

Update on M4 Junctions 3 to 12 Motorway Upgrade

I have received the enclosed update from National Highways:

Dear Sir John,

M4 Junctions 3 to 12 motorway upgrade update

I am writing to update you on progress on the M4 Junctions 3 to 12 motorway upgrade project, part of which runs through your constituency, and to outline a recent milestone in the delivery of the scheme.

Since July 2018, we have been constructing four lanes in each direction between junctions 3 and 12 of the M4 motorway, with upgraded technology to make journeys more reliable.

Between Junctions 8/9 (Maidenhead) and 12 (Theale) all temporary restrictions have now been removed and this section of the M4 motorway upgrade is finished.

The key changes drivers will see are as follows:

- The M4 between junctions 8/9 and 12 is now operating at the national speed limit.
- There will be variable speed limits at certain times to smooth out traffic and tackle frustrating stop-start congestion.
- The hard shoulder has been converted to a new fourth traffic lane in each direction, boosting capacity by a third on this vital route between London, the south west and Wales.
- Between junctions 8/9 and 12, if drivers get into difficulty, they will be able to use one of 29 places to stop in an emergency, which include emergency areas.

The new radar Stopped Vehicle Detection (SVD) technology identifies a stopped vehicle, typically within 20 seconds, and provides an alert to our control room. At the same time, it can also automatically display a 'report of obstruction' message to warn oncoming drivers of a stopped vehicle ahead. Our operators then set a Red X sign to close one or more lanes, adjust speed limits and deploy traffic officers.

When the entire upgrade project between junction 3 and 12 is fully completed, there will be places to stop in an emergency approximately every 1.3 miles.

In October 2019, the Secretary of State for Transport asked the Department to carry out an evidence stocktake to gather the facts on the safety of smart motorways and make recommendations. A wide range of data was considered, and conclusions drawn on what the evidence told us about the safety of this type of motorway. This work is set out in the 2020 Evidence Stocktake and Action

Plan:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/smart-motorway-evidence-stocktake-and-action-plan>.

We've been working with the Department for Transport to implement the actions from the stocktake, and in April of this year we published the Smart Motorways Stocktake first year progress report, setting out our progress in delivering the 2020 Action Plan, the latest evidence on the safety of smart motorways, and commitments we have made to accelerate measures.

On 2 November 2021 the Transport Select Committee (TSC) published the findings of its inquiry into the rollout and safety of smart motorways. We are absolutely committed to making smart motorways as safe as possible and we welcome the TSC's scrutiny. We are considering the inquiry's findings and recommendations in detail and working with the DfT to support them in the response that they will be making to the report.

Activity is continuing between junctions 3 and 8/9. Inevitably, a scheme of this size and complexity does have an impact on local residents and road users and we do our utmost to minimise this. We have a community relations team that deals with correspondence from residents and we liaise regularly with the local authority to discuss any issues of concern.

We continue to engage with local communities through parish councils, site visits, letters, newsletters and email updates. This will include notifications and dissemination of information on forthcoming work and the motorway closures. The latest information can be found on the project website at: <https://www.nationalhighways.co.uk/m4j3to12>.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Grant

Delivery Director, M4 Junctions 3 to 12 motorway upgrade