

I welcome today's announcement that the stress and worry that this inquiry has caused to service personnel and veterans will soon be brought to an end- Griffith

Nia Griffith MP, Labour's Shadow Defence Secretary, commenting on the decision to close down The Iraq Historic Allegations Team, said:

"I welcome today's announcement that the stress and worry that this inquiry has caused to service personnel and veterans will soon be brought to an end.

"I completely condemn the spurious and untrue allegations that have been levelled against service members and veterans. Labour has long said that anyone facing investigation should be properly supported by the Government.

"It is now important that the inquiry's work is completed promptly and properly in order to eliminate any risk of these vexatious claims arising again in future."

Ends

Government must show caution and concern about the way the Saudi campaign is being conducted – Thornberry

Emily Thornberry, Shadow Foreign Secretary, responding to today's revelations regarding arms exports to Saudi Arabia, said:

"We have discovered today that, even after the bombing of the funeral hall in Sana'a and the concerns of Liam Fox's department about the

risk

that British weapons were being used in breach of International Humanitarian Law, Boris Johnson gave his personal reassurance that the Saudi-led coalition was improving its targeting processes and ensuring that any incidents where non-military targets had been bombed were being properly investigated.

"According to the independent

Yemen Data Project, in the 55 days between Boris Johnson writing his letter and

the end of 2016, Saudi forces bombed 60 residential sites in Yemen, including houses, markets and refugee camps. At this time of heightening humanitarian crisis, they bombed 46 sites of economic infrastructure, including farms, water

tanks and food trucks, and 48 sites of physical infrastructure, including roads, bridges and ports. They also managed to bomb three schools and a university. Not a single one of these 160 incidents has yet been investigated by the Saudi authorities. If this is what Boris Johnson calls the Saudis 'improving processes and...taking action to address failures', then I would sorely hate to see the opposite.

"It should not be left to the

courts to rule whether the export licences for these arms sales should have been granted. It should be for this Government to show some long-overdue caution and concern about the way the Saudi campaign is being conducted, the devastating humanitarian crisis that campaign is helping to cause, and the blatant failure to ensure any proper, independent investigation of these alleged crimes against international law."

Ends

[Press release: North West traffic officers featured in Channel 5 documentary](#)

Three North West traffic officers will be featured in a new Channel 5 series which shows the work involved in keeping the roads moving during the winter months.

A film crew from Winter Road Rescue has spent several shifts with Highways England traffic officers Jason Williamson, Mike Caffrey and Barry Connolly this winter, following the incidents they respond to on some of the England's busiest stretches of motorway.

Jason, Mike and Barry are among over 1,000 traffic officers who respond to over 200,000 incidents every year. They are based at Newton-le-Willows – one

of 33 traffic officer outstations on the motorway network – and their patch includes both the M62 and M6.

They can be called out to a wide range of incidents – from minor breakdowns to major collisions – and some of the recent incidents they have attended will be shown in the new series of Winter Road Rescue at 8pm on Channel 5, starting on Monday 13 February.

Jason Williamson, 48, has been a traffic officer for 7 years. The married father-of-three from Macclesfield spent several years with the Royal Air Force Police before signing up as a traffic officer. Jason said:

I was pleased that we were asked to get involved with Winter Road Rescue as we were able to show some of the work we do to keep the roads moving.

Drivers often only see us when we've finished dealing with an incident and the road's reopened. They don't see us helping drivers, moving badly-damaged vehicles or clearing up spillages that would otherwise cause hours of delays, so I hope some of that comes across in the programme.

The new series of Winter Road Rescue will also feature Highways England's North West regional control centre in Newton-le-Willows, where incidents are monitored on CCTV cameras and responded to 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Mike Caffrey, 27, from Warrington, joined Highways England as a traffic officer in September last year. He said:

I really like the variety of the job and the fact that it's such an unusual role. When I applied to become a traffic officer, it sounded different to anything else I'd done and has definitely lived up to expectations. Every day is different.

I get a buzz coming to work as you never know how your shift is going to play out. We perform a vital job on the motorway network and I feel lucky to be a part of a role helping members of the public to be safe and to arrive at their destination safely.

To be able to make a positive difference to someone's day, no matter how small, is a real enjoyment.

Highways England is urging drivers to adapt their driving to the changing conditions on the road this winter after the latest annual figures revealed that travelling too fast for the conditions is a factor in 1 in 9 of all road deaths in Great Britain.

A new safety campaign is warning drivers that 'when it rains, it kills' after the figures also showed that people are 30 times more likely to be killed or

seriously injured on the roads in rain than in snow.

It generally takes at least twice as long to stop on a wet road as on a dry road because tyres have less grip on the surface. In wet weather you should:

- slow down if the rain and spray from vehicles is making it difficult to see and be seen
- keep well back from the vehicle in front as this will increase your ability to see and plan ahead
- ease off the accelerator and slow down gradually if the steering becomes unresponsive as it probably means that water is preventing the tyres from gripping the road

A new road safety video, showing rain falling inside the home of a family imagined to have been involved in a serious road collision, is available to [watch on our YouTube channel](#).

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.

[Press release: Weekend closures for final phase of £192m dual carriageway project](#)

Drivers in Cheshire are being reminded the A556, M56 junctions 7 and 8 and M6 junction 19 will all be closed next weekend as work to open the new £192 million Knutsford to Bowdon dual carriageway gets underway.

Highways England, which is replacing the A556 between the 2 motorways with the new dual carriageway, today confirmed the new road is currently on course to open for the first time on Monday 6 March – after the second of 3 full weekend closures of the existing A556 and 2 motorway junctions.

