

Arundel road improvements consultation enters final two weeks

On 30 August, a public consultation was launched by Highways England on options for improving the A27 at Arundel in West Sussex. 79 per cent of people responding to a previous consultation agreed that the road needed improvements, and people have under two weeks left to give their views on the six new designs which have been put to the public for scrutiny. The consultation ends on 24 October 2019.

Highways England A27 Arundel Bypass programme leader Jason Hones said:

There is clear demand for upgrading the A27 at Arundel, but also genuine concerns about protecting Arundel's unique cultural heritage and prized environment. We are approaching the consultation with a completely open mind and the six proposals we have published allow a more detailed comparison than ever before. People's input on all the options will be vital in helping us find the right solution that balances the needs of drivers, communities and the environment. I encourage everyone who has an opinion to have their say, even if they took part in the previous consultation.

The plans for upgrading the A27 at Arundel include six new options which feature a mix of improvements along the existing road, and other new sections south of the town.

Each of the six routes would link up the dual carriageway stretches of road on either side of Arundel, which would remove the current bottleneck; helping to reduce journey times, improve reliability, make the road safer and reduce the amount of rat-running on roads that were not built for the volume of traffic they currently experience. Highways England held 10 information exhibitions at venues across the area so people could examine the proposals in detail and put questions to the project team.

Details on the proposals and feedback forms are [available on the scheme website](#) until 11:59pm on 24 October 2019.

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.

Helen's Law takes vital step closer

- bill to introduce 'Helen's Law' enters Parliament today (15 October 2019)
- criminals who withhold information on victims could spend longer behind bars
- new law could also block paedophiles from release

'Helen's Law' follows the tireless campaigning of Marie McCourt, mother of Helen McCourt who was murdered in 1988 but whose killer has never revealed her body's location.

It will place a legal duty on the Parole Board to consider the cruelty of killers who refuse to give the location of a victim's remains when assessing their release.

The Bill will also now apply to paedophiles who take indecent images of children but refuse to disclose their identity and could therefore see them locked away for longer.

'Helen's Law' is the government's latest move to overhaul the criminal justice system – following steps to recruit 20,000 new police officers, invest £2.5 billion in prisons and review sentencing to protect the public from the most violent and sexual offenders.

Justice Secretary & Lord Chancellor Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP said:

Innocent families should never have their grief compounded by offenders who refuse to disclose information on their victims.

Not only will this Bill help prevent the torture of families in Marie's situation but we also believe evil sexual offenders who refuse to identify victims should face longer behind bars.

Helen's Law should send another clear signal that under this government the most violent and sexual offenders can expect to serve sentences that reflect the true severity of their crimes.

The Prisoners (disclosure of information about victims) Bill was announced yesterday (14 October 2019) in the Queen's Speech and is one of the first pieces of legislation to be introduced in the new parliamentary session.

Parole Board guidance is already clear that offenders who withhold information may still pose a risk to the public and could therefore face longer in prison. 'Helen's Law' will for the first time make it a legal requirement to consider the withholding of information when making a decision

on whether to release an offender.

Human rights legislation protects against arbitrary detention, and the proposed new law balances this with the need to keep the public safe. The proposals also take into account instances where, for example, a murderer may genuinely not know the location of a victim's body if it has been moved.

Notes to editors

- The [Prisoners \(disclosure of information about victims\) Bill](#) will put in statute, and therefore beyond doubt, the Parole Board's established practice of considering a failure by an offender to disclose specific information when deciding on parole for those convicted of murder, manslaughter, or taking, or making, indecent photographs of children.
- Courts can already pass tougher sentences for murderers who deliberately conceal the location of a body.
- The changes to the release test build on wider reforms to the parole system, announced earlier this year, that will allow victims the opportunity to request the reconsideration of a release decision. This forms part of sweeping changes to bring more transparency and accountability to the parole process and improve the support to victims.
- Applications for reconsideration will only be merited where there is a clear likelihood that the process may have been procedurally or legally flawed. It will not apply to decisions which are challenging and unpopular but have nevertheless clearly been carried out strictly in line with the lawful requirements and normal standards of practice for Parole Board members.

[UK to go further and faster to tackle climate change](#)

- Ambitious new package of energy efficiency measures for businesses which could also save them £1 billion a year in energy bills by 2030
- bold plans to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport including automotive, freight and rail and stronger governance to drive further climate action across government
- comes as government introduces the new Environment Bill

The government has today (15 October 2019) set out how it will go further and faster to tackle climate change, in [response to recommendations from the Committee on Climate Change \(CCC\)](#). This comes 4 months after the UK became the first major economy to legislate for net zero emissions by 2050.

The government's official response to the CCC's recommendation includes plans to strengthen governance to galvanise the whole of government to do more to

tackle climate change and a bold and ambitious plan to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport.

