

# Press release: Captivating CCTV footage of kestrel released by Highways England

The film shows the young bird of prey:

- using the CCTV mast as a perch
- being mobbed both by a magpie and then a raven
- checking out her reflection in the camera
- still-hunting, where the bird sits on the exposed perch and watches for prey
- struggling to keep her perch in high winds

## Kestrel video

The release of the video comes in the wake of the RSPB's BIG Garden Bird watch last weekend. More than half a million people were expected to take part, recording the number of birds that visited their gardens over a one hour period.

The RSPB is also promoting the Big School Bird Watch during the month of February, where pupils will be encouraged to get closer to nature by counting birds at set times.

More information can be [found on the RSPB website](#).

Traffic Officers Leigh Goodchild and Steve Dyas at Highways England's Regional Control Centre in Avonmouth first spotted the cheeky bird in October 2016.

And since then operators monitoring traffic on CCTV have been treated to frequent sightings as the kestrel has made a camera stand at junction 11a of the M5 one of its favourite perches.

Leigh Goodchild said:

We've grown quite fond of our feathered friend since she started visiting the camera. The platform seems to give a good view of the surrounding area and potential prey – on one occasion she returned with half a mouse which she proceeded to swallow complete, tail and all!

We've also noticed she's rather obsessed with her own image, which she probably thinks is an equally nosey kestrel 'in' the camera, but her inquisitiveness has given us some good close-ups.

She's squawked and attacked the lens a few times as well but when that happens we try to discourage her from hurting herself by

tilting the camera skywards.

Her visits certainly brighten up our day and makes a change from the traffic!

With their pointed wings and long tails, kestrels are a familiar sight along UK motorways and other main roads as they use thermals from the road to hover while they look for prey.

Kestrels are generally recognised by their characteristic hovering hunting mode, but also use perches to hunt. They can often be seen perched on a high tree branch, or on a telephone post or wire, on the lookout for prey. The RSPB estimate that there are around 46,000 breeding pairs of kestrels in the UK, and the bird is on their amber list of protected species.

Highways England Traffic Officers operate motorway CCTV cameras from seven regional control centres and the National Traffic Operations Centre and patrol the motorway network around the clock. They work to keep traffic moving by dealing with incidents and setting signals and signs to alert drivers to potential issues ahead.

### **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.

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## **News story: Manchester seminar: Developing place based services in Gtr Manchester slidepack (31 Jan 2017)**

From:

First published:

1 February 2017

In this free seminar learning Jane shared past and future challenges for GM place-based delivery models.

featuring

## **Jane Forrest**

Greater Manchester Public Service Reform Team

The scale of financial challenge facing Greater Manchester public services continues to be a driver for change and across Greater Manchester (GM) partners are working together on the radical reform of public services through a series of challenging and ambitious programmes to improve outcomes for GM residents whilst increasing independence and reducing the rising demand on public services.

The development of place-based integrated working is an essential feature of the GM whole-system approach to the creation of new Public Service delivery models. These new delivery models are being designed against demand; focussing on reduction and prevention and building on community capacity. It is intended that these new models will maximise operational effectiveness within the context of reduced budgets and are essential to the sustainability of neighbourhood services.

In this free seminar learning Jane will share past and future challenges for GM place-based delivery models and discuss how citizens are at the centre of their plans and will help to truly drive whole system reform

Please see slide pack for further information

PDF, 1.22MB, 18 pages

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## **News story: Serious signalling irregularity at Cardiff East Junction**

Over the Christmas period in 2016, Network Rail carried out extensive resignalling and track remodelling work in and around Cardiff Central station. This was the final stage of the Cardiff area signalling replacement scheme, a project which has been in progress for several years. This stage involved the closure of the power signal box at Cardiff, with control of the area moving to the South Wales Control Centre (SWCC), and changes to the track layout and signalling on the east side of Cardiff Central station.

Some of the new track layout was brought into use on 29 December. At 08:46 hrs on that morning the driver of train 2T08 from Cardiff Central to Treherbert, which had just left platform 7, noticed that a set of points in the route his train was about to take were not set in the correct position. Train 2T08 was the first up train on the Up Llandaff line after the start of service over the new layout.

The points at which the train stopped were redundant in the new layout and should have been secured in the normal position in readiness for their complete removal at a later date. The project works required eight point ends in two separate locations to be locked and secured in this way. In the event only six of the eight point ends were locked and secured, and the line was re-opened to traffic without the omission having been identified by the project team through the normal checking processes which should take place as part of this type of works. These two point ends were left in a condition in which they were unsecured and not detected by the signalling system, and the points at which train 2T08 stopped, points 817A, were left lying reverse. If the driver had not noticed the position of these points and stopped, the train would have been diverted towards line E (the former down relief line) on which trains can run in either direction. The new signalling system uses axle counters for train detection, and in this situation the system would not have identified that the train was in the wrong place.

A few minutes earlier, at 08:24 hrs, another train, down train 1V02, had travelled over the other points which had been left unsecured at the other end of the same crossover (817B). These points had been left in the normal position, which was correct for trains travelling over them in the down direction.

No-one was injured and no damage was caused by either event, and Network Rail acted quickly to secure both sets of points.

