

Press release: Highways England supports training exercise in Birmingham

The event took place on Friday night on a closed section of the A38(M) in Birmingham for a 'real-time' incident involving a HGV, double-decker bus, a van and four cars. The training scenario was a road-traffic collision. To add an extra dimension to the incident, the van and one of the cars was on its side and on its roof.

The exercise – organised by West Midlands Fire Service – took place in a closed section of the carriageway which was utilised for the exercise as part of on-going repair work by Highways England at Spaghetti Junction.

Highways England has been working closely with the emergency services for the past couple of months to stage the exercise.

Highways England emergency planning officer, Frank Bird, said:

This was a really useful training exercise for us and our partners to test responses to a challenging incident. We continue to work closely with the emergency services across the West Midlands and we're pleased to be able to help by utilising an existing closure on the road to help support their training programme.

Watch commander Andy Wagner of West Midlands Fire Service, who planned and organised the exercise, said:

We're extremely grateful to everyone who helped make Friday night's exercise as realistic as possible, including Highways England for ensuring we had use of the A38(M).

We aim to get to life-risk emergencies in five minutes or less, and then put in place an assertive, safe and effective plan to resolve the incident. This scenario drew on the wide range of skills and resources that would be needed in such challenging circumstances. It was a great opportunity to test and perfect how several agencies work together.

The incident also posed a challenge to paramedics called to the scene to treat nine 'casualties' in the form of actors that replicated wounds similar to those that would be experienced in real-life.

West Midlands Ambulance Service hazardous area response team manager, James Price, said:

The exercise on Friday night was a great opportunity to test our skills and joint-agency team work at a multi-vehicle collision.

Routine exercises like this take place across the West Midlands region regularly and are important as they enable us to test our ability to deal with large scale incidents. Thanks to Highways England and West Midlands Fire Service for organising the exercise.

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.

[News story: Foreign Secretary condemns murder of White Helmets volunteers](#)

Since 2013 the White Helmets have saved thousands of lives in Syria, rescuing people from bombings and missile strikes.

The Foreign Secretary said:

I am appalled by the targeted and heinous murders of heroic White Helmets volunteers who put their own safety at risk to save lives on all sides of the Syrian conflict.

Their bravery and humanity is so inspiring and their deaths a huge loss for their families, Syria and the world.

Further information

[News story: Culture Secretary](#)

Reappoints Ofcom Board Member

Graham Mather was appointed to the Ofcom Board with effect from 1 June 2014. He is a member of Ofcom's Nations Committee, Nominations Committee, Remuneration Committee and Risk and Audit Committee.

Graham Mather was a member of Ofcom's Consumer Panel from 2004 to 2008. He served as a member of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and, between 2000 and 2012, was also member of the Competition Appeal Tribunal, the body that deals with appeals from the UK regulators. Graham is currently the President of the European Policy Forum and Chairman of its Regulatory Best Practice Group. Graham is a member of the Board of the Office of Rail and Road.

He was appointed CBE in the Queen's 2017 Birthday Honours list for services to economic regulation, competition and infrastructure development.

Ofcom Board Members are remunerated, £42,519 per annum.

These appointment have been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments. The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Graham has declared no such political activity.

News story: UK spectroscopy firm bought for £40 million

Oxfordshire-based [Cobalt Light Systems](#) has been acquired by [Agilent](#) – a US analytical laboratory technologies company that was spun out of [Hewlett Packard](#) – for £40 million.

The deal will see Oxford become Agilent's global centre for Raman spectroscopy. Raman spectroscopy is one of the fastest-growing spectroscopy segments and has the potential to revolutionise the pharmaceutical industry and airport security.

Improving material identification

Conventional spectroscopy solutions have limited detection of materials through sealed, non-transparent containers.

Cobalt Light Systems' highly-differentiated Raman spectroscopic instruments

enable non-invasive, through-barrier identification of chemicals and materials. This includes quickly and accurately analysing materials hidden inside objects or through opaque barriers such as plastic, coloured glass, paper or skin.

Applications include analysing whole tablets to measure concentrations of materials for pharmaceutical quality control, or detecting hazardous chemicals or other banned substances inside sealed containers at airport security. It results in time, cost and efficiency savings for those using it. Importantly, it also improves safety.

Supporting product development

Innovate UK granted Cobalt Light Systems a £180,000 smart award in 2012. This helped the company to develop a prototype for screening liquids in sealed containers to detect and identify liquid explosives at airports.

