

[Press release: PM call with Greek Prime Minister Tsipras: 5 July 2017](#)

This morning the Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece to discuss the ongoing Cyprus settlement talks in Geneva.

The Prime Minister praised the constructive role that both parties have played to reach this point and reiterated that there is a major opportunity to be seized.

She added that any agreement requires all sides to show leadership and flexibility and that the UK will do it all it can to support a settlement.

[Press release: New fourth lane opens on M3 smart motorway](#)

Main construction on a £174 million project to upgrade the M3 in Surrey and Hampshire to a smart motorway has been completed on time Highways England announced on Saturday 1 July.

Overnight on Friday 30 June, the last of the cones were removed and a new fourth lane is now open for traffic in both directions. Work to test and commission the new smart motorway technology will continue for a short period, with the fully upgraded road opening to traffic later in July. A 50mph limit is in place for safety reasons while this work is carried out.

Highways England project manager Pranav Devale said:

I am delighted that we've opened this vital motorway upgrade on time. This new stretch of smart motorway will tackle congestion and improve journey times for the 130,000 drivers who use it every day.

Smart motorways add vital extra capacity, improve journey times and maintain high levels of safety. Drivers will also see better information about conditions on the road ahead and enjoy smoother journeys on the fully resurfaced road – as well as the smart motorway upgrade, we have also been carrying out the most extensive maintenance on the M3 since it was first built in 1971 in parallel with the smart motorway works.

I would also like to thank drivers for their co-operation and understanding during the final testing phase and hope they enjoy

the improved journeys between London and the south coast.

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

The smart motorway upgrade has converted the hard shoulder of a 13.4 mile section of the M3 between Farnborough and the M25 to an extra traffic lane. New technology will make the road more resilient to disruption, improving journeys by using variable speed limits that will help tackle frustrating stop-start traffic and giving drivers better information on conditions ahead.

The extra running lane has opened for traffic as scheduled, with the smart motorway technology being switched on shortly afterwards. When the testing and commissioning is complete, the speed restriction will be lifted and all four lanes will operate at 70mph in normal conditions. The testing phase is expected to last for up to three weeks.

Work on major maintenance being carried out alongside the project is also substantially complete, but some activities – including the rebuilding of the Woodlands Lane bridge over the M3 near Windlesham – will continue until later in the year. None of this maintenance will require any permanent traffic restrictions on the M3.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

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[Press release: £50 million investment in M6 Knutsford roundabout](#)

The 'Option A' idea, to provide a new bridge across the middle of the roundabout where the motorway meets the A556, received the backing of three quarters of drivers, Cheshire East and Tabley councils and other local people responding to last summer's month-long consultation. Today it was unveiled as the option Highways England is taking forward in its preferred route announcement (PRA) for the improvements.

Highways England project manager Irene Ofei said:

We are delighted to announce the scheme we are taking forward is the one which was the overwhelming choice of people taking part in last year's consultation. We feel this option will deliver most and lasting benefits in terms of improving journey reliability and safety and increasing capacity.

The new link roads across the middle of the roundabout will take a lot of traffic away from other parts of the roundabout, reducing congestion for everyone.

While further work to refine the idea will now take place, construction work could start as soon as March 2019 but by March 2020 at the latest.

The improvements will involve significant construction in the middle of the roundabout over the existing M6 motorway carriageways. This will provide dedicated link roads between the northbound M6 and the new northbound A556 Knutsford to Bowdon dual carriageway as well as the southbound M6 onto the southbound, local, A556 road towards Northwich.

The improvements also include:

- wider lanes on the existing roundabout to increase capacity, including the bridges over the M6.
- new traffic lights on the roundabout and its approach roads.
- new traffic lights for the Tabley Hill Lane/Pickmere Lane junction.
- improvements to local access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders using the junction.

The reports setting out the preferred route announcement and detailing the responses to last summer's consultation can be found on the [consultation web page](#).