Our investigation will examine:

- the events leading up to the commissioning of the new track layout in the area of 817 points
- the methods that Network Rail's Cardiff area signalling replacement project used for project management and assurance processes
- the on-site team briefing and works management process.

It will also examine any relevant management issues and consider previous relevant recommendations made by the RAIB.

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry or by the industry's regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#).

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

You can [subscribe](#) to automated emails notifying you when we publish our reports.

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# **Press release: Charity payment after water company permit breach**

The Environment Agency has accepted an Enforcement Undertaking which will see Northumbrian Water pay £375,000 to charities in the North East after it breached environmental permitting regulations.

The offer also includes actions for Northumbrian Water to improve its operations and infrastructure.

It follows a sewage pollution incident involving West Wylam pumping station, investigated by the Environment Agency on 18 February 2015.

A blockage upstream of the pumping station resulted in raw sewage overflowing into Park Burn, a tributary of the River Tyne, breaching its permit.

Investigations showed significant water quality impact at Park Burn, with sewage odour and litter visible, and ammonia and suspended solid levels above accepted levels. Surveys indicated there had been no significant impact on the invertebrate population in the burn, and there was no impact on the Tyne, due to the river size and flow of the river.

Northumbrian Water carried out an immediate clean-up of the polluted area after it was reported to them.

## **Wide range of measures**

The Environment Agency is making better use of the wide range of measures that are available to bring sites back into compliance as quickly as possible. Along with prosecutions, it uses enforcement notices, stop notices and civil sanctions to either improve performance or stop sites from operating.

The Environment Agency's use of civil sanctions is in line with recent legislation extending their availability for more offences.

Civil sanctions such as these can be a proportionate and cost-effective way for businesses to make amends for less serious environmental offences. The company must offer to restore or remediate the harm caused by the incident, and demonstrate they will change their behaviour and ensure future compliance with legislation.

## **Proportionate response**

Fiona Morris, Environment Manager with the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

We will always take forward prosecutions in the most serious cases and while we did initially consider prosecution, the company submitted an EU which we subsequently accepted.

We felt it to be a more proportionate response that would benefit the environment – achieving more than if the company had been convicted and fined.

We work hard to protect people and the environment, and a clear regulatory framework with agreed standards and targets has helped to drive major environmental improvements over the last few decades.

We're continuing to improve our approach to ensure that we remain a fair and proportionate regulator.

The actions offered in the accepted EU, require Northumbrian Water to:

- Make donations to Tyne Rivers Trust (£134,500), Northumberland Rivers Trust (£59,500), Wear Rivers Trust (£48,500), Tees Rivers Trust (£58,500).
- Make a donation of £74,000 to Groundwork towards the Land of Oak and Iron Project.
- Make improvements to site operations and infrastructure, including updated sewerage records, an updated process for asset planning and management and refurbishment of West Wylam pumping station, as well as an accelerated programme of planned upgrades to sewer infrastructure in the area.
- Further inspections and surveys of the impacted area.
- Pay Environment Agency costs.

Failure to comply with an EU may result in the offender being prosecuted for the original offence.

[See the full list of the most recent enforcement undertakings](#)

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## **News story: Work to improve disabled access to toilets on trains and at stations is underway**

Work to improve disabled access to toilets on trains and at stations is underway following talks between Rail Minister Paul Maynard and senior rail industry representatives.

The Rail Minister met with senior executives after Paralympian Anne Wafula Strike highlighted the issue. Clearer information will be made available about the availability of accessible toilets in advance of journeys and the Department for Transport will work with train companies to see how staff training can be improved. Where facilities are out of order, we have challenged industry to make sure disabled passengers are informed before the train departs. Maintenance teams will also ensure accessible toilets are more reliable and fix them more quickly when problems arise, ensuring fewer toilets are out of service in the first place.

Rail Minister Paul Maynard said:

I take the issue of accessibility on our railways extremely seriously and these commitments from industry are just one step forward to improve things.

It is vital that all people, including disabled passengers, are able use public transport and I will continue to push train companies on this matter.

Paul Plummer, chief executive of the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), which represents train operators and Network Rail, said:

The rail industry wants to modernise what is often Victorian infrastructure to make it more accessible and to provide far better information to enable people with disabilities to travel with confidence.

When things go wrong, rail companies want to put them right, and we are keen to hear directly from people with disabilities to understand their experiences which is why the industry is already engaging more with disability groups to understand how we can improve.

It has been a requirement since 1999 that all new trains with toilets are built with accessible toilets as standard – all trains built before then must comply by 2020.

The meeting sought to identify and address the reasons behind the lack of provision of accessible toilets, as part of the government's ongoing commitment to reduce barriers to disabled people accessing transport services. The steps were agreed as part of the rail industry's continued strong engagement with disabled advocacy groups.

More than 150 stations have been upgraded under the [Access for All programme](#) to remove barriers to independent travel – this includes installing signs, ramps and lifts. A further 68 are in construction or development.

The Department for Transport will be publish its 'Accessibility action plan'

later this year, which will address accessibility across all modes of public transport. In addition, Aviation Minister Lord Ahmad will be holding talks on access to air travel for disabled passengers.