

# Speech: Education Secretary opens the Bett Show 2019

Welcome to Bett 2019 – the most amazing, brilliant showcase of education technology and innovation at its very best. Actually, not just its best, but its biggest. Here we are at the 35th Bett Show – bigger than ever – it just keeps on growing.

Speaking of keeps on growing, we're really proud that this show happens here in London because we're very proud in the UK of our EdTech sector; the fourth largest in the world with a projected export value of around £170million (over \$200million). And I want that to keep on growing as well.

But of course, here at Bett you see products, innovations and services from right across the world, as well as from here in Britain. You might say it is an Aladdin's cave for the education geek. Well ladies and gentlemen I have a confession to make to you; I am that geek – or at least I used to be.

I wonder if any of you are old enough to remember this from your youth, I certainly am. This was one of my hobbies when I was growing up – coding, or as we used to call it programming. Sitting in your bedroom trying to get a game out of something as simple and straightforward as a Commodore VIC-20. For any of you who are not old enough to remember what these types of technologies were, a Commodore VIC-20 was something you used to plug into your telly and you would plug in a tape deck to load up programmes. It was something about the size of a small coffee table, with about the same amount of memory. I compare that now to something like 'Fortnite' which my children tell me does not actually take 14 days to play but does seem to take something like 14 gigabytes to download. It was hard writing a playable game with 3583 bytes of RAM; hard – but not impossible. In fact, in some ways, when technology was simpler life was simpler.

When I took my first job at the age of 17 (or at least the first job I had to wear a suit for every day) it was at IBM in Manchester, and it was possible back in those days in 1987, as a 17 year old, to be taught in half a day how to take apart a PC and put it back together. If I reflect back to those times in the late 1980s, I am struck that actually we had all of the core ingredients of office productivity that we have today; we had spread sheeting, we had word processing, we had slide design, we had database and we had desktop publisher. There is the classic Lotus 1-2-3, who's old enough to remember that?

But I'm struck by the difference between having ground-breaking innovation and then having the sorts of great leaps forward that makes those innovations work at their full potential and their full scale in the mass market. Of course, today we still have spread sheeting, word processing, database technology and so on but it was the graphical user interface and 'point and click' technology which made it available to that mass market in an accessible way.

Back in 1987, I was a bit weird because I worked at IBM I had an email address, but if I said that to any of my friends they had no idea what I was talking about, because it took a number of years and three more letters at the end of every email address to make it actually work for the consumer. It took the internet, the biggest leap forward of them all.

Speaking of leap forwards, let's leap forward to where we are today. We have some astounding examples of education technology available, you will see many of them in the halls out there and you can see many of them in very active and productive use in our schools in this country today.

Such as at Bolton College where their chat bot called Ada, named of course after the great Ada Lovelace, is enabling personalised learning for 14,000 students but is also dealing with many routine and not so routine questions, to relieve the burden of administration on staff.

Or Highfurlong School in Blackpool, where they are using technology in very innovative ways to support their students with special education needs and disabilities, to get the very most out of their education.

Or Sandringham School, where they are using technology to create a generation of discerning consumers of information, being critical users of technology and searching out bias online.

There are many, many encouraging and positive things happening in education technology. But EdTech also faces some particular challenges unique to the education sector. One of them is that EdTech sometimes gets a bit of a bad name because this is one of the few sectors where technology has been associated, for some people, not with a decrease in their work but an increase.

One example of that is email. Email is great when it replaces other types of communication, to make things more productive, but in education what you often hear from teachers is that it hasn't replaced anything, it has just added to it. To deal with this, we need schools and leaders to think in innovative ways and we also need the EdTech companies to come up with more solutions.

Of course, one of the very best things about technology and one way in which it has changed remarkably since the 1980s is its ability to crunch large amounts of data, and often, though sadly not always, to turn that into informative analysis, charts and outputs. But of course the data have to come from somewhere and this is another way that EdTech, technology and IT can get a bad name in the world of education; the sheer volume of data that is required or is asked for to be inputted into these systems can create an additional burden on teachers.