Money for remodelling the roundabout at one of the region's busiest road junctions is being provided as part of the Government's £15 billion Road Investment Strategy (RIS), and will help boost the Northern Powerhouse agenda of improving transport connectivity and reliability to help the economy of the North.

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[News story: New Immingham Port link officially opens](#)

Maritime Minister John Hayes MP was in Immingham to open the scheme which has provided vital transport improvements to reduce congestion and increase capacity for the 40,000 vehicles that use this route daily.

Immingham is the UK's busiest port and currently contributes £460 million to the regional economy every year.

Right to Left: Highways England Project Manager Ben Ridgeon, Martin Vickers MP, Maritime Minister John Hayes MP, Highways England Regional Investor Programme Director David Haimes, Costain Group Strategy & Risk Director Matthew Harris and Costain Project Manager Craig Snow.

Maritime Minister John Hayes said:

I am delighted to open this fantastic new port link, a scheme which will significantly reduce congestion for tens of thousands of drivers and boost productivity across the region.

Ports like the one here in Immingham play a key role in the long term growth of the economy and provide essential access to global markets.

The scheme started in 2015 and in total a 3 and half mile stretch of the A180 has been improved.

The roundabout at Brocklesby Interchange has been upgraded providing access to and from the A180 and the A160 between Brocklesby Junction to Habrough roundabout has been increased from one lane to a dual carriageway.

The Port of Immingham is the UK's largest port by tonnage and handles up to 55 million tonnes of goods every year, including nearly 20 million tonnes of oil and 10 million tonnes of coal.

At peak times 10 per cent of the traffic in the UK is lorries. On the A160/180 it is up to 70 per cent, with more than 100 abnormal loads a month, heading to and from the port.

Highways England Project Manager Ben Ridgeon said:

We are already seeing a reduction in congestion as a result of this project which we completed in March. It will provide vital transport improvements in this area by increasing capacity and boosting productivity in the area creating more jobs and greater investment.

We would like to thank drivers and the local community for their patience while this work has been taking place, and are pleased they can now benefit from the completed upgrade.

During Christmas 2015 contractors carried out a complex piece of engineering when they slid a 4,000 tonne bridge slid into place using hydraulic jacks weighing more than 5 tonnes each.

Contractors worked around the clock to install the bridge at Rosper Road under the railway line which carries freight trains between the Port of Immingham and Ulceby.

Aerial shot of the Brocklesby Junction at the A160/80 Port of Immingham improvement scheme.

Simon Bird, Humber Director at the port's owner Associated British Ports (ABP) said:

The A160 road improvement works have already made a significant difference to the way we operate our port. ABP's Humber ports currently contribute £2.2 billion to the region's economy and ABP is continually investing in new infrastructure and equipment in order to expand our operations in Immingham. The newly established improvement works will help us to handle the additional traffic we expect to see come through the port.

Facts and figures:

- more than 1,700 staff worked on the project with over half of them living within the local area
- over 98% of the scheme waste went on to be recycled
- in a first for Highways England the scheme trialled innovative asset tagging technology to improve the monitoring and maintenance of highway equipment located along the road, such as street lighting and drainage
- the scheme has donated almost £30,000 towards the community with staff working on the project also spending more than 400 hours volunteering with local schools and charities; this included working with Cannon Peter Hall School to build bat and bird boxes with wood left over from the scheme

More details on the scheme are available at the [road project website](#).

[Speech: Launch of the Business and](#)

Property Courts of England and Wales

Can I first thank you, Sir Geoffrey, for your warm words of welcome, and say how delighted I am to be attending what is a landmark event for our judges as they lead change from the front and look for the new opportunities presented by the globalisation of legal services.

We're here in this magnificent building in the heart of The City, and I suppose what we see here is the dignity and authority of our historic law courts married to the cutting-edge technology of the digital age and what we've got as a result is a set up that is state of the art, that is specialist, that meets the challenges of handling litigation in the 21st century.

