Welcome to iHighways

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Driving forward: a new era for England’s major roads

A new era for England’s major roads starts next week with the launch of Highways England, the government-owned company responsible for delivering the largest investment in England’s major roads in a generation.

As a new company which replaces the Highways Agency from 1 April, we will invest £11 billion improving and modernising our network of motorways and major A roads during the next 5 years, as well as running the network and keep traffic moving.

Highways England will be a different type of organisation, better equipped to support the journeys of today, while investing in those of tomorrow. As well as longer-term funding, we will have more flexibility while still remaining accountable to government.

We’ll have the ethos of a commercial organisation – putting value for money and customer service at the heart of everything we do. Yet crucially, working on behalf of drivers and the country as a whole.

So while we deliver that record investment, we will make roads even safer, improve traffic flow and reduce congestion to make journeys better for those who use our network.

Highways England is a new company with a big brief. As a result, while we are operating and improving the country’s roads, we will grow our own capability – investing in our people and working with our suppliers and stakeholders.

Graham Dalton, Chief Executive of Highways England said:

“The launch of Highways England is an incredibly significant moment for those who rely on England’s motorways and major A roads. As well as delivering the biggest investment in major roads since the 1970s, there will be fundamental changes to the way motorways and major A roads are maintained and operated. We will be focussing on customers, providing better travel information before and during journeys, improving safety and reducing the impact of roadworks.

“Highways England is the organisation that will meet this challenge. We are committed to a strategic road network in England that is far safer, more free-flowing and more integrated and supports economic growth across the country.”
Highways England will be responsible for delivering the first ever Road Investment Strategy – a long-term approach to improving England’s major roads. This gives us secure five-year budgets.

This certainty allows us to plan for the long-term to make journeys better for our customers. So ahead of our launch on 1 April, we’ve published our Delivery Plan, which sets out details of how our budget will be allocated over the next five years and how we will measure success against the performance specification set for us by government. It also explains how we will transform the organisation to perform more efficiently and deliver our 5 strategic outcomes:

• Supporting economic growth through a modern and reliable network that reduces delays, creates jobs, helps business and opens up new areas for development.

• A safe and serviceable network where no one should be harmed when travelling or working.

• A more free-flowing network where routine delays are more infrequent and journeys are safer and more reliable.

• An improved environment where our activities ensure a long-term and sustainable benefit to the environment.

• A more accessible and integrated network giving people the freedom to choose their mode of transport and enable safe movement across and alongside it.

The Delivery Plan supplements our Strategic Business Plan, which we published in December 2014. Key points from our delivery plan:

• We will deliver the equivalent of nearly ‘two Olympics’ during the next 5 years – almost twice as much spend on infrastructure investment as London 2012. We’ll tackle congestion hotspots across the country, unblocking bottlenecks and helping the economy to grow.

• But simply building more roads won’t deliver the 21st century network that the country needs. By embracing technology, improving safety and exploring greener modes of transport, we’ll deliver an intelligent network of major roads that is open to all.

• We will add over 280 miles of extra capacity by creating a spine of smart motorways and introducing a new standard for A roads, known as ‘expressways’ with modernised junctions, refuge areas and specialist technology to quickly detect incidents and get traffic moving again.

• We will help create safer roads and vehicles for people by improving road design, whilst influencing driver behaviour.

• We will organise road improvement work to minimise disruption and keep as much of the road open as possible.
• Innovation will be a major driving force behind everything that we do. We’ll carry out pilot projects to improve safety, incident detection and inform drivers of the latest traffic information.

• We shall play our part in the national effort to manage carbon emissions. We’ll tackle noise pollution, support specialist research and improve how we monitor air quality.

• We will create a network that is open to all, and boost facilities for people that cycle or walk along our routes.
Roads reform update

As we head towards the launch of Highways England, we reflect on the final hurdles negotiated to reach the starting line.

December 2014 saw the announcement of the company name, publication of the Road Investment Strategy (RIS), the first Highways England Strategic Business Plan, and progression of the Infrastructure Bill from the House of Lords to the House of Commons.

In February, the Infrastructure Bill completed the parliamentary process and received Royal Assent, so that we now have legislation in place for Highways England to operate from 1 April 2015.

The government has formally confirmed the appointment of Highways England as the strategic highways company responsible for England’s strategic road network. As a government-owned company Highways England will have access to long-term stable funding to ensure improvements on the country’s major road network are streamlined, cost efficient and encourage investment.