Then there's the market itself and there's probably no better example of an efficient market working well than here in the ExCel centre in January 2019 bringing together buyers, sellers, the interested, the curious to come together to taste and see what is on offer.

But away from Bett, there can be some difficulties with how the market works for EdTech products.

If you are a teacher, a school, a school leader or a head it can be very difficult to know from this vast range of what is on the market, what is good. From the point of view of a seller – particularly if you have a devolved system as we do in this country – and we are very proud of our devolved system in education and think it is a great strength. That can also make it hard for a seller to reach the buyer and to be able cost effectively to do their marketing and their product exposition.

There can be a very understandable nervousness on behalf of schools dealing sometimes with brands and names that they are not familiar with and wondering if they can be certain that these will be around in a number of years' time.

Then there is the issue of making a commitment, once you have signed up for a particular piece of software or a particular programme, it can feel like you are locked in. That can both make people stick with things perhaps longer than they would have otherwise, but also make them more reluctant to take them on in the first place. That can mean some wastage which is a serious issue. A serious issue because EdTech is now big business, here in England, technology in general in schools now has a spend of some £450million per year, so we need to make sure that money is being spent effectively.

So from this spring, we are going to be shaping our EdTech strategy for England and it has a number of different elements to it.

One of them is our friends at BESA are running a number of roadshows around the country which have already started, bringing tech to teachers to enable more schools to see what is on offer and to see what is possible. They are free, happening right throughout the country and I would encourage you, if you haven't already, to sign up to attend one.

We also want schools to be able to see good tech in action. That's why we are going to be rolling out a network of demonstrator schools and colleges where educators can get the peer-to-peer support and the training that they tell us is important to them, and raise their confidence level and skill in using some of these key products.

We need to have a trusted single place, an education destination if you like, where people know where to go for education products and services. By the way this is not just for teachers but also thinking about parents and direct consumers of education services as well.

Finally, because of those challenges that I mentioned with the way that markets work, we need to have an informed marketplace where people can buy with confidence and that also makes it more effective and more efficient for sellers to market their wares.

An important part of that is this product, which is being trialled by BESA and launches today, called LendED. It is an opportunity with tech products to try before you buy. It also allows teachers to write reviews and you can see

case studies and get hints, tips and advice on how to get the most out of these products. If you do go on to buy the product you have the reassurance of knowing that the companies involved have been vetted.

So, I want to make sure that in our education system we are able to make the fullest use of the complete range of opportunities available through EdTech. But I also want to make sure that we are able to be specific in what problems we are trying to solve. We have set aside a £10 million innovation fund in order to help to drive this forward and part of that is about addressing some very specific challenges. These are real world issues that exist today that we can look for new solutions to. They cover everything from administration, assessments, learning at all stages, teaching practice itself and the professional development of teachers.

I could have a lot more than ten things up here, if you look at special education needs this could be expanded into a number of different items. In different countries there will be different lists, for example there will be places where accessing remote or particularly sparse rural communities is a very important thing to develop. But I thought ten was quite a lot already and we wanted to have focus. So, these are the ten we are going to be focusing on. Each one has a very specific challenge attached to it and, in most cases, a measurable definable metric as well.

For now let me just talk about three of them. First of all, on lesson prep, I want to see what technology companies can come forward with to help to cut the time that teachers spend on preparing and marking homework and in class assessments. Obviously this is absolutely vital work, it is at the core of what we do in school and is the core of what teachers are about, but it takes too long. I want to see what we can do through technology to cut the time doing that by two hours a week or more.

Secondly, the engagement of parents, and obviously parents are crucial to children's education. Again, I think there is an opportunity here to cut the amount of time it takes while enhancing the quality of interaction with parents. As an example, we already have some schools in the North East of this country where they have introduced an online learning journey which enriches the amount of information available to parents and their involvement in their child's education and the progress they're making, but without adding more pressure onto teachers.

Finally, beat the cheats – we know that the growth of essay mills, the subcontracting of work if you like, and the older problem of plagiarism – these things of course undermine the great work that students do at university. Over time this erodes the validity of qualifications themselves. Software exists and is widely used to try and identify plagiarism and abuse, but it seems the problem exists and in some cases is getting worse. For us to keep up with this, we need to make sure that we are not just up with the cheats but one step ahead of the cheats and we get smarter in the way that we do it.

