

Press release: Intelligent road studs to improve road safety

Highways England is installing around 170 of the innovative LED road studs at one of England's busiest motorway junctions – used by over 90,000 vehicles every day.

The intelligent road studs are being introduced as part of a £3 million project to improve journeys and safety at Switch Island in Merseyside, where the M57, M58 and 3 A roads all join together.

The LED road studs light up when traffic lights turn green so drivers can clearly see which lane they should follow. Cables under the road surface connect them to traffic lights through a nearby automatic controller unit.

The studs can be visible up to 1,000 metres away – far greater than traditional reflective road studs – and have been proven to help stop drivers drifting between lanes, reducing the risk of collisions.

Highways England has already installed the LED studs at Hindhead Tunnel in Surrey to guide drivers through the tunnel but the Switch Island scheme will be the first time they have been linked to traffic lights at a motorway junction.

Phil Tyrrell, Project Manager at Highways England, said:

We're always looking for new ways to further improve journeys and safety for drivers, and I hope the new intelligent road studs will help better guide drivers around Switch Island.

The innovative light-up road studs along with the other improvements we're introducing will make it much easier to navigate the junction, benefitting the tens of thousands of drivers who travel through it every day.

Construction work on the Switch Island scheme, which is being funded by the government's £220 million congestion relief programme, is due to start on Monday 5 February and is expected to take around a year to complete.

The scheme is designed to improve the flow of traffic and enhance safety, following 49 collisions at the junction in the past two years – an average of one every fortnight. New traffic lights will be installed at a height of over 5 metres – higher than HGVs and double-decker buses – so that drivers approaching the junction can clearly see when the lights are changing.

Other improvements will include changes to the road layout and lane markings, new barriers between carriageways, coloured high friction surfaces and better signs. And a new 400 metre shared cycle path will be created through the

junction, which will link up with the existing cycle path alongside the A5036 Dunnings Bridge Road.

Jerry McConkey, Sefton Council's Transportation and Highway Infrastructure Service Manager, said:

We have worked closely with Highways England and Merseyside Police to look at the issues at Switch Island and develop improvement proposals.

As a result, we are delighted that these important safety measures are about to be introduced with Highways England implementing the latest technology solutions. This will further improve safety and give drivers a much higher level of confidence when negotiating this busy junction.

The new intelligent road studs which are being installed at Switch Island were designed by Oxfordshire-based company Clearview Intelligence.

Managing Director Nick Lanigan said:

The introduction of intelligent road studs, reacting to traffic light changes on a busy roundabout is a continuation of the traditional road studs legacy but takes advantage of new technology available. The new studs have been proven to reduce lane transgression by over 50% in certain conditions so it's a great way to help improve the safety for all road users.

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.

[**News story: International Trade Secretary appoints new 'HM Trade**](#)

Commissioner' for China

- Richard Burn named as HM Trade Commissioner for China
- Dr Fox leads delegation of more than 50 British businesses
- Prime Minister announces £9 billion of new trade

Richard Burn is the first of 9 HMTCs to represent and promote the UK in important markets across the world.

The announcement comes during a UK trade visit to China led by the Prime Minister in which she announced around £9 billion of new deals for British companies.

Trade between the 2 countries is at record levels, worth over £59 billion annually, with British exports to China growing by more than 60% since 2010. The UK is already one of the largest European recipients of Chinese foreign direct investment.

Leading a delegation of more than 50 businesses to China, Dr Fox announced the first HMTC to head the global operations of the Department for International Trade (DIT) in China.

Each of the HMTCs will lead on export promotion, inward and outward investment, and trade policy overseas on behalf of the UK government. Their work will include developing and delivering a regional trade plan setting out DIT's priorities in important global markets.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, said:

DIT was established to deliver a new approach to trade and investment promotion and this requires a new, senior, commercial team to lead our trade work overseas.

As an international economic department, we've moved quickly to appoint the first of these important roles. With his existing wealth of trade