

Press release: Have your say on plans to widen A12 in Essex

The project, which will see the widening of the A12 between junction 19 (Boreham interchange) and junction 25 (Marks Tey interchange) in Essex, will reduce congestion, improve safety and boost the economy. It is part of the government's record £15 billion investment in England's motorways and major A roads.

A Highways England consultation seeking public views on the proposals starts today and will run until Friday 3 March 2017.

Four options were shortlisted to be put forward to consultation:

- Option 1 – widening the existing A12 corridor (the online option)
- Option 2 – widening the existing A12 corridor between junctions 19 to 22 and 23 to 24 and two new bypasses between junctions 22 and 23 (Rivenhall) and between junctions 24 and 25 (Marks Tey)
- Option 3 – a variation of option 2 with only one new bypass between junctions 22 and 23 (Rivenhall)
- Option 4 – a variation of option 2 with only one new bypass between junctions 24 and 25 (Marks Tey)

Map showing the different options up for consultation on the A12 between junctions 19 and 25

Highways England programme leader Richard Hofton said:

Deciding how best to plan and carry out improvements along the A12 is vitally important and we've been working hard to identify a range of possible solutions to take forward.

There are important choices to be made and we are keen to get as many views as we can, so I encourage anyone who would like to find out more to check out the consultation materials online or come and see us at one of our public exhibitions.

People are invited to attend one of the seven public exhibitions, held at venues along the A12 route between Chelmsford and Colchester, to find out more and take part. A consultation into plans for proposed improvements on the A120, which is being organised by Essex County Council is also being run at the same time and some of the events will be run jointly.

All responses to the A12 consultation will help Highways England take the best possible improvements forward. For more information about our proposals and the public exhibitions, and to provide your views, please visit the [scheme website](#).

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: Waste site operation to protect workers and the environment

The Environment Agency has joined forces with the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) in the North East to carry out combined visits to check waste sites aren't flouting important legislation.

This ongoing multi-agency approach aims to improve working practices on regulated sites.

During the last series of visits at the back end of 2016, staff attended 13 sites across the region, with more visits proposed for the early part of the New Year.

To date the joint initiative has focused on sites that recycle, process or store waste metal, such as scrap vehicles and general waste metal. Operators use a variety of processes and equipment to strip, cut and burn waste to extract the key metal and components, work which has the potential to expose workers to risks to health and safety.

The aim of these visits is two-fold; to make sure the sites are operating within the conditions of their Environmental Permit to protect the environment and community, while ensuring the health and safety of workers isn't put at risk.

The Environment Agency's Ruth Tyson, Waste Team Leader, said:

We manage our permitted sites every single day to ensure they are operating within the law, to protect the environment and to minimise impact on the local community.

Health and safety is paramount when our officers are visiting sites and officers regularly contact HSE if they feel a site is unsafe.

These joint operations are a really good opportunity to share

knowledge with other agencies and mean we look at the site from different perspectives, ensuring any issues impacting on the environment and community can be looked at together with site safety.

Inspector Victoria Wise from the Health and Safety Executive added:

An average of 7 people are killed each year in the waste industry, this includes members of the public. The main causes of death are people being run over or struck by a moving vehicle or something unstable collapsing on them.

A high number of workers in this industry are also exposed to processes that cause irreversible ill health conditions. During the last joint initiative HSE found 8 sites visited to be in significant contravention of health and safety law with 7 Enforcement Notices served.

Joint operations such as this mean we can work alongside the Environment Agency to make sure those responsible for the sites are not exposing workers, members of the public and the environment to harm from the operations they undertake.

News story: Air pollution advice to the public

Widespread moderate and high [air pollution levels](#) are currently being measured across many parts of the UK due to still and foggy weather conditions, with some isolated pockets of very high pollution mainly across southeast England but also possible for some urban areas of Northern Ireland, central and eastern England.

Some very high levels are also expected, mainly across southeast England but also possibly for some urban areas of Northern Ireland, central and eastern England. Air pollution is expected to remain low across Scotland.

Current air pollution levels are due to the continuing high pressure and associated light winds across the UK.

During periods of high air pollution adults and children with lung problems, and adults with heart problems, should reduce strenuous physical exertion, particularly outdoors, and particularly if they experience symptoms. People with asthma may find they need to use their reliever inhaler more often. Older people should also reduce physical exertion.

Anyone experiencing discomfort such as sore eyes, cough or sore throat should consider reducing activity, particularly outdoors.

For those parts of the country forecast to have very high levels of ambient air pollution, Public Health England is advising people to reduce physical exertion, particularly when outdoors and especially if they experience symptoms such as a cough or sore throat. Adults and children with lung problems, adults with heart problems, and older people, in areas where very high levels are recorded should avoid strenuous physical activity. People with asthma may find they need to use their reliever inhaler more often.

Light winds and foggy conditions are expected to continue through Wednesday, especially across southern and eastern parts. This will lead to the ongoing risk of areas of moderate air pollution levels, along with isolated pockets of high levels. Meanwhile across the north and west increasing winds should lead to air pollution returning to low levels.

These low levels are expected to spread to all parts during Thursday and Friday as stronger winds extend east across the UK.