For all of these three and the other seven on the list, there are three further tests which I think need to be woven through them. The first is that things have to be cost effective, ideally to reduce the cost that schools are

spending on these things to free up more resource for teaching and learning and the other important things that schools do.

I also want it not only to involve a manageable amount of teacher workload, but to cut the amount of teacher workload that is being expended.

Finally and most importantly, it's all about outcomes and enhancing learning so that more children can do better and fulfil their full potential.

I think you've all showed remarkable self-restraint sitting here listening to people doing PowerPoint presentations, I apologise for that, but there are some fantastic presentations coming up after mine which I hope you will enjoy. I know then you'll want to get out into the Aladdin's cave to see the full breadth of all that is on offer.

I do believe we are truly on the cusp of amazing things in education technology and there are some truly amazing products and services. I say amazing in the truest sense; when you see them you are actually taken aback by what is possible.

But in some ways I feel we are still in 1987; we have a lot of these brilliant innovations but we need to make more connections, we need to create conveyors to bring these things to their fullest potential throughout our system.

And Bett, the opportunity you have today to be with colleagues and innovators in the system from around the world, is an unrivalled opportunity to do that.

We must never think about technology for its own sake. Technology is an enabler and an enhancer. Ladies and gentlemen you in this room are a big part of that because we need a partnership approach between educators and innovators, between the technology companies, and the government has a role as well; to make sure we work together to forge those brilliant tools for a brighter future for all our children.

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**[Press release: Sentence increased for man who violently attacked and threatened to kill teenage girl](#)**



A man who was convicted of assault by beating, criminal damage, possession of a bladed article and making threats to kill has today had his sentence increased after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, referred his case to the Court of Appeal.

In August 2018, Jamie Powell, then aged 18 violently attacked the victim at his home while she tried to retrieve her belongings. In September 2018, he visited her family home armed with a kitchen knife and repeatedly threatened to kill her while smashing property and brandishing the knife.

On 20 November 2018 at Truro Crown Court, Powell was sentenced to 12 months detention.

Today, the Court of Appeal has increased his sentence to 30 months in detention.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

Jamie Powell caused his victim physical harm and made threats to her life, terrorising both her and her family. I am pleased that the victim was able to use this process to seek a review of Powell's sentence, and I hope that she finds some comfort from the result today.

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1. 29 January 2019 Content amended as reporting restrictions have been put in place to protect the victims identity.
2. 29 January 2019 First published.

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**[Statement to parliament: Final local](#)**

# government finance settlement 2019 to 2020: written statement

## **Local government finance**

Today I laid before the House, the 'Report on Local Government Finance (England) 2019-20', the 'Council Tax referendum principles report 2019-20' and 'Council Tax alternative notional amounts report 2018-2019', which represent the annual local government finance settlement for local authorities in England.

I would like to thank all colleagues in the House, council leaders and officers, who contributed to the consultation after the provisional settlement was published on 13 December.

My Ministers and I have engaged extensively with the sector, including offering a teleconference to all local authorities, and holding meetings with representative groups including the Local Government Association and with councils and MPs. Representations from around 170 organisations or individuals have been carefully considered before finalising the settlement.

This settlement is the final year of the 4 year offer which was accepted by 97% of councils in return for publishing efficiency plans. This settlement comprises a broad package of measures and confirms that Core Spending Power is forecast to increase from £45.1 billion in 2018-19 to £46.4 billion in 2019-20, a cash-increase of 2.8% and a real-terms increase in resources available to local authorities.

Yesterday, I released £56.5 million across 2018-19 and 2019-20 to [help councils prepare for EU Exit](#).

## **Adult and children's social care**

The government has listened and responded to the pressures local authorities are facing and announced at Autumn Budget in October 2018 that we will be providing additional resources across 2018-19 and 2019-20 to support social care. This funding includes £240 million in both 2018-19 and 2019-20 to support adult social care services to reduce pressures on the NHS, and an additional £410 million Social Care Support Grant for local authorities to support adult and children's social care services. Having considered responses to the provisional settlement consultation, I can confirm that this will be distributed according to the existing Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formula.

