

Press release: Updated plans for major A2 improvements published

Under the plans, the Bean and Ebbsfleet junctions will both see their capacity increased, improving journeys, boosting safety and preparing the road network for the transformative growth expected in north Kent in the coming decades.

Both junctions will see enlarged junction roundabouts, with new lanes and enhanced slip roads. At Bean, a new bridge will be built over the A2 dual carriageway providing two extra lanes between the two junction roundabouts, which will also be improved, and an additional slip road for eastbound traffic joining the A2.

The Ebbsfleet junction improvements include enlarging the existing roundabouts, widening the road between the roundabouts to a dual carriageway and widening existing slip roads.

An initial consultation ran between January and March last year, before the preferred options were announced in August. Now, the public is being asked for views on the updated plans, which will form the basis of the project's formal planning application.

Highways England Senior Project Manager, Brian Gash said:

Bean and Ebbsfleet junctions serve Bluewater, Ebbsfleet International station and soon the new Garden City and these vital upgrades will help to make sure that the A2 stays fit for the future opportunities coming to Kent.

Demand is expected to grow by up to 200 per cent by 2027, so it is vital that the final proposals we end up taking forward for planning permission are the best we can possibly make them. People's input into the consultation will help us make sure that they are. There are important decisions still to be made about each junction, so I'd encourage anyone with an interest – drivers, residents, business owners and visitors – to get involved.

The announcement has been welcomed by the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, who have also contributed £45m funding for the project.

Ian Piper, Chief Executive of Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, said:

With up to 15,000 new homes in Ebbsfleet Garden City, it is important that local infrastructure is improved to accommodate this growth. With our support for the proposed scheme for the two A2 junctions and a commitment from us to improve public transport in

the area through a new and upgraded Fastrack service, we are investing to ensure traffic continues to flow.

Details on the plans and feedback forms will be available online from 21 February until 11:45pm on 4 April 2018 on the [scheme web page](#). These pages also include details of the Public Information Events that are taking place throughout February and March.

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: Devolution talks take a considerable step forward](#)

Discussions between the UK Government and the devolved administrations on the EU Withdrawal Bill have taken 'a considerable step forward', the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster David Lidington MP said today after chairing the Joint Ministerial Committee meeting in the Cabinet Office.

Mr Lidington said the Scottish and Welsh Government Ministers had acknowledged that the changes the UK Government is proposing to Clause 11 of the Bill represent good progress. Ministers agreed to meet again as soon as possible to try and reach an agreement.

Speaking after the Joint Ministerial Committee (European Negotiations) meeting in Whitehall, David Lidington said:

We had a constructive discussion today. We have not yet secured an agreement but have agreed to meet again in the very near future to crack this.

The Devolved Administrations acknowledged that the proposal we offered yesterday was a significant step forward.

We want to find an agreed way forward that respects and strengthens the devolution settlements and which also provides certainty for businesses and families as we depart the EU.

As we have always been clear, it is our intention that the Devolved Administrations will have more powers as a result of this process.

It is also very important that we protect the UK internal market and ensure that companies all across the UK are able to buy and sell freely.

Joint Ministerial Committee (EU negotiations) communiqué, 22 February 2018

The seventh Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) met today in 70 Whitehall. The meeting was chaired by the Rt Hon David Lidington MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office.

The attending Ministers were:

From the UK Government:

- the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt Hon David Lidington MP
- the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, Rt Hon David Davis MP
- the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP
- the Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP
- the Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt Hon David Mundell MP

From the Welsh Government:

- Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford AM

From the Scottish Government:

- the Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe, Michael Russell MSP

In the absence of Ministers from the Northern Ireland Executive, a senior civil servant from the Northern Ireland Civil Service was in attendance.

The Chair opened the meeting by summarising the constructive bilateral engagement with the Scottish and Welsh governments, including political developments that had taken place since JMC(EN) last met. The Secretary of State for Exiting the EU provided an update on the previous rounds of negotiations with the EU. The Committee discussed forthcoming priorities, including the implementation period and the future relationship with the EU.

The Committee discussed the role of the Devolved Administrations in contributing to the process of developing the UK position in the next phase of negotiations with the EU on the future relationship. The Committee noted the engagement that had taken place between UK Government and Devolved Administration officials since the previous meeting to open discussion on the future economic and security partnerships. Engagement would continue with the aim of ensuring the Devolved Administrations were fully involved in

developing the UK's negotiating position, while respecting the UK Government's role as negotiator.

The Committee discussed the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, including the proposal to amend clause 11. It was noted that progress had been made, but agreement had not yet been reached between the UK Government, Scottish Government and Welsh Government on the form of an amendment. Discussions on further detail would continue in the coming weeks.

The Committee discussed progress on common frameworks. Multilateral official level discussions had explored a range of areas where common frameworks may be required, including where legislative and non-legislative approaches could be appropriate. These discussions were ongoing.