As part of implementing the provisions under Part 1 of the Infrastructure Act 2015, the Department for Transport:

- Formally laid the Road Investment Strategy as an act paper with statutory force. It comprises three parts: the strategic vision, investment plan and performance specification (originally published in December 2014).
- Published the licence which sets out statutory directions and guidance for the company.
- Published statutory guidance to the Highways Monitor (part of which is jointly issued with HM Treasury), and published the Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretary of State and the Highways Monitor in support of the guidance.
- Published the Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretary of State, Highways England and the Watchdog, Transport Focus.

The final part of the formal governance framework, the Highways England Framework Document was published on 20 March 2015. This sets out the relationship with government, especially the arrangements for accountability to parliament and stewardship of public money.

For further information please see the roads reform pages on GOV.UK.
The strategic roads customer watchdog – Transport Focus

In 2014, the Department for Transport announced that Passenger Focus would extend its role representing rail, bus and tram passengers, to include road users on the strategic road network.

Road users include motorists, freight and business users, as well as those who walk or cycle on the network.

To reflect their added responsibility Passenger Focus will change its name to Transport Focus from 1 April 2015. Transport Focus has a legal duty, as set out in the Infrastructure Act 2015, to protect and promote the interests of users of the strategic road network. They will also provide the Secretary of State for Transport with advice based on their research findings.

Transport Focus works to three principles: focusing solely on what users experience and want; being useful to those that make the decisions about transport services; and basing its work on evidence.

The first piece of work from Transport Focus explored how different groups use our network and what their issues are. They carried out focus groups, accompanied journeys and carried out interviews with a wide range of road users.

Chief executive Anthony Smith said:

“User satisfaction surveys allow us to benchmark how different parts of the strategic road network perform. This is a powerful tool for driving change as we have found in public transport.”

Over the last six months the Highways Agency has been working with Passenger Focus (now Transport Focus) to develop a collaborative relationship. We have helped them to understand the strategic road network, how we work, the pressures on our business, how we are developing our new role as Highways England and importantly how they can help us to understand road users better.

Transport Focus has been tasked by government to keep a close eye on what we do and to make sure that we keep on improving services for our road users. They will be getting lots of feedback from road users and they will be sharing those views with us and others. This is our opportunity to really improve our services for road users. Transport Focus will give us their experience and advice, helping us to think and act in ways we have not done in the past and to really find those different and better ways to do things.
Be deer aware this spring

This spring, be ‘deer aware’ and avoid being one of 40,000 road users involved in deer vehicle collisions across England every year, causing some 350 human injuries.

Deer are not afraid of traffic noise and can be seen grazing alongside our roads in many parts of the country, especially during peaks coinciding with the dispersal of the young in May and the rutting season from October to December. Peaks also occur at dawn and dusk, when deer go out and return from feeding.

Collisions often lead to traffic disruption while debris and carcasses are removed. In addition, it’s unpleasant work for our traffic officers and suppliers to manage, while road users can often be distressed when passing dead or dying deer.

Research carried out for us by The Deer Initiative (2010), indicated that while most collisions result in vehicle damage only – costing approximately £16m per year, serious human injuries including fatalities, do occur. The animal cost is also incalculable as many deer leave the scene only to die of their injuries later.

Here are some simple steps to help you avoid a collision:

• Do take note of deer warning signs.
• Drive with caution, where hitting a deer is a possibility.
• Beware at peak danger periods – May and October to December, at dawn and dusk.
• Seen one? Look for another.
• After dark, use full-beams when there is no opposing traffic, dimming them on sight of a deer.
• Don’t over-swerve to avoid hitting a deer.
• Only brake sharply and stop if there is no danger of being hit by following traffic.
• Report any deer collisions to the police.

If only...

In recognition of the significance of deer vehicle collisions, the Highways Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Deer Initiative in October 2014. It is intended that this will provide a framework for partnership working and by improving our understanding of where and when collisions occur, allow us to jointly target our efforts to improve road safety. This work should, in turn, contribute to delivering our road safety vision which is:

**Objective:** no-one should be harmed while travelling or working on the strategic road network.

**Approach:** we will continuously improve road safety and invest in our road network to prevent incidents from occurring, while reducing their severity.

**Goal:** we will achieve year on year reduction in casualties across our network.

For more information about deer collisions visit the Deer Aware website.