The additional resources announced at Autumn Budget, alongside the Adult Social Care council tax precept and the improved Better Care Fund, mean that councils will have been given access to £10 billion in dedicated funding that can be used for adult social care over the 3 years from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

For 2019-20, local authorities will have access to £4.3 billion in dedicated resources for Adult Social Care, including £1.8 billion in improved Better Care Fund grant.

## **Business rates growth, and the distribution of funds within the levy account**

In addition, every authority in England also stands to benefit from increased growth in business rates income, which has generated a surplus in the business rates levy account in 2018-19. I can confirm that £180 million will be returned to the sector and distributed based on each local authority's 2013-14 Settlement Funding Assessment.

This highlights the continued success of the business rates retention system, from which local authorities estimate they will gain an additional £2.4 billion in retained business rates growth in 2018-19 on top of settlement core funding.

## **Business rates retention pilots**

As we move towards our aim of devolving additional grants to increase business rates retention to 75% from 2020-21, I will continue to test increased business rates retention with a range of local authorities across a wide geographical spread.

At the provisional settlement I confirmed that 15 new pilots will get underway in 2019-20 in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Leicester and Leicestershire, Norfolk, North and West Yorkshire, North of Tyne, Northamptonshire, Solent Authorities, Somerset, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, West Sussex and Worcestershire. I will also be piloting 75% business rates retention in London and continuing ongoing pilots in 5 devolution deal areas.

## **New Homes Bonus**

Local authorities are instrumental in ensuring the building of homes this country needs. As well as providing extra resources for social care, rewarding local authorities for economic growth and testing elements of future reform, I am keen to provide as much continuity and certainty to the sector as possible. As a result, I can confirm that the payments threshold for New Homes Bonus will be retained at 0.4%. To keep the baseline at 0.4%, I am investing an additional £18 million. The total budget for the Bonus this year is therefore £918 million.

The consultation illustrated that the sector wants certainty on the future of the New Homes Bonus after next year. The government remains fully committed to incentivising housing growth and will consult widely with local authorities on how best to reward housing delivery effectively after 2019-20.

## **Rural funding**

The 2019-20 settlement confirms that the Rural Services Delivery Grant will continue to be £81 million in 2019-20, maintaining the highest ever levels of funding provided in 2018-19. This has been welcomed by rural local authorities from particularly sparse communities. Our review of local authorities' relative needs and resources will consider the specific challenges faced in all geographic areas, including rural areas, to inform the final distribution formula.

## **Negative Revenue Support Grant**

Having listened to representations since the provisional settlement, this settlement also confirms that the government will directly eliminate the £152.9 million negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) that occurs in 2019-20 using foregone business rates.

Negative RSG is a direct consequence of the distribution methodology adopted for the 2016-17 settlement, whereby for less grant dependent authorities the required reduction in core funding exceeded their available RSG.

The Government's decision will prevent any local authority from being subject to a downward adjustment to their business rates tariffs and top-ups that could act as a disincentive for growth, and I believe this is the most straightforward and most cost-effective means of dealing with this issue.

## **Council Tax referendum principles**

Finally, I can confirm that in 2019-20 local authorities, with the exception of Police and Crime Commissioners, will retain the same flexibilities to increase council tax as in 2018-19, with a core council tax referendum principle of up to 3%. I have agreed with the Home Secretary that the referendum limits for Police and Crime Commissioners will be set at £24 to address changing demands on police forces.

I have also decided to provide Northamptonshire County Council with an additional 2% Council Tax flexibility, to assist with the improvements to council governance and services after their serious issues. Use of the flexibility will ultimately be a matter for the authority's cabinet and full council.

During the consultation, many local authorities called for referendum limits to be removed. However, I believe the proposed limits allow local authorities to retain the flexibility to raise additional resources locally to address local needs, whilst protecting households from excessive increases in council tax, in line with the government's manifesto pledge.

## **Future of local government finance**

A strong theme during the consultation was calls for certainty on the future of local government finance. To meet the challenges of the future, we have

published two consultations on [future reform of the business rates retention system](#) and on the [assessment of local authorities' relative needs and resources](#). These consultations close on 21 February.