For the latest forecasts and health advice, please visit the [Defra UK Air website](#) and alerts for high levels of air pollution are issued by Defra via the Air UK Twitter account [@DefraUKAir](#).

Further information:

- The 5-day forecast of predicted air pollution levels is continually updated on the UK Air website, with advice from Public Health England to allow members of the public, particularly those who are most likely to be affected by air pollution, to take action.
- We also work with health charities to make sure vulnerable people are aware of any periods of low air quality.

News story: Chief of the Defence Staff strengthens UK – Romania Defence ties

He today welcomed to London General Nicolae-Ionel Ciucă, Chief of the General Staff of the Romanian Armed Forces, to discuss mutual interests and strengthen Defence ties. This follows Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon's [announcement](#) last year that the UK will send RAF Typhoon aircraft to Romania in support of the NATO Southern Air Policing mission.

General Ciucă and the Chief of the Defence Staff discussed the UK and Romania's partnership as members of NATO, UK deployments to Romania this year, and possible trade opportunities.

Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach said:

The UK shares an important Defence relationship with Romania, both bilaterally, and as part of our membership of NATO.

I was pleased to welcome General Ciucă to the UK, and continue to recognise the key role Romania plays within the Alliance, including their commitment to increase defence spending to meet the 2% of GDP target this year.

To enable the UK's contribution to NATO Southern Air Policing, RAF Typhoons from RAF Coningsby will be based at Mihail Kogălniceanu Airbase for up to four months in 2017, the Defence Secretary said at the end of last year.

Additionally, as part of multinational NATO exercises, British land forces will deploy to Romania for various exercises this summer, demonstrating the Alliance's commitments on the south-eastern flank. Defence Engagement in 2017 will also include a Royal Navy Type 45 Destroyer visit to a Romanian port.

Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach added:

Our deployments this year by land, in the air, and at sea, underline the UK's commitment to working within NATO alongside our Romanian friends.

The UK-Romania relationship was further strengthened by a [visit](#) last year by then Romanian Minister of National Defence Mihnea Motoc, who was hosted by the Defence Secretary.

During his visit General Ciucă is also due to visit the Northwood Headquarters, where he will meet senior UK military personnel from the Joint Forces Command and speak to Romanian officers based at the NATO Allied Maritime Command.

Press release: Charity trustees censured over repeated failure to file accounts

The Charity Commission has today concluded its [inquiry](#) into [Apostolic Faith Mission International Ministries UK](#) (registered charity number 1096543). The Commission investigated the charity after it repeatedly failed to file its accounts ([see endnote 1](#)). The investigation concluded that the trustees had

been responsible for mismanagement and misconduct. As result of the inquiry the charity is now in compliance with its legal duty to file accounts and £872,238 is now transparently and publicly accounted for on the register of charities.

The charity was ordered by the Commission to file its accounts ([see endnote 2](#)). A Commission accountant scrutinised the accounts and identified that they were not compliant with the charity accounting regulations and identified issues with the charity's internal financial controls. The inquiry found that the financial governance of the charity was inadequate, particularly in relation to how cash was handled.

The Commission ordered the trustees to implement recommended actions by way of a formal action plan to resolve the issues identified ([see endnote 3](#)). The Commission monitored the charity, and it submitted its 2014 and 2015 accounting information on time (for the first time in 10 years). To ensure the charity had complied with its order, The Commission met with the trustees in February 2016 and found that they had completed the actions set out in the action plan and were discharging their duties in relation to the governance of the charity including its financial controls by properly managing the charity's funds.

As a result of the Commission's engagement the financial governance of the charity has been improved.

The inquiry concluded that there had been mismanagement and misconduct by the trustees, due to their failures to file annual accounting information for 2013, and mismanagement by the trustees due to the failures in financial governance at the charity.

Carl Mehta, Head of Investigations, Enforcement at the Charity Commission, said:

Charities enjoy a range of benefits as a result of their status, but they also have a duty to the public, as well as a legal duty, to be transparent regarding their finances and submit accounts to be displayed on the register of charities.

The Commission takes this responsibility seriously and regards it as mismanagement and misconduct in the administration of the charity when a charity fails to submit their accounts. Trustees must also ensure that their accounts comply with the relevant accounting standards and that their charity has robust financial controls in place.

The Commission has produced guidance to assist trustees in implementing robust internal financial controls that are appropriate to their charity. [Internal financial controls for charities \(CC8\)](#) is available on GOV.UK. There is also a [self checklist for trustees](#) available.

The full report is available on [GOV.UK](#).

Ends

PR 03/17

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).

Endnotes

1. The inquiry was opened on the 4 February 2014. The charity was previously part of the [class inquiry](#) in September 2013 for failing to submitting accounting information for the financial years ending 31 March 2011 and 2012.
2. On 12 February 2014, the inquiry exercised powers under section 84 of the Charities Act 2011 to direct the trustees to submit the relevant missing annual accounts, reports and returns for the charity for financial year ending 31 March 2013 to the Commission.
3. On 23 September 2014, the inquiry exercised power under section 84 of the Charities Act 2011 to direct the trustees to implement the Commission's recommendations.