

Press release: Three award wins for Highways England projects

Innovative projects including a virtual reality training programme to improve roadworker safety, a time-saving system to install drainage more quickly and work to repair Spaghetti Junction have picked up prestigious awards.

Picking up the Best Innovation Award 2019 title was Kier, in partnership with Highways England, for the pioneering Aqua-Slot drain developed for the M6 motorway upgrade between junctions 13 and 15.

The judges were impressed by the development of the pre-cast drainage system to reduce installation times, costs and network disruption. They commented:

This required early contractor involvement at various levels within the supply chain to make sure procurement, manufacturing and construction of the units were phased efficiently and safely. The reduced timescales and installation rates benefited the end-user and was only possible by this collaborative and innovative approach.

While the Best Innovation Highly Commended accolade went to the virtual reality training scheme used for those working on the M6 junctions 2 to 4 upgrade.

Working on behalf of Highways England, Balfour Beatty Vinci are using virtual reality simulators to educate the workforce on the perils of working on a construction site.

The fully-immersive simulation is designed to prevent on-site accidents by making projects safer through improved training. Users are given different perspectives of potentially dangerous situations to develop a better understanding of safe working zones.

Judges were impressed with the development of the virtual reality software which “allows workers the opportunity to see the hazards in a safe environment therefore encouraging safe and controlled practices on site”.

It was described as “a great demonstration of innovation in the construction industry”.

A virtual reality training session in action

Winning the Best Small Project Highly Commended award was the Kier team working on the re-waterproofing and concrete repairs at the A38(M) Gravelly Hill Viaduct for Highways England.

This is challenging maintenance on Spaghetti Junction, at a very busy part of

the road network. Judges felt the project team put the 'customer first' during the work.

They said the scheme used some 'really innovative methods but also with excellent stakeholder engagement. These proactive communications included regular newsletters but also working closely with Highways England to disseminate information of closures through TV, radio and Twitter.'

Highways England smart motorways sponsor and WM CIHT committee member Paul Unwin said:

This year's awards showcased another diverse range of submissions and winners.

It demonstrates the exciting range of developments that are being generated in the region and how the West Midlands is leading the way in innovations.

The CIHT awards celebrate the highways and transportation industry, rewarding the achievements of those working in the sector and promoting their professionalism as best practice to a wider industry audience.

This year's annual West Midlands awards took place at the Burlington Hotel in Birmingham

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.