

Press release: New M20 junction leads record South East road investment

The construction of junction 10a, near Ashford, will unlock job-creating developments, improve journeys, and open the door to further inward economic investment for communities along the M20, a crucial link to the south coast.

Since the project was given the go ahead in December 2017, final preparations for starting construction in 2018 are nearly completed and now work will start on setting up a site compound ahead of main construction starting in the spring.

It is one of four major improvements that will start construction across South East England in the first six months of 2018, promising better, safer journeys.

The projects hitting milestones between January and June 2018 across the South East

Between now and June this year, work will also start on three smart motorway upgrades in Kent, the Solent and on the M23 near Gatwick. Together valued at over £550m, they will add around 65 miles of new lanes, increasing capacity by a third, and introducing new technology to tackle congestion and keep drivers informed. Four other upgrades across the region will hit crucial points – including public consultations that will help shape the proposals, and route announcements.

A consultation on improving junction 9 of the M3 near Winchester launched in January. And on Monday 12 February 2018, a consultation into major improvements of the M25's interchange with the A3 near Wisley in Surrey will also begin.

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

These upgrades in the South East will improve millions of journeys. Each of these milestones in the region is evidence of Highways England delivering major infrastructure upgrades for the whole country.

Nationwide, 37 projects will hit milestones over the same period, including seven schemes starting construction and four improvements opening to traffic, adding much needed extra capacity to some of the country's busiest roads and improving journeys for millions of drivers.

The upgrades are funded by the Government's £15bn investment in motorways and main A roads and being delivered by Highways England.

April will mark three years since Highways England embarked on delivering the

Government's Road Investment Strategy, the biggest investment in the country's major roads since the 1970s.

The 37 schemes reaching milestones in the first half of this year will join the 18 major projects that have already opened to traffic since April 2015. A further 16 are presently in construction. Those which opened include the M3 smart motorway between the M25 and Farnborough, and a new dual carriageway on the A21 near Tonbridge in Kent.

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: Terrier rescued after a ruff time on the motorway

Highways England traffic officers Nick Sivell and John Winsor were called to an incident on the M23 on Tuesday after reports of a car colliding with the central reservation.

The driver, from Brighton, had to be taken to hospital, leaving Sally and the car on the hard shoulder while recovery was arranged.

Nick and John paws-ed for thought and then took it upon themselves to look after the pooch in peril.

Nick said:

If you have an emergency on the motorway and need to stop, it is always safest to leave any animals travelling with you in the car, while you and any passengers get out and behind a barrier. The driver did the right thing. Normally, we'd contact a local animal sanctuary or kennel who could look after any stranded animals, but on Tuesday there was no one who could help straight away.

Poor Sally was stressed and having a really ruff time, not only after the impact of the collision, but seeing her owner being taken away in an ambulance. We realised that the only solution to this canine conundrum was for us to look after her for a while.

Nick and John calmed the terrified terrier down and took her to Highways England's regional control centre in Godstone where she was looked after while they tried to find someone to solve their doggy dilemma.

John said:

Part of our job is being able to be adaptable and keeping an eye out for anything unusual, and we always keep our eyes and ears open, but this was certainly something we don't deal with every day.

Highways England traffic officers handled 49,000 incidents last year alone and are used to dealing with a variety of incidents and problems during their shift – and not always just with humans.

Nick and John had recently been on an animal handling course which gave them training and techniques on how to deal with a variety of stressed animals, from swans to horses, which helped them know how to comfort 15 year old Sally.

Sally made herself at home at the control centre and John and Nick got in touch with Furry Friends (a rescue centre based near Godstone), who arranged to come out and collect Sally while her owner recovered.

John continued:

Luckily the driver was okay and has been discharged from hospital. Sally was collected from Furry Friends in Coulsdon, and the driver and Sally are now reunited at home in Brighton. We are so glad this tail had a yappy ending.

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[Press release: Powers over onshore oil](#)

& gas licensing regimes transfer to Scottish Parliament

From today [9 February 2018] Scottish Ministers will have new powers over onshore oil and gas licensing, continuing the drive to make the Scottish Parliament one of the most powerful devolved administrations in the world.

The latest in a raft of powers transferred to Holyrood through the Scotland Act 2016, these include:

- Powers to legislate for the granting and regulation of licences to search and bore for and get petroleum;
- Powers to determine the terms and conditions of licences;
- Powers to regulate the licensing process.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

This is the latest in the transfer of significant new powers to the Scottish Parliament.

The Scotland Act 2016 delivers in full the recommendations of the Smith commission. We promised to make the Scottish Parliament one of the most powerful devolved administrations in the world, and we have delivered on that promise.

People in Scotland now have a greater say than ever before over their own affairs, while retaining the security and safety of being part of a strong United Kingdom.

Since the Scotland Act 2016 received Royal Assent, various powers have been transferred to the Scottish Parliament. These include:

- Various tax and fiscal powers including the ability to adjust rates and bands of income tax and powers over assignment of VAT revenues
- Responsibility over certain powers in relation to elections to the Scottish Parliament and local government elections in Scotland
- Responsibility for managing the Crown Estate assets in Scotland
- Increased responsibility for welfare policy and delivery in Scotland.

This comes on top of powers which were already devolved:

- Health
- Enterprise policy / regional development / Local Government – including business taxation
- Law
- Social work and housing
- Public sector reform
- Energy and utilities infrastructure

- The environment
- Sport and the arts.

The Scottish Government also has a robust financial settlement through the 'fiscal framework', plus an additional £2 billion allocated at the Autumn 2017 Budget, which also confirmed the Scottish Government's block grant will increase in real terms over 2015-2020.

[News story: CIC Q&A Session on Coverting to the CIC model](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Take a look at our webinar on Conversions to a CIC

[News story: New plans for military flexible working become law](#)

The Armed Force Flexible Working Bill, which became law on Thursday 8 February.

The measures, which achieved Royal Assent on Thursday, will allow some military personnel to serve part-time for defined periods.

Consultation within the Armed Forces has found that personnel want more choice over the way they serve when their personal circumstances change, such as having young children, needing to care for elderly relatives, or taking on further training and education.

Personnel will also be able to restrict the amount of time they spend away from their home base and their families.

The plans, which will come into effect in 2019, are part of a range of measures the Armed Forces are implementing to become more modern and diverse.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This change will make it significantly easier for our dedicated Armed Forces to raise their children, care for elderly relatives,

or look after an ill family member.

This will ensure we are able to retain and recruit the brightest and the best from all backgrounds to keep Britain safe.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Flexible work is key to retaining our expert personnel who we've invested in during their military career.

Personnel have told us they want more flexibility and we have listened – that's what this Act delivers.

The flexible working measures are designed so that they won't impact the military's ability to deliver its core tasks of defending the country. Applications for part-time service and restricted separation will be assessed against the need of the Armed Forces and personnel would be required to deploy on operations should the need arise, such as in cases of national emergency.

Internal MOD surveys have consistently reported the impact of service on family and personal life is the most important factor that might influence them to leave.

Flexible working will help retain personnel, and a recent survey found that 70% of respondents were supportive of more opportunities for flexible working, with 71% interested in taking up such opportunities in the future.

The measures are part of military modernisation, aiming to retain personnel who have been trained and have gained important experience, particularly on operations, rather than having them leave for civilian life.

96% of UK employers already offer flexible working for some of their employees and research has found that offering flexible working encourages people to stay with their current employer.