Alongside the 2016-17 local government finance system, the government announced a review to develop a more up-to-date and responsive distribution methodology for the sector. In December, I announced a new consultation, seeking views on the future assessment of relative needs and resources, and on principles for transitioning to new funding arrangements in 2020-21.

Alongside the new funding methodology, in 2020-21 we will also be implementing the latest phase of our business rates retention programme that gives local councils the levers and incentives they need to grow their local economies. The consultation seeks views on how the business rates system can be reformed to: provide a strong growth incentive; strike a desirable balance between risk and reward; and reduce complexity and disproportionate volatility in local authority income where possible.

## **Conclusion**

This settlement recognises the pressures that councils face in meeting growing demand for services and rewards their impressive efforts to drive efficiencies and help rebuild our economy.

This settlement answers calls for additional funding in 2019-20, and it paves the way for a more self-sufficient and reinvigorated system of local government.

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## **[Press release: £300,000 refurbishment for Branston Island flood reservoir](#)**

A reservoir that helps protect more than 7,000 homes and businesses in and around Lincoln from flooding has undergone a £300,000 refurbishment.

The work, completed by the Environment Agency over 11 weeks, involved repairing the banks and bank tops, plus concrete and mechanical repairs to sluices that control the flow in and out of the reservoir.

Branston Island flood reservoir is located 7 miles southeast of Lincoln and stores excess water from the River Witham. Together with the River Till and River Witham reservoirs, it helps reduce flood risk to the city of Lincoln and nearby villages.

Combined, the three reservoirs can hold over 11 million cubic metres of water – the same as 440 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Built in the 1960s, it is part of a system of sluices and engineered channels managed by the Environment Agency which includes Sincil Dyke, Boultham catchwater and the Great Gowts Drain to better protect 7,200 properties.

The reservoir was last used to store water from the Witham during a period of wet weather in winter 2012.

Paul Dutchburn, Asset Performance team leader at the Environment Agency, said:

We carry out regular checks, tests and repairs that ensure our defences can continue to reduce flood risk to homes and businesses – and that includes carrying out maintenance like this on our reservoirs.

Across the country, we're investing over £200 million this year to maintain our flood defences so they continue to help protect our communities.

Environment Agency teams work around the clock to help protect people from flooding, but everyone still has a responsibility to take steps to reduce their own risk.

Check whether you're at risk of flooding, and sign up to receive our free flood warnings by calling 0345 988 1188 or visiting [www.gov.uk/flood](http://www.gov.uk/flood). By registering, you can choose how you'd prefer to be reached – by text, phone call to a mobile or landline, or even email – giving you vital notice to prepare if flooding is expected.

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## **Press release: Communities to benefit from schemes to ease traffic delays**

This funding boost comes from Highways England's Growth and Housing Fund budget and includes:

- nearly £4 million for junction improvement schemes around the A45 in Northamptonshire
- almost £3 million for junction improvement schemes around the M42 and M5 in Worcestershire
- nearly £620,000 at Moor Lane Roundabout in Exeter

Ian Parsons, Highways England's senior investment planning manager, said:

Our roads are vital for the country and its economic success; they

connect businesses and communities and support employment and new homes. All of our improvements will ultimately ensure our roads continue to improve journeys and unlock the potential for new jobs and homes.

## **Northamptonshire**

Northamptonshire will benefit from a Highways England contribution of around £4 million to deliver a comprehensive package of junction improvements at Queen Eleanor, Brackmills and Great Billing junctions along the A45.

This funding is aimed at helping local communities unlock plans for future housing, including a Homes England site at Hardingstone and to create better journey times and generate jobs.

Once delivered, the improvements will support a further 14,500 homes in the wider area and create some 3,000 jobs. The improvements will be delivered by Northamptonshire County Council.

Councillor Ian Morris, county council cabinet member for transport, highways and environment, said:

These are very important works for Northampton and the county as a whole as the infrastructure improvements to these busy parts of the road network will help accommodate housing development. This goes to show how good partnership working can be instrumental in bringing the improvements required that benefit the local economy.