Press release: Aquilon Medical **Nebulisers: people urged to stop use** **immediately**

Following withdrawal of CE certification for the Aquilon series of nebulisers, the manufacturer has continued to place the nebulisers on the market. We have issued a [Medical Device Alert](#) today to all relevant healthcare professionals.

The affected nebulisers and packaging do have a CE mark placed on them, however this has not been obtained through appropriate regulatory oversight and therefore, their safety cannot be assured.

A medical device cannot be marketed in Europe without carrying a CE mark. It is applied by the manufacturer and means that the device meets the relevant regulatory requirements and, when used as intended, works properly and is acceptably safe.

This issue affects Aquilon2, Aquilon, Aquilon+ and Aquilon Pro series medical nebulisers manufactured since 01 April 2015. MHRA believes that more than 8,000 Aquilon nebulisers, which have been on the market since 2015 are affected in the UK.

If there is suspicion that a nebuliser is affected, people are advised to stop using immediately, dispose of the device and to use an alternative nebuliser where available. It is advisable that you speak to your healthcare professional or GP who can help you find out if your device is affected, give you advice on how to dispose of it and provide a replacement.

John Wilkinson, MHRA's Director of Medical Devices said:

We have been made aware that the manufacturer has continued to sell nebulisers even after their CE certification was withdrawn. We cannot guarantee they have been manufactured to an appropriate standard.

These devices deliver potential life-saving treatment and it is vital they operate correctly when needed.

We are taking action, as a matter of priority, to make sure people are aware the CE mark has been withdrawn and that these devices should not be used and should be disposed of.

Patient safety is our highest priority and we urge anyone with questions to speak to a healthcare professional as soon as possible.

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Office hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5pm. For real-time updates including the latest press releases and news statements, see our Twitter channel at <https://www.twitter.com/mhrapress>

[Press release: Child sex offenders](#)

sent to prison after Solicitor General's action

Two men who sexually abused two 14 year old girls have been sent to prison after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, appealed their sentences.

Lee Pollard and Marc Allen were each originally sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment suspended for 24 months at Exeter Crown Court for the offence of sexual activity with a child.

Pollard and Allen who were both 24 at the time knew their victims were under-age when they had sex with them but they later denied this. The offences took place while the young girls were under the influence of alcohol and drugs at a party in Dawlish.

Today, after the action of the Solicitor General, the Court of Appeal quashed the original sentences and replaced them with immediate prison terms. Pollard has been sentenced to 2 years 9 months imprisonment and Allen 3 years 6 months imprisonment.

Commenting after the hearing today, the Solicitor General said:

Despite knowing that the girls were only 14 years old Pollard and Allen engaged them in sexual activity and provided them both with alcohol and drugs. They have no excuse for their behaviour. I hope that the increased sentences will bring some comfort to the girls' families.

Press release: Exeter flood defence scheme

The construction of the Exeter flood defence scheme is now well advanced with completion of the whole scheme expected at the end of 2018. The scheme is a partnership between the Environment Agency, Devon County Council and Exeter City Council. The flood defences will reduce the risk of flooding to more than 3,200 homes and businesses in Exeter.

As part of the new defences being built in the north of the city it will be necessary to close Station Road from 9 April 2018 for 9 weeks. Station Road is located near St David's Station and links Exwick Road to Cowley Bridge Road across the River Exe.

Two flood gates will be built across Station Road on either side of the river and the flood relief channel. When not in use the gates will sit behind the footpaths; when a flood is expected the gates will be closed thereby completing the flood defences and protecting the properties on each side of the river.

It is necessary to close Station Road to vehicles during the construction work due to the size of the foundations required to support the gates. Pedestrians and cyclists will be able use the footpaths across the bridges except for the 4 weekends in May when complete closures will be in place.

Cllr Roger Croad, Devon County Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for Environmental Services said:

This is an essential element of the flood defence scheme and these flood gates will reduce flood risk to hundreds of homes and businesses in the city. Every effort will be made to minimise disruption during the closure of Station Road, but the long term benefits will outweigh the short term inconvenience.

The Environment Agency and Network Rail have co-ordinated their work such that Network Rail will carry out essential maintenance work on their level crossing during this time to avoid the need for a separate closure at a future date.

The Environment Agency will be holding a drop-by briefing on Station Road on 12 March 2018 from 4pm to 7pm to explain the works and diversion routes. The briefing is in the public car park on the Exwick side of the bridge. You can also see the latest information on GOV.UK.

Throughout the works detailed traffic and pedestrian diversion signage will be erected to direct people around the closures.

Richard Cox, the scheme's project manager said:

We'd like to thank commuters and others for their patience while we carry out these essential works. We regret that there will be inconvenience and we urge motorists to plan ahead and allow extra journey time. If people have questions regarding the diversion routes or works they can call the Exeter scheme information line on 07769 162338.