

Press release: Highways England working with West Midlands Combined Authority to improve journeys

Traffic officers are to help combat congestion on roads surrounding the M5 Oldbury viaduct as Highways England and the West Midlands Combined Authority join forces to improve journeys.

The two organisations have signed a partnership agreement that involves closer communication and sharing working arrangements to provide better journeys and reduce congestion.

Meanwhile, the Highways England traffic officer service will, for the first time ever, provide additional support to motorists that encounter vehicle breakdowns on key roads near the M5 as part of a 13-month pilot scheme.

The service, which normally only patrols motorways and key trunk roads, will work closely with Sandwell Council as well as West Midlands Police to assist motorists and clear obstructions from incidents to keep traffic flowing in and around the Sandwell area.

Traffic officers will provide additional support to:

- motorists exiting at junction one and travelling northwest on the A41 towards Wednesbury
- motorists exiting at junction two and travelling northwest on A4123 towards the Dudley to Burnt Tree junction, which is six miles from the strategic road network
- motorists when necessary using the A4034, A457 and A4252

Highways England recently started using rapid assistance motorcycles carrying emergency fuel to combat breakdowns and ease congestion on the M5 at Oldbury, while the essential repairs take place. It is the first time fuel bikes have been used by Highways England.

The Oldbury scheme, valued at more than £100 million, includes concrete repairs and waterproofing on the ageing viaduct. It is the largest concrete repair project, by value, ever carried out in Britain.

The partnership agreement was signed by Highways England chief executive, Jim O'Sullivan and West Midlands Mayor, Andy Street.

Mr O'Sullivan said:

We want our customers to experience safer and better journeys.

Working more closely with our partners means our traffic officers can now support those who break down near the main motorway network

while the Oldbury viaduct repair scheme continues.

West Midlands Mayor, Andy Street, said: "It's important that people have confidence that every step is taken to minimise disruption when essential repairs and upgrades take place.

Firstly, this means closer working between the WMCA and Highways England around planning, so that we can ensure these works go as smoothly as possible.

And secondly, measures such as introducing traffic officers to local roads means we can act more quickly when there are breakdowns to clear the way and get traffic flowing.

A huge amount of investment is going into the network in the coming years. This needs to be planned, communicated and managed as well as possible to keep disruption to a minimum. This partnership agreement will help us achieve this.

Sandwell Council's cabinet member for highways and environment Councillor David Hosell, said:

I'm looking forward to seeing Highways England traffic officers on our roads. Anything that will help to keep the traffic moving while work is being done on the viaduct will help commuters and our residents.

To keep the M5 open, a contraflow system is in place with traffic currently using the northbound carriageway and two lanes operating in each direction, along with a 30mph speed limit.

Motorists are reminded to consider using alternative routes while the vital work takes place.

At the link between the M6 and the M5 southbound, one lane leads onto the M5, with three lanes continuing onto the M6, to encourage drivers to take the alternative route around Birmingham.

On the M5 northbound at junction 4a one lane continues onto the M5 through the junction while still providing two lanes to the M42.

The dynamic hard shoulder sections on either side of the M42 and on the M6 are currently being opened much earlier than usual and left on later to see if this helps traffic. The dynamic hard shoulder is used by traffic when the motorway is at its busiest.

Slip roads at junctions 1 and 2 on the M5 are being kept open, to ease effects on the local network.

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: The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport appoints two new Members to the Board of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority \(SGSA\)](#)

Dr Rimla Akhtar MBE became the first Muslim and Asian woman on the FA Council in 2014, in addition to her role on the Inclusion Advisory Board at the FA, and in 2015 was awarded an MBE for her contribution to equality and diversity in sport. She is a developer, communicator and strategist best known for her work as an Inclusion and Diversity specialist in sport, which led to her being ranked 15th in the 2015 list of The Independent's Most Influential Women in Sport. Rimla has over 17 years' experience in the sports industry across the UK, Middle East and Asia as well as a number of accolades to her name, including most recently the Sky Sports and Sunday Times Sportswomen of the Year Community Award in 2013. Her strategic and boardroom roles include being Independent Director and Trustee of Kick It Out, and Council Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland.