Today's response to the CCC sets out details of the wide-ranging action taken so far. Other new measures include:

- proposals to dramatically improve commercial buildings in the private rented sector, with businesses set to benefit by saving up to £1 billion per year in energy bills by 2030. This includes a [consultation on plans to improve the energy performance of rented commercial buildings](#). The proposal to set minimum energy efficiency standards at EPC band B by 2030 could reduce UK emissions by the equivalent of half a million homes – roughly the size of Birmingham
- a consultation in 2020 on introducing mandatory in-use energy performance ratings for business buildings. This will be a key step in helping businesses to understand and manage the amount of energy they use
- a consultation on [proposals to make it simpler for large-scale energy storage facilities to obtain planning permission](#)
- an endorsement of the recommendations of the Energy Data Taskforce, unlocking the potential of data sharing across the energy system to support decarbonisation and reduce consumer bills

Today, the new Environment Bill will also be introduced in Parliament. The Bill outlines ambitious proposals to strengthen the UK's standards of environmental protection post-Brexit with the establishment of a new public body – the Office for Environmental Protection which will also hold government and other public bodies to account on their environmental obligations, including on climate change.

Business and Energy Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

4 months ago the UK took the bold step of becoming the first country in the developed world to put into law our ambition to wipe out the UK's contribution to climate change by 2050, following the CCC's advice.

This builds on our long and proud track record of leadership – since 1990 we've cut our greenhouse gas emissions by 42% while growing our economy by more than two-thirds. More than half of our electricity currently comes from low carbon sources. And we will keep on going further and faster to ensure our action meets our ambition.

These new measures build on the UK's record of action. Since committing in law to end the UK's contribution to climate change entirely by 2050, the government has announced investment of around £2 billion in low carbon technologies to lead the race in developing solutions to tackle climate change from research and development in large-scale battery technology to speeding up the development of carbon capture capability.

Recognising the need to scale up efforts in the transport industry, the UK's first Transport Decarbonisation Plan has been announced today to bring together a bold and ambitious programme of coordinated action needed to end the UK's transport emissions by 2050.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

From driving our cars, to catching a train or taking a flight abroad, it is crucial that we ensure transport is as environmentally friendly as possible.

This is why, as well as agreeing to the CCC's recommendation on net zero by 2050, we have launched this ground-breaking plan to achieve net zero emissions across every single mode of transport.

We want to work with industry and communities around the country to develop this plan – to make our towns and cities better places to live, help to create new jobs, improve air quality and our health, and take urgent action on climate change.

Due to be complete next year, the first-of-a-kind plan will set out in detail what government, business and society will need to do to deliver the significant emissions reduction needed from all modes of transport. In particular it will consider how UK technology and innovation can be implemented to encourage major changes to the way people and goods move across the UK.

Earlier this month, the [government announced up to £1 billion](#) to develop and embed the next generation of cutting-edge automotive technologies. The funding will look to accelerate mass production of key technologies in the UK through major investments in the manufacturing of batteries including cells, modules and packs as well as electric motors, power electronics and hydrogen fuel cells.

The new money will include research and development into new, advanced electric vehicle technologies, helping to super-charge the uptake of zero emission vehicles in the UK, building on the £1 billion R&D commitment to the [Advanced Propulsion Centre](#) and £274 million funding for the Faraday Battery Challenge.

Further detail on how the UK will make progress towards the 2050 net zero target is expected in the National Infrastructure Strategy this autumn.

1. Since legislating for net zero, the government has committed more than £2 billion to support decarbonisation in sectors across the economy from industry to transport:

- £390 million of investment in hydrogen and low carbon technology to [reduce emissions from industry](#), including steel – which accounts for 15% of industry emissions in the UK
- up to [£1 billion additional funding](#) to develop and embed the next

generation of cutting-edge electric vehicle technologies

- £400 million of investment in new charging infrastructure for electric vehicles
- plans to use [new financing models](#) to roll out more new nuclear, including up to £18 million for the UK's first mini nuclear reactor to be operational in the early 2030s – creating 40,000 jobs at its peak and powering 750,000 homes
- £26 million of additional funding for carbon capture technology, including investment in the [UK's largest project to be operational by next year](#)
- £222 million [investment](#) in a visionary fusion reactor design programme
- plans to make it easier to [recycle oil and gas infrastructure for carbon capture](#), including some of the 20,000km of UK pipelines
- record low use of coal in the UK's energy system, with just 0.6% of the UK's electricity coming from coal between April and June
- our Green Finance Strategy, requiring publicly listed companies and large asset owners from 2021 to report on how climate change risk impacts on their activities by 2021
- £5 million to help the financial sector develop green financial products, including green mortgages
- a £10 million innovation fund to cut the cost of retrofitting old homes

2. The groundwork for the Transport Decarbonisation Plan will start immediately, with the department publishing a document setting out the challenge later this year. The Department for Transport has recently published strategies to reduce carbon emissions across transport, including the £1.5 billion [Road to Zero](#), [Maritime 2050](#) and the Clean Maritime Plan as well as the [Aviation 2050 green paper](#), and upcoming aviation strategy which will be published early next year. But with the move to net zero, there is a need to go further and faster to reduce emissions. The Transport Decarbonisation Plan will take a coordinated, cross-modal approach to deliver the transport sector's contribution to our decarbonisation targets.

