online campaign which runs from 8th to 12th June 2020. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the importance

of the world's oceans, how plastic pollution is damaging ocean biodiversity and to encourage action in tackling marine pollution.

The campaign encompasses an interactive home-based activity sheet aimed at encouraging children to think more holistically about their plastic usage habits; as well as a series of marine-themed webinars targeted toward businesses, policy makers and academia to encourage discourse and inform policy making. This campaign is supported by the Malaysian Ministry of Education, Ministry of Environment and Water. Other partners include Plastic Oceans UK, Mura Technology, TimorBlue, WRAP, Asia Dive Expo, ZuBlu and YTL.

H.E. Charles Hay MVO, British High Commissioner to Malaysia, said:

Collaboration is at the heart of tackling the global problem of plastic pollution in the oceans. This is why I'm very pleased that the UK is working with Malaysia and international partners on such an important cause. This Blu Hope campaign showcases not just international collaboration to raise awareness, but also research, science and technology that is being deployed to help create a plastic neutral circular economy.

Tackling plastic pollution is one of the UK Government's commitments in the broader agenda of conserving the environment and addressing climate change. The UK is championing these causes and will be co-chairing the very important United Nations' Climate Change Conference of Parties or COP26 in November 2021.

This online campaign, which is well-suited to the current environment where people are encouraged to stay home, will enable children in Malaysia, SE Asia and beyond to participate by doing the 'Plastic Detectives' activity sheet which is available in Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and English languages. The activity challenges children to record and track their household plastic consumption for one week (8th to 14th June) and upload their findings on the campaign website. The data and findings will be tallied with the objective of informing future policy on plastic.

To further promote participation, the Ministry of Education Malaysia will disseminate the activity sheet to 10,000 public primary and secondary schools in Malaysia.

The special lesson plan and activity sheet was developed by British NGO Plastic Oceans UK. Jo Ruxton, its founder and director, said:

Since our work began in 2009, I have been delivering presentations on plastic to school pupils of all age groups. I've seen how effectively these students take that message on to their friends, relatives and even their teachers. Our 'Plastic Detectives' activity sheet will engage those young minds. But it will also show how much single-use plastic has entered into our homes, unnoticed. We hope that those who take part, with their families, will feel a

new sense of responsibility to break the plastic habit. We're empowering young leaders to become plastic intelligent through our behaviour change programmes.

The live webinars and online panel discussions will feature a line-up of Malaysian and international speakers. Among the topics which will be covered are oceans and biodiversity; protection of mangrove and corals; sustainable tourism, chemical recycling among others. There will also be sessions where eco warriors and professional divers will share tales and tips and also daily screenings of 'A Plastic Ocean'. These webinars and online discussions have been made possible with the help of Asia Dive Expo (ADEX) who will co-host the sessions.

The Plastic Detective activity sheet, webinar schedule and other campaign materials are available at [Blu Hope](#).

Blu Hope is the third phase of the British High Commission's ongoing Green is GREAT campaign, which was first launched in September 2019 with the VVIP screening of BBC's Blue Planet II graced by TRHs The Prince Edward Earl of Wessex and Tengku Zatashah binti Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah. The second phase of the Green is GREAT campaign was held in conjunction with Commonwealth Day in March this year.