The first weekend closure, which will be in operation from 9pm next Friday night (17 February) and 5am on the following Monday morning (20 February) – a total of 56 hours – will allow preparations for the old road to be sealed off to through traffic and for the motorway junctions to be tied into the new dual carriageway.

Work over the 3 weekend closures includes linking the southern end of the new dual carriageway (top centre) with the roundabout at junction 19 of the M6 at Knutsford and sealing off the existing A556 (top right)

Highways England project manager Paul Hampson said:

We're delighted to be able to confirm that we can start work next week on preparations to open the new road with the first of these 3 scheduled weekend closures.

We appreciate there will be some inconvenience for people wanting to use the A556 and the 2 motorway junctions over these weekends but we have worked hard to plan diversions for through traffic and local road users, which will be clearly-signed.

We're working to publicise these but road users can help by taking a little bit of extra care in planning journeys, especially if they are heading to Manchester Airport on any of the 3 weekends.

Motorway users will be diverted to alternative junctions to leave or join the M6 or M56.

Drivers on the northbound M6 heading for Manchester and Manchester Airport will need to stay on the M6, join the westbound M56 at Lymm Interchange (M6 junction 20) and then join the eastbound M56 at junction 10 (Preston Brook).

Drivers on the westbound M56 heading away from Manchester and wanting to join the southbound M6 will also need to travel to junction 10 at Preston Brook – joining the eastbound M56 from there to travel back to Lymm Interchange and access the southbound M6 .

Local diversions , which will be strictly monitored, will also be in place with access to the A50, Chapel Lane and Mereside Road. A one way system, travelling southbound, will be in place at Bucklow Hill to allow access for residents and businesses located between the Bucklow Hill and Mere junctions along Chester Road. Vehicles must use Mereside Road and Chapel Lane to access Chester Road. Traffic marshalls will be at Mere and Bucklow Hill junctions to facilitate the local diversion.

Over the weekend, only the northbound exit slip road at junction 19 of the M6 will remain partially open – allowing drivers to access the southbound, local authority section, of the A556 towards Northwich.

Work during the 3 weekend closures also includes connecting the new dual carriageway at its northern end with junction 7 of the M56 using these new free-flow link roads, opened in December.

Drivers are advised to build in some extra time for the diversions and to check traffic conditions before setting out on journeys. Highways England provides live traffic information [via its website](#), local and national radio travel bulletins, electronic road signs and mobile apps.

Information is also available from Twitter via @highwaysNWEST as well as services in other regions. Providing they can do so safely, road users can also call the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000 to keep up to date with road conditions.

The current schedule for the 3 weekend closures – and the timetable for opening the new road – involves:

- next weekend's full closure of the existing A556 and associated M6 and M56 junctions (Friday 17 February to Monday 20 February)
- a full weekend closure of the existing A556 and associated M6 and M56 junctions from 9pm on Friday 3 March to 5am on Monday 6 March – with the new road opening to drivers for the first time that morning
- a final full weekend closure of the old A556 and new A556 between 9pm on Friday 10 March and 5am on Monday 13 March to finalise work to seal off the old road

Construction of the new A556 link road, between the M56 and the M6, started in November 2014 and is part of a £15 billion government investment in motorways and major A roads by 2021 which is being delivered by Highways England as part of the Northern Powerhouse initiative.

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.

[Press release: Plans for new M49 junction at Avonmouth announced](#)

Highways England announced the preferred option for the new junction, which is part of the government's £15 billion road investment programme. The junction will improve road access and provide a much needed connection into the Avonmouth and Severnside Enterprise Area from the motorway network.

Featuring a two bridge junction design, the proposal uses the existing bridge at Farm Lane with a second bridge being built immediately adjacent.

The two bridges will be incorporated into a single roundabout that spans the motorway with new access and exit slip roads built on both sides of the junction so that it connects fully with both northbound and southbound

traffic.

Highways England South West Regional Director Andrew Page-Dove said:

We recognise the strategic importance of the Avonmouth and Severnside Enterprise Area as a key regional employment site and that is why we are helping to unlock economic growth in the area by building this new junction.

Over the last few months we have worked hard to identify the best possible design for the junction and we are excited to share our plans with local stakeholders, businesses and the community.

As well as boosting the local economy, the junction will also improve access to the regional road network and relieve traffic on local roads.

Three design options were shortlisted for the scheme and these were presented at an information event in July 2016, where members of the public, businesses and stakeholders were invited to give feedback. Highways England also worked closely with the local community before deciding on the preferred design.

Simon Tothill, Property and Development Director for Robert Hitchins Ltd, who own the Westgate 296-acre employment site with Harrow Estates plc, said:

This will be a huge boost to the local economy and is a very welcome investment by Highways England.

It will change the profile of Westgate dramatically, and unlock a large and incredibly well located site which, already benefits from planning permission, for employment uses. It opens the door to significant economic activity and will provide for thousands of new jobs.

The design of the Farm Lane Two Bridge option will now be taken forward and will involve the detailed design of the new layout including drainage requirements, pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian access, as well as environmental improvements.

Subject to statutory approval under the Highways Act 1980 and approval from the Secretary of State, construction is planned to start by the end of 2017.

Another information event will be held before construction starts to ensure everyone understands details of the final proposal and the associated construction programme. The estimated cost of the scheme is £45 million. Additional information is also available on the [Highways England project website](#) which will be updated on a regular basis.

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.