The prototype, built on the proprietary technology SORS (spatially offset Raman spectroscopy), resulted in the company launching Insight100. This instrument can detect dangerous chemicals in unopened containers within a few seconds with very high detection rates. It is now used in more than 70 airports.

We have continued to work with Cobalt Light Systems to support new innovations, including a prototype Insight200, designed to US airport specifications.

A conditional offer has also just been signed for a new project for pharmaceutical applications. This project will develop a low-cost automated system that supports real-time analysis of pharmaceuticals during manufacture, in statistically representative sample sizes. It should improve quality control while creating efficiencies in time and cost.

Capitalising on a growing market

James Heydari, Smart and Open Programme Lead, Innovate UK, said:

Particularly in the pharmaceutical industry, ambitious young start-ups can find it difficult to develop, trial and commercialise new products.

For a company that's still less than 10 years' old, Cobalt Light Systems' success in capitalising on the growing market of Raman spectroscopy should be celebrated. Early-stage funding gave a helpful start. Now, the acquisition by Agilent will allow them to scale-up further and reach a wider customer base.

More about Cobalt

Since it was formed in 2008, Cobalt Light Systems has attracted many high-profile customers. This includes 20 of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies and airports across Europe and Asia-Pacific.

The company has also been recognised with numerous awards. It received the [Royal Academy of Engineering MacRobert Award](#) in 2014 and [The Queen's Award for Enterprise](#) in 2015. In addition, it was a winner in [Innovate UK's first SME awards](#), for innovation leading to business transformation.

Press release: New road upgrade for Solent to unlock new homes and jobs

A £13m project to upgrade junction 9 of the M27 between Portsmouth and Southampton has been announced today (Monday 14 August), as part of a Government programme to boost new homes and jobs across the country.

The improvements will deliver a comprehensive package of improvements to the junction and the immediate local road network and support up to 3,500 homes and up to 250 jobs in the Solent area, particularly the substantial development site at North Whiteley. It will be the first project in the South East to benefit from Highways England's Growth and Housing fund – a special budget ring-fenced for road improvements needed for planned major developments.

The Solent scheme is part of a £45.5 million nationwide package being announced today that are set to help unlock the development of more than 6,000 jobs and nearly 10,000 homes in Leicestershire and the South East.

Highways England is making a £19.9 million contribution towards the schemes from its Growth and Housing Fund, with private sector developer contributions and other public funding making up the rest.

The £100 million Growth and Housing Fund was set up as part of the government's £15 billion investment in roads and provides financial contributions towards the cost of road improvements that are needed for new developments, which promise timely delivery of homes and jobs.

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

England's strategic roads are vital for economic success, connecting businesses, people and supporting the government's agenda of employment and growth. All of these improvements and future upcoming announcements will ultimately ensure England's

major roads continue to make a valuable contribution to the prosperity of our country.

The £220m Congestion Relief Fund announced during the Autumn Statement has also played its part in underpinning economic growth, by providing additional funding to the M27, junction 9 scheme. This additional funding will help to tackle congestion in the local area and improve connectivity.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

The Whiteley Way junction upgrade is part of our record investment in infrastructure across the country to improve journeys for motorists.

It will cut congestion on the M27, help unlock thousands of much-needed houses, and boost Hampshire's economy.

The three schemes announced today are:

- M27 junction 9 Whitley Way, up to 3,500 homes and up to 250 jobs – £9.9 million Growth and Housing Fund / £3 million Highways England Congestion Relief Fund. This scheme is being delivered by Hampshire County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership under the terms of a grant funding agreement. It is the first scheme to be supported by this fund in the South East.
- Anstey Lane (A46 / A560) up to 2,378 homes and around 260 jobs – £5million Growth and Housing Fund / £2.8million private developers. This scheme will be delivered by Leicestershire County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership in Leicester and Leicestershire.
- M1 junction 23, up to 4,000 homes and 5,600 jobs – £5 million Growth and Housing Fund / £10 million private funding / £3.2 million local growth fund. This scheme will be delivered by Leicestershire County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership in Leicester and Leicestershire.

Highways England's Growth and Housing Fund has so far made contributions of over £60 million to 16 improvements to unlock over 30,000 new homes and more than 40,000 jobs around Swindon, Exeter, Weston Super Mare, Darlington, Scunthorpe, Grantham, Warrington, Honiton, Derby, Foxdenton (Oldham), Taunton, Durham, Daventry, Leicester and Southampton.

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