Head of Public Sector Land (South East) for Homes England Charles Amies said:

Providing major infrastructure is key to unlocking the development of new and affordable homes, so we welcome Highways England's investment in improving the A45.

The development will support the ambitions we share with Northamptonshire County Council and Northampton Borough Council to create the communities, employment opportunities and transport links the county needs.

Regional Director for Kier Living Martin Bessant added:

We are committed to building houses in areas of the country with the greatest need. Our Hardingstone development will deliver 750 new homes as well as vital new and improved infrastructure, including roads, as we look to leave a lasting legacy for residents and the wider community.

The Northamptonshire improvements scheme is expected to start on site in June 2019 and be completed and open to traffic by March 2021.

## **Worcestershire**

Worcestershire will benefit from a Highways England contribution of £2.68 million to support two schemes to improve journeys around junction 4 of the M5 and junction 1 of the M42 near Bromsgrove.

The improvements, which include widening the A38 at junction 1 of the M42 and at M5 junction 4 to Lydiate Ash Road, are expected to significantly reduce queuing at peak times in the area and improve journey times. They are part of the wider A38 Bromsgrove Corridor scheme which, when complete, is expected to unlock a total of 1,946 homes and allow new offices and warehouse space to be built, creating employment opportunities in the local area.

The scheme is being developed by Worcestershire County Council in partnership with Bromsgrove District Council and is being funded by Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP), Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and Highways England with further funding from the private sector.

More details on the scheme will be shared by Worcestershire County Council over the coming months.

## **Exeter**

Exeter and the surrounding area will benefit from a £619,000 Highways England contribution to the scheme which will deliver extra lanes on the southern approach to Moor Lane Roundabout and improve local road access from the A30.

The improvements will reduce queuing at peak times in the area, especially on the M5 junction 29 exit slip roads, and improve journey times.

The £2.23 million scheme is being delivered by Devon County Council and is also being supported by the Department for Transport's National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) which is providing £858,000 in funding, with a further £750,000 coming from the private sector. Work is expected to start the Autumn of 2019 and continue until the following Spring.

Highways England's contribution will enable the building of 370 of the planned 1,870 homes at Cranbrook in east Devon and Hill Barton in Exeter to be brought forward.

The scheme also complements the recently delivered Tithe Barn improvement scheme, which included a 60-metre span pedestrian and cycle bridge and was funded with over £4 million from Highways England's Growth and Housing Fund, as well as developers' contributions.

The pedestrian and cycle bridge, which runs alongside the existing bridge just north of Junction 29, opened in February – with the link road fully opened in April.

Councillor Andrea Davis, Devon County Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for Infrastructure and Development, said:

Increasing the capacity at Moor Lane roundabout is a positive investment in our local infrastructure which supports Devon's continuing economic growth. It will help citybound commuters on the A30 in the mornings and will ease congestion problems for people leaving Sowton Industrial Estate in the evenings.

Devon County Council is continuing its excellent track record of getting schemes shovel ready. Working with Highways England, the Growth and Housing Fund, has helped us deliver the Tithebarn Link Road and pedestrian and cycle bridge, while the National Productivity Investment Fund is helping support the next phase of the E4 cycle route, expansion of the Co-Bikes scheme, a new Park and Change near Exeter Science Park and the works at Moor Lane roundabout.

The eastern edge of the city will benefit from over £15 million of transport investment over the next three years. These improvements will upgrade transport links while providing access to planned new homes and employment land.

Steve Hindley, Chair of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, also welcomed the improvement to the Moor Lane junction, adding:

This scheme will help support the dynamic growth of both employment and housing East of Exeter, including the Science Park, Skypark and the new community of Cranbrook. Reducing congestion is crucial in continuing to attract investment in our businesses.

All the schemes are receiving support from the fund that has already provided over £77 million to communities across the country, improving junctions and creating access to commercial land and new homes.

To date the specialist fund has made huge improvements and benefits to local communities, unlocking homes and jobs in Swindon, Exeter, Weston-super-Mare, Darlington, Scunthorpe, Grantham, Warrington, Derby, Oldham, Taunton, Durham, Daventry, Leicester and Southampton.

## **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.