I believe that the changes that we are marking today will be a powerful further magnet for international civil litigation and proof of the UK's unwavering commitment to a modern justice system that is second to none.

That's a commitment that I wholeheartedly support.

People are drawn to the United Kingdom from every nation, as they have been for centuries – and will continue to be drawn, long into the future.

And they come here because they are seeking decisions that come with a recognised guarantee of impartiality, integrity and enforceability.

And they deliberately seek out our ranks of globally-renowned, high quality specialist practitioners and judges, who have an unrivalled reputation.

And it's thanks to those clear-sighted judges that we are celebrating today's launch of the Business and Property Courts – as the specialist jurisdictions in England and Wales shall now be known.

And it's leaders like Geoffrey Vos, Brian Leveson and of course Lord Thomas, the Lord Chief Justice, who have driven this forward.

It's very much their initiative; their innovation – but one that I am very proud and happy to promote.

Because the judges know that the United Kingdom's reputation for dispute resolution is a national asset.

A reputation to be both trumpeted and treasured, nurtured and developed.

We offer the gold standard of court and non-court based domestic and international resolution, underpinned by a top class independent judiciary.

And I think we can all take pride in the fact that in 2015, the legal services sector contributed close to £26 billion to the economy of our country, or more than one and a half per cent of total UK GDP.

Indeed as Sir Geoffrey himself argued in his recent lecture on the UK jurisdictions after 2019, that figure in all probability undervalues the UK legal services sector. Once a UK lawyer is instructed on an international project, there is a significantly greater chance that UK accountants, engineers, architects and actuaries will also be instructed.

To quote Sir Geoffrey, UK legal services drive the success of UK professional services generally.

And as the negotiations go forward on our exit from the European Union, it is more important than ever to focus on these assets.

And it's evident from the range of guests here – some of them from the world's most powerful financial institutions – how much international business values everything that you do, and everything that you in the British judiciary and legal professions stand for.

Today's launch demonstrates beyond any doubt that our bench is responsive, forward-thinking and clear in their purpose.

Not least in recognising that while our historic courts continue to flourish, the somewhat arcane names of some – 'Chancery', for instance, about which Dickens wrote with such scathing relish, or 'Mercantile' – are perhaps still beloved of many lawyers but rather less well understood by the 21st century business community outside the City of London.

And, perhaps dare I say it, by those many people who have not been steeped in the law for decades.

And at a stroke, this is now remedied.

The new umbrella name – the 'Business and Property Courts of England and Wales' – is squarely to the school of 'Does What It Says On The Tin'.

It's a user-friendly choice, it's easy to understand no matter what part of the world someone comes from.

And it brings a welcome clarity to the focus and range of legal services that the UK offers at the highest level.

A more integrated system of business and property courts will mean judges can be cross-deployed to maximise the benefit of their particular qualifications.

But the reform isn't just about bolstering our reputation among overseas claimants.

It's also about improving the service our civil courts offer to all the individuals and businesses in this country who seek legal redress.

Senior judges have argued that no case should be deemed too big to be tried outside London. And rightly so, given the talented lawyers we have nationwide.

Yet many cases at the moment migrate unnecessarily from the regions to the Rolls Building, leading to extra inconvenience, delays and expense for those based in our other great cities like Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol and Cardiff.

And having business and property courts across England and Wales that are served by a critical mass of specialist judges will mean that all classes of case should be capable of being managed and tried away from the capital.

I'm confident that these changes will ensure that our courts and judiciary continue to lead the world in this field – and they build on other measures like the [inaudible] financial list and the shorter and flexible trial scheme.

The reforms will showcase the strength and depth of our legal talent, which in turn underpins the strength of the United Kingdom as a leading investment and business destination.

So I welcome this chance to congratulate everyone involved. I look forward to the continued success of the Business and Property Courts and all those who work in them, and am delighted to accept Sir Geoffrey's invitation to work closely with him and other leading members of the judiciary as we go forward. Thank you very much.