[French patrols doubled to tackle migrant crossings](#)

The UK and France have agreed an enhanced action plan which will see patrols on French beaches doubled, as activity is stepped up to tackle migrants crossing the Channel in small boats.

Under an enhanced action plan, the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, and the French Interior Minister, Christophe Castaner, have agreed to redouble efforts to address the issue. The updated plan includes:

- doubling patrols and deploying new detection equipment to increase

interceptions on French beaches

- action to intensify efforts to tackle criminal gangs through strengthened intelligence sharing
- engaging directly with migrants to discourage them from making the journey

Assets on the ground will be doubled to provide 24/7 cover of the beaches in northern France, ensuring more detections before boats are able to leave the shore, cutting the number of attempted crossings.

The new plan follows a meeting between the Home Secretary and the French Interior Minister on 29 August, at which they agreed tougher action was needed following the concerning rise in incidents over the summer months and agreed to draw up an enhanced plan.

The Home Secretary, Priti Patel said:

As Home Secretary, I have a duty to protect our borders and prevent the loss of life. That's why I am absolutely committed to doing everything in my power to stop these dangerous Channel crossings which are putting vulnerable lives at risk.

The plan we have agreed builds on the extensive joint work we are already doing with our French neighbours, and I am confident that it will lead to a considerable reduction in this illegal activity.

The French Interior Minister, Christophe Castaner, said:

This addendum clearly marks a new and very concrete level of commitment of the United Kingdom to tackle irregular crossings through the Channel.

Eradicating this phenomenon should allow us to save lives as well as reduce the migratory pressure in Northern France.

The enhanced plan came into force on Saturday 28 September and the ultimate goal of both Ministers is for attempts to cross the Channel in small boat to be an infrequent phenomenon by Spring 2020.

To supplement increased resources on the ground, the UK and France are going to step up intelligence gathering and sharing on criminal gangs, including through UK intelligence sources being deployed to France.

There will also be greater engagement directly with migrants, to change their behaviour and deter them from making the journey to the UK. This will be based on the successful Operation Focal, which sees UK and French authorities directly countering the misinformation put forward by criminal gangs.

Finally, action will be taken to increase returns and prevent people who have

already made the journey and been returned to Europe from making the journey again, through improved capturing and sharing of data.

The boosted plan follows on from the Joint Action Plan agreed by the former Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, and Christophe Castaner in January.

Melissa Tatton appointed as new Tax Assurance Commissioner

Melissa Tatton has today (15 October 2019) been appointed as HMRC's Tax Assurance Commissioner, overseeing the assurance and dispute governance arrangements that allow Parliament and the public to be confident that HMRC secures the right tax under the law when resolving tax disputes.

Chief Executive of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), an executive agency of HMRC, Melissa takes over from Jim Harra following his appointment as HMRC interim Chief Executive.

She also becomes chair of the Professional Standards Committee and head of the tax profession.

Melissa, who retains her VOA responsibilities, does not directly engage with taxpayers to discuss their specific tax liabilities, nor is she responsible for the HMRC operational teams that manage taxpayers' compliance.

Biography

Melissa joined the Inland Revenue as a graduate tax inspector and has forged a successful career as a tax leader across a wide range of roles.

She took up her current post as Chief Executive of the Valuation Office Agency in September 2017, and was previously HMRC Director for Individuals and Small Business Compliance; Director, Large Business Service and Deputy Director, Business International.

The Tax Assurance Commissioner

The Tax Assurance Commissioner role was introduced in 2012 to strengthen HMRC's governance and assurance of tax disputes.

It provides assurance to Parliament and the public that HMRC handles civil tax disputes in accordance with the law and its litigation and settlement strategy – avoiding unnecessary disputes, conducting them in a non-confrontational, collaborative and transparent way and resolving them to collect the tax that is due under the law without unnecessary delay.

The Tax Assurance Commissioner chairs a panel of 3 HMRC Commissioners who make decisions in the largest and most sensitive cases as well as a sample of smaller cases.

The role also oversees HMRC's tax settlement assurance programme to ensure that the department monitors and continuously improves its management of tax disputes.