Janet Johnson is a chartered town planner by background, having specialised in regeneration and economic development in the North East of England. In a local government career spanning almost 40 years, Janet has enjoyed senior management positions for a number of councils. She is an experienced board member, having served on the boards of a number of organisations in the education and development sectors. In addition to being a specialist in regeneration Janet is experienced in modernising local government, managing change and driving service improvement. Janet was Chief Executive of District of Easington Council from 2004 to 2009 before moving to Sunderland City Council as Deputy Chief Executive where she led the Council's major regeneration programme. Janet took early retirement in 2015. She is married with three children and is a keen follower of football and cricket.

The roles are remunerated at £265 per day. This appointment has 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. Rimla and Janet have declared no such political activity.

News story: Master and vessel owner fined for fisheries offences

Kenneth Savels, master of Belgian beam trawler Van Eyck (Z53) and owner Irina NV (represented by Steven Savels) were sentenced at North Tyneside Magistrates' Court on 26 September 2017 in a prosecution brought by the MMO.

The court heard how the defendants had failed to maintain an accurate logbook by incorrectly recording the area of capture for sole and plaice on several trips in 2015.

On 7 May 2015 the Van Eyck was boarded by MMO officers on a joint patrol with the Isle of Man Fisheries Department in Welsh waters. A diary was found containing details of 12 fishing trips in 2015. The recordings for three of these trips did not corroborate recordings in the logbook.

Both entered not guilty pleas but were found guilty by the judge. Irina NV was ordered to pay a £27,000 fine, £9,115 costs and a £120 victim surcharge. Kenneth Savels was ordered to pay a fine of £3,000 and a £120 victim surcharge.

In sentencing, the judge said:

Taking together all of the evidence for all of the trips, I am satisfied that there are no credible or plausible explanations for the existence of the diary or the inconsistencies between the diary and the log. On each contentious trip there is a clear incentive to misrecord.

A spokesperson for the MMO said:

The court in this case considered these offences to be serious in nature and imposed significant penalties, which recognises the scale of offending that took place in failing to record logbook information correctly.

In these cases the MMO will always take the appropriate action, including prosecution, to ensure offenders do not profit from such illegal activity and to protect fish stocks for the wider fishing industry and future generations.

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News story: Police and National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Bodies – members

Do you want to play a leading role in advising the government on a range of issues relating to police pay and conditions?

Remuneration: remuneration is £300 per day along with reimbursement for reasonable travel and subsistence costs.

Number of roles: 3

Time commitment: The expected time commitment is around 20 days per annum.

The Police and National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Bodies were established in 2014, and provide independent advice to the government on police pay and conditions and pay of National Crime Agency (NCA) officers with operational powers. These roles will provide an influential and intellectually stimulating challenge for the right individuals contributing to recruiting, retaining and motivating an effective police and NCA workforce.

Membership is of both Review Bodies. There are currently 5 members possessing a range of capabilities and we are looking to develop the team with 3 new members:

- 1 with strategic level experience of and expertise in economics in the academic and/or business world
- 1 with significant experience in staff representation
- 1 with experience in policing

As a member, you would have responsibility for working corporately to assess the evidence and develop our recommendations to the government. You would also need to share our commitment to making the bodies a success in supporting the recruitment, retention and motivation of these most vital public services at a time of significant reform.

You will also have a high level of analytical ability, strong communication skills to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, and an understanding of the issues facing complex organisations.

These appointments will be for a period of 3 years with the possibility of

re-appointment.

Further information and details of [how to apply](#)

The closing date for applications is midnight on Sunday 29 October.

We value and promote diversity and are committed to equality of opportunity for all and appointments made on merit.