

Press release: Online hub to help learner drivers ahead of law change

The driving hub is being launched to help people improve learner drivers' safety awareness in the run up to the law change on 4 June 2018.

The law change will mean that for the first time learner drivers that are ready to take their test will be allowed to have motorway driving lessons with an approved driving instructor using a dual controlled car displaying L plates. Any motorways lessons will be voluntary and it will be up to the instructor to decide when the learner is ready to drive on a motorway.

Highways England, the body responsible for the country's motorways and main A roads, has supported the creation of [Driving Hub](#) which features a series of free instructional learning modules to help drivers and instructors prepare for the law change.

Highways England has worked with Department for Transport, DVSA, DVLA, the Driving Instructors Association, Approved Driving Instructors National Joint Council, Motor Schools Association of Great Britain and Trak Global, in setting up the website. It is also aimed at improving the driving skills of all road users.

It will be followed by a free smart phone app being launched later this summer.

The free driving hub tutorials are accessible by logging onto the site and include a range of courses covering everything from safety checks, to driving on high speed roads, reading the road, being a considerate driver and managing incidents and breakdowns, as well as a dedicated section for learner drivers.

In the past learner drivers' first experience of driving at higher speeds had been limited to using dual carriageways and only when they had passed their driving test could they get their first taste of driving on a motorway. For some newly passed and inexperienced drivers this could prove to be a daunting and often frightening experience.

Highways England Head of Road Safety, Richard Leonard, said:

We want all drivers on our motorways to be as safe as possible. We're looking forward to helping the motorway drivers of tomorrow to develop new skills and get invaluable practical knowledge and experience of using motorways thanks to this law change.

To help instructors and learners prepare we have worked with our partners to set up these really valuable free resources and I'd urge people to log on and take a look. It will help everyone, not just learner drivers, be safer on our roads.

Driving Instructors Association chief executive, Carly Brookfield, added:

Learners and novice drivers, the next generation of motorway user, will greatly benefit from the hub and the app, but there's also lots of useful advice, guidance and resources on there for parents, and even driving instructors, too.

The free app, called Pace Notes, being launched later, is for all learner drivers and approved driving instructors and can be used alongside their driving lessons and practise sessions. By logging onto [Driving Hub](#), people can register to download the app as soon as it is launched.

Highways England believes the law change will help develop a smarter generation of motorway road users, allowing approved driving instructors to teach test-ready learners about the specific set of skills associated with using the motorways safely in a practical situation.

Further information

The law change will allow learner drivers to:

- get broader driving experience before taking their driving test,
- get training on how to join and leave the motorway, overtake and use lanes correctly,
- practise driving at higher speeds and,
- put their theoretical knowledge into practice.

The Department for Transport consulted on these changes in December 2016, they received wide support from learner drivers, the driver training industry and road safety organisations and the general public. These changes apply to England, Wales and Scotland only. The law applies to drivers of cars only (licence category B).

Learner drivers will need to be:

- accompanied by an approved driving instructor (with ADI certificate correctly positioned in the car windscreen)
- driving a car fitted with dual controls and displaying L plates

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.

Speech: An important step in the interests of peace and the people of South Sudan

Thank you very much Madam President. The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of this important resolution today.

The situation in South Sudan is appalling. Thousands have been killed. Over a fifth of the population are on the edge of famine and over half are food insecure. A third of the population have fled their homes. Widespread human rights abuses continue to be reported.

We strongly welcome and support regional efforts, led by IGAD, to revitalise the peace agreement and broker an agreement between the parties. But it is clear that the parties are still not prepared to compromise in the interests of peace.

Even whilst peace talks were taking place, violations of the cessation of hostilities continued and we have seen horrific reports of violence and human rights violations and abuse. Just today, the media is reporting CTSAMM reports of multiple ceasefire violations, allegations of gang-rape, murdered children and the use of child soldiers.

This cannot be allowed to continue.

It is clear that the solution to South Sudan's crisis is lasting peace. And I agree with my colleague from Ethiopia about the need to address the problems of South Sudan through an all-inclusive political process. Without it, suffering will spread and the consequences will endure for many years to come. Genuine compromise is essential to securing a political agreement which stands the test of time.

Madam President, the United Kingdom believes that this resolution is an important step in increasing the pressure on the parties to compromise in the interests of peace and the interests of the people of South Sudan.

This Council has today shown that it will act. Let that be a clear message to the parties and to those who wish to prevent peace going forward. Madame President, I acknowledge that it is unfortunate that the Council could not agree unanimously today, but I believe that we are united in our vision for South Sudan. I believe we all remain supportive of IGAD and IGAD's work, so let us not cease in our resolve to find peace or give any comfort to those who oppose it.

Thank you Madam President.

[News story: Scottish Secretary tours Stirling University's world-leading Institute of Aquaculture](#)

Scottish Secretary David Mundell met with academics at Stirling University and toured the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre to hear about their work, and how UK Government funding to the university – [part of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal](#) will help them continue their cutting edge research and innovation.

The City Region Deal confirms that the UK Government will invest £17 million to build a new Aquaculture Hub for Innovation.

This will be unique in Scotland and the UK, and will operate four aquatic research facilities which between them will provide the full range of marine environmental conditions.

