

Press release: 800 tonne M6 bridge to bite the dust in major 24-hour operation

The bridge, north of Stafford, which is almost 250ft in length, will be dismantled and the entire 150-tonne centre section lifted clear and taken away in one piece on a 90ft long specialist transporter to a nearby compound.

Other sections of the Creswell Home Farm bridge will be taken away later. In total, the bridge contains enough concrete to fill 40 tipper trucks. The old bridge will be recycled and used in the construction of the upgraded motorway.

While work takes place the M6, between Stafford (junction 14) and Stoke-on-Trent (junction 15), will be closed in both directions for up to 24 hours over the weekend of 22 and 23 September.

Highways England smart motorways project sponsor, Peter Smith, explained:

This is part of our plan to ultimately improve journeys in this area by adding extra capacity and technology to the motorway.

The bridge is no longer in use and is too narrow for the upgraded motorway which will have an extra lane in each direction.

Demolishing it is a big and complex job and to do it safely we need to use both carriageways of the motorway, which means it will be closed for up to 24 hours.

We're doing all we can to minimise disruption though and that is why we are arranging to take the centre section away in one piece, rather than breaking it up which would take more time.

I'd like to thank motorists, businesses and residents in advance for their patience. I'd also urge anyone wanting to use the M6 in that area on 22 and 23 September to plan an alternative route to avoid congestion between Stoke and Stafford. Please also allow extra travel time and fuel for your journey.

The motorway is due to close at 8pm on the evening of Saturday 22 September 2018 and reopen on Sunday 23 September 2018 as soon as work allows.

Traffic will be diverted off the M6 between junctions 14 and 15 and will use the A34 Stone Road as the diversion route. This route has been agreed with local authority partners and will be kept clear of other works during the demolition. Drivers are warned to expect delays and urged to avoid the area if possible, allowing lots of extra time for essential journeys.

To reduce M6 traffic on the day, signs will alert motorists to the closure as far away as Dover and Carlisle. Motorists and hauliers travelling between the North West and the Midlands and South of England will be urged to avoid the area by using the M62 and M1.

Work is under way with emergency services and social care providers to ensure they maintain their services along the route.

Creswell Home Farm bridge, just north of junction 14, was built in 1961. Removing it will provide extra space to increase the capacity of the northbound entry and southbound exit slip roads and make them safer, as well as remove an unnecessary maintenance liability.

The demolition does not involve the use of explosives. Some noise from excavators, reversing bleepers and concrete crushing will be heard around the bridge while the work takes place.

This is the first of two bridges to be removed. A further 24-hour closure will take place next year to remove the Burton Bank footbridge.

This bridge is too low for the required safety clearance when the hard shoulder becomes a new running lane. Its replacement will be entirely within Highways England land and the current public right of way across the motorway will be maintained.

Highways England is increasing capacity on a 17-mile stretch of the M6 between junctions 13 and 15 by turning the hard shoulder into an extra traffic lane and installing up-to-date technology that will help keep traffic flowing more smoothly. This creates a smart motorway.

This will lead to more reliable journeys on a currently heavily congested route and boost regional growth.

The upgrade will also give drivers better information to help with their journeys, while maintaining high levels of safety.

Work began earlier this year, with bridge strengthening works to prepare for the main scheme. The central reservation barrier is currently being upgraded to a safer, concrete design near junction 15. The work is being limited to a 6-mile stretch only of narrow lanes through to the autumn.

As the central reservation barrier works move south, work will follow behind using contraflow which will speed up the works on the motorway verges and more than halve the number of motorway closures normally required for these works.

The upgrade work also includes:

- Increasing capacity by one third by converting the hard shoulder to a new running lane.
- Installing 20 emergency areas to provide an area of relative safety following a breakdown.
- Hardening the central reserve and installing a reinforced barrier to improve safety.

- Installing approximately 2km of new noise barriers.
- New lighting introduced at junction 15.

The project is due to be completed by March 2022.

More information is available on the [scheme page](#).

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: Family resettlement and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka boosted by £1 million

Nearly 600 families resettled on newly released land in the North and East of Sri Lanka will benefit from £1 million from the UK Government to support the provision of basic infrastructure and services.

Helping families return to their villages is a crucial element of Sri Lanka addressing the legacy of civil war and is a key part of the joint strategy agreed by the UN and the government of Sri Lanka to support long-term post-conflict peacebuilding in Sri Lanka.

The funding will help those returning to their homes in the Jaffna, Killinochchi, Mullaitivu and Batticaloa districts by contributing towards roads, wells and sanitary services, and help re-establish access to local government services as well as local civil society organisations.

It will also help families rebuild their lives by supporting livelihood development through training on small business management, and provision of essential fishing and agricultural equipment.

Minister of State for Asia & the Pacific Mark Field said:

Helping some of the families resettle in districts from which they had been displaced is a very important step. It is symbolic of the steady progress made after decades of conflict. There remains a lot

to do, but I am proud of the UK's support to the rebuilding process.

We will continue to encourage the Sri Lankan Government to make progress delivering their Human Rights Council commitments, and I hope that the UK's Sri Lankan diaspora will also play their part in encouraging that progress.

The UK currently supports stability in Sri Lanka through projects designed to build reconciliation and the rule of law; including, police and defence reform, demining, inter-faith mediation and anti-bribery and corruption, among other issues.

The funding is being provided through the UK's Conflict Security and Stability Fund (CSSF), increasing the UK's contribution through the CSSF for Sri Lanka to £7.9 million between 2016 and 2019.

The funding is part of the UK's contribution to Sri Lanka's Peacebuilding Priority Plan; a joint strategy agreed by the UN and the Government of Sri Lanka to support long term post-conflict peacebuilding in Sri Lanka.

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Mark Field [@MarkFieldUK](#)
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[News story: £76 million a year to](#)

build homes for vulnerable people

The government has announced an extra £76 million a year of funding to build homes for vulnerable people. The new homes will be built over the next 3 years and will be for disabled people, people with mental health issues and older people.

This supported or specialised housing is designed to be accessible and aid independent living by including features such as:

- an individual home with its own front door
- flexibility to adapt or install equipment or assistive technology in the home
- varying levels of personal care and support to residents, including access to a GP or other health services
- communal areas (for housing for older people)

The Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund (CASSH) was announced in 2012 and has been extended until 2021.

The fund is run in partnership with Homes England for schemes outside London, and the Mayor of London for London-based schemes.

Housing providers applied for funding during 2 fixed bidding rounds, and have already built around 3,300 specially designed new homes.

Local authorities and housing developers will now be able to apply on a rolling basis, until all the funding has been allocated for the year.

Minister for Care Caroline Dinenage said:

No one should have to go into a residential home or get stuck in hospital because of a lack of specialised housing adapted to suit their needs. This programme provides a vital life line for some of the most vulnerable people in society to live their own lives in a home that works for them.

We want the fund to be used to its maximum potential so more homes can be created, more quickly, ensuring that thousands of people are supported to live independently in their own homes, benefitting both them and their carers.

Press release: Foreign Secretary to discuss Brexit with four European allies

The Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt will today begin a three day visit to Finland, Latvia, Denmark and the Netherlands to continue his discussions with European partners on the withdrawal of the UK from the EU.

Mr Hunt will meet the Foreign Ministers of all four countries and outline the UK's determination to build a new relationship with Europe after Brexit which will offer a bright future that benefits all on our continent.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

We share history and values with our partners in Europe and work side-by-side to defend the rules-based international system on which our safety and prosperity depend. I'm delighted to be visiting four close European partners this week to reiterate that these strong ties will not diminish once we leave the EU.

As a continent we face many of the same threats, including terrorism and the destabilising activities of Russia. In Finland, Latvia, Denmark and the Netherlands – we have four partners who stood by us when Russia used a chemical weapon on British soil. All four expelled Russian diplomats in retaliation, and we are forever grateful for their solidarity.

In the negotiations to leave the EU our strategic choice is to build a deep and special partnership with the remaining member states. We want to safeguard our operational capacity as we leave the EU, and so we have put forward precise, credible proposals that ensure our ability to act is maintained.

We are now at the point where the EU also faces strategic choices: with the option to move the negotiations forward and achieve a deal that works in our mutual interests. My simple message is that we need to take that opportunity.

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter [@Jeremy_Hunt](#) and [Facebook](#)
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Press release: Minister for Asia & the Pacific Mark Field visits Indonesia

FCO Minister of State Mark Field is visiting Indonesia today (14 August) on a programme that includes bilateral meetings and a [keynote speech](#) on the UK's 'All of Asia' policy at the Centre for Strategic & International Studies.

While in Jakarta, the Minister will be meeting government representatives including Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and incoming Governor of West Java Ridwan Kamil. Mr Field will also visit the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat for talks with ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi.

Discussions will cover bilateral relations, broader regional and global issues, and the UK's relationship with ASEAN and its members after the UK leaves the EU. Mr Field will also travel to Bali to open the new British Consulate, which provides an important service to British people on the island.

Commenting on his visit, Minister Field said:

As a fast-growing, vibrant economy, Indonesia remains a key partner for the UK. My visit provides an opportunity to explore ways to strengthen our cooperation in education and security, and to discuss other global issues including the post-Brexit UK-ASEAN relationship.

The Minister's visit to Indonesia is the first stop in a six-country visit across the Southeast Asia region.

Further information

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