

Update from National Highways on M4 works

Please find below the letter update that I have received from National Highways concerning works on the M4.

Dear Rt Hon. Sir John Redwood MP

National Emergency Area Retrofit – work set to begin on M4 between junction 10 and junction 12.

We are delivering a government commitment to add more than 150 more emergency areas to motorways across the country including several sections of the M25 and surrounding motorways.

I am writing to update you on what this means for the M4 in your area. Between junctions 10 (Wokingham) and 12 (Theale) we are adding 12 new emergency areas to the existing 10, providing drivers with more places to stop if they need to in an emergency.

The work is expected to start from Tuesday 7 May 2024 and is due to be completed by March 2025. Whilst we will do our utmost to maintain these dates, these dates may be subject to change.

There are major upgrades already underway at junctions 10 and 28 of the M25, as well as regular roadworks for maintenance and renewals. We know just how busy this section of the motorway network is and are working tirelessly to coordinate all this work closely and keep disruption to an absolute minimum. You can find out more about these projects, including a series of planned weekend closures on the M25 junction 10 project on their webpages:
<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/south-east/m25-junction-10/>
<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/south-east/m25-junction-28-improvements/>

To carry out the work safely, lane one (the left lane) on the four-lane motorway, will be closed throughout construction. Lanes two, three and four will remain open with a 50mph speed limit in place. Existing emergency areas through roadworks will remain open and a free recovery service will be in place throughout the roadworks.

The traffic management for the working areas will be installed overnight when the traffic flows are quieter. We always do our best to minimise disruption and we apologise in advance for any inconvenience these works may cause to your constituents.

It may take a few weeks before the roadworks appear as preparatory work is completed. We will regularly publish information about the upgrade and the roadworks on our website at www.nationalhighways.co.uk/emergency-areas.

The new emergency area work will mainly be carried out Mondays to Fridays

from 7am to 7pm. There will be occasions when we need to close lanes, slip roads or the carriageway between junctions for construction activities and deliveries to the work sites, but this will be overnight and at weekends when traffic flows are at their lowest. Should there be a need to close overnight there will be clearly signed diversion routes in place.

We are in close contact with local authorities through coordinated collaborative meetings to minimise the impact of roadworks as much as possible. A summary of all planned closures on the strategic road network is available at: Road closure report – National Highways.

Emergency areas provide a place to stop in an emergency if drivers cannot exit the motorway or stop at a motorway service area. They are clearly signed at regular intervals along the motorway and have bright orange road surfaces to help identify them. At 100 metres long, they have plenty of space for even the largest lorry plus a recovery vehicle and they are equipped with emergency telephones linking directly to our control rooms to get help on the way quickly.

You can find out more about what to do if your vehicle breaks down on the motorway here: <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/road-safety/breakdowns>. This investment in extra emergency areas, along with technology like stopped vehicle detection, more signs, and clear advice about all lane running motorways online and in an updated Highway Code, will help road users feel safe and be safer on our roads.

Through all the work we are doing, we are determined to further improve public confidence in driving on our motorways and to continue to build and operate one of the safest and best performing road networks in the world.

Drivers can visit Driving on the motorways – National Highways for more details on what to do in the event of an emergency, including how to use an emergency area.

We are encouraging drivers to plan their journeys and check before travelling and we would be grateful if you could consider re-sharing our posts and information on your channels and with your audiences to help increase awareness about the work.

For more information you can follow National Highways @highwaysseast and <https://www.facebook.com/HighwaysSEast> .

I hope you find this update useful.

Yours sincerely

National emergency area project sponsor

Service to constituents and journalists

A journalist has asked questions about my service levels as an MP, so I am sharing the answers in case others are interested.

Letter from Minister – School building condition improvements

Please find below a letter that I have received from the Minister concerning Schools which will benefit from funding improvements to buildings.

Dear John Redwood,

Condition Improvement Fund Outcomes

Further to the letter from my right honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Education, about our funding to improve the condition of school buildings, I am delighted to confirm that there are 2 projects which will be funded in your constituency. The list of successful projects has been published online and includes projects at:

- The Forest School
- The Coombes Church of England Primary School

The successful schools in your constituency have also been informed today, and officials will now be contacting schools about the terms and conditions of projects and delivery and payment schedules. Further guidance and information can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund.

Data on the amount of funding provided for projects in each region is available at: Condition Improvement Fund: 2024 to 2025 outcome – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). We will also publish project-level funding at a later date, only once a sufficient number of projects from the round are complete, to avoid influencing the local commercial tender processes before that point.

For any schools in your constituency that have not been successful, we will provide feedback to support them with future applications. We will publish guidance for any applicants who may want to appeal their outcome. Schools will be able to find this guidance on our online CIF Portal.

If any schools in your constituency have further enquiries, they can enquire via the Education and Skills Funding Agency customer help portal:

<https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/>

Yours sincerely,

Baroness Barran

Minister For the School System and Student Finance

The threats from Iran

President Biden changed US policy towards the Middle East in 2020. He pulled out of Afghanistan too suddenly, losing a crucial air base and undermining his allies. It led directly to the Taliban taking the country over, after 20 years of the west losing lives and spending huge sums to stop them. He then tried to get a negotiated settlement with Iran. President Trump had negotiated successfully with the Gulf states to achieve their peace with Israel and to try to do the same with Saudi. All agreed Iran was a threat.

President Biden has ended up with worse relations with Saudi and the Gulf states, with OPEC pushing up oil prices by withholding production and now with US forces shooting down Iranian drones and missiles. Iran was always constructing a ring of hostile forces to the west with the Houthis in Yemen now firing on civilian cargo ships, with Hezbollah in Lebanon , Iraq and Syria and Hamas in Gaza.

The UK needs to be super vigilant to stop terrorists gaining access, to continue to work closely with allies to ensure good intelligence

Wokingham Borough opens Wokingham up to more development

I have worked with a group of MPs to secure the promise from Mr Gove of the ending of top down targets for more housing set in Whitehall. This now allows a Council like to Wokingham to have more say over how many new homes will be built in the years ahead in our area. In order to control the numbers the Council needs to produce a new local plan setting out how many, where and why.

The Councillors in charge of Wokingham Borough have wasted time and delayed bringing forward the necessary plan. If a Council does not have an up to date plan developers can apply for permission where they like and then appeal

if they are turned down. On appeal the Inspector may well grant permission. Only if there is a clear modern plan covering forward years will the Inspector be guided by local wishes embodied in the plan. Without it the Inspector is more likely to be guided by the need to build more somewhere. The Council does not like the current ageing plan which expires soon, so why the delay? The current plan offers no protection for building after next year.

In opposition the Lib Dems were fiercely against too much development, and promised a No when it comes to Hall Farm as a location. Now in charge of the Council they fail to set out limits to development, and are reported to be considering major housebuilding on Hall Farm. Why? Why do they always let us down and override clear wishes expressed by the public in consultations? Why have they not moved promptly to take advantage of the new approach?