The hub will create research and development opportunities that will secure jobs and an economic contribution in the process.

The deal also confirms that the UK Government will invest up to £5 million into a new international Scottish Environment Centre, which will provide an integrated approach to cutting-edge research, innovation, skills development, inclusion and sustainable growth that tackles global environmental challenges.

The announcement was welcomed by University Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Gerry McCormac, who said:

I welcome today's signing of a City Deal for Stirling and Clackmannanshire, which will bring significant economic benefits.

Investment in world-class research through the City Deal will enable University of Stirling researchers to further tackle some of the world's most pressing problems. By working in partnership, we can unleash our economic potential, delivering a unique source of jobs, growth, and skills development, both for Stirling, and the wider Scottish and UK economies.

Press release: Liverpool at the forefront of justice transformation

The Crown Court is the first in the country to pilot new software that will streamline and speed up hearings, helping to avoid unnecessary delays in the courtroom. The new system is key to delivering a more effective, efficient and high performing courts service as part of the government's reform agenda which allows Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and police files to be shared between agencies in one easy to access database.

In Liverpool, the pilot was established with the close co-operation of Merseyside Police, Mersey Cheshire CPS and HMCTS and lessons learnt during user testing will play a vital part in its wider adoption.

Justice minister Lucy Frazer said:

Liverpool courts have been at the forefront of cutting edge technology to improve efficiency, speed up justice and provide value for money for the taxpayer.

I was delighted to see for myself the progress being made towards the modernisation of our justice system, which will make our courts fit for the digital age.

Minister Frazer spent the day at Liverpool Magistrates and Crown Court, as well as the Civil and Family court where she met court staff and the judiciary, and, in addition to the Common Operating Platform, was able to see a live demonstration of a second digital system designed to record sentences in real time.

Results of 18,000 cases a week are uploaded using the Digital Mark Up, which went live at every magistrates' court across England and Wales in May, and allows a legal advisor to immediately record the outcome of a hearing, ensuring swift justice. This eliminates the need for a lengthy paper process, and means results can be shared immediately with the CPS and police, therefore freeing up staff to concentrate on the most important matters.

The minister also spent time in the Merseyside Centralised Domestic Violence Court – a dedicated court dealing with all cases of domestic abuse at their first hearing in the magistrates' court as swiftly and sensitively as possible, lessening the impact on the victim.

Today's digital demonstrations follow earlier advances in 2015 which saw Liverpool Magistrates' and Crown Courts integrated into a single centre for crime – the first of its scale in England and Wales, and the early adoption of the Digital Case System in the Crown Court. This system enables the judiciary and other parties in Liverpool to prepare, present and share case

papers in a digital format, thereby reducing delays.

The Government is investing £1 billion in reforming and modernising courts, which has already delivered:

- A fully paperless system in conjunction with Transport for London – which means thousands of cases involving fare evasion are dealt with more swiftly and effectively.
- An online system which enables court staff to prepare case files and access them digitally in a courtroom during a hearing – saving 68 million pages of paper.
- The ability for those convicted of minor motoring offences to make their initial plea online. 1500 pleas are dealt with online every week. Court staff and the police automatically receive the completed online plea form as soon as the defendant has submitted it, reducing delays.

In the civil courts people can now:

- Make a small money claim online – with over 3,000 claims issued in the first month, cases moving through more quickly, and user satisfaction over 80% during the pre-launch pilot.
- Apply for a divorce online – which has cut errors in application forms from 40% to less than 1%, saving people time and trouble during a traumatic time.
- Apply for probate online – which has also cut errors, speeds up the process, and has a satisfaction rate of more than 90%.

Press release: Flood risk due to thundery downpours

With further thundery downpours expected today (Thursday) and tomorrow (Friday), the Environment Agency is urging people to check their flood risk – especially if driving or staying in an unfamiliar location over the half term break. Communities in the South West of England are most at risk, including parts of Hampshire, Wiltshire and the West Midlands.

Locally significant surface water flooding impacts are likely from Thursday afternoon and into Friday due to these heavy and slow-moving thunderstorms. There is also risk of flooding from urban rivers and rivers that rise quickly.

The Environment Agency is again warning drivers not to drive through flood water. Driving through floodwater puts the lives of drivers and their passengers on the line, risks the safety of emergency responders, and often causes serious damage to the vehicle, with three-quarters of flood-damaged cars ultimately being written off. The AA rescued more than 14,500 drivers

from floods between 2013 and 2017.

Kate Marks, Environment Agency flood duty manager, said:

Further heavy showers and scattered thunderstorms bring a risk of localised surface water and river flooding on Thursday and Friday. The main risk is for the Western counties of England, with urban areas are most likely to see the impacts of any flash flooding.

Throughout this period of unsettled stormy weather, our teams will continue to work 24/7 operating flood defences, clearing blockages in rivers and streams to ensure they flow freely, and supporting partners responding to any incidents of surface water flooding.

With heavy rain forecast during rush hour, drivers should stay up to date with the latest weather forecast and travel information before making their journey. We remind people not to drive through flood water as just 30cm can move your car. The public can check our active alerts and warnings – which are updated every 15 minutes – online at www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk or by calling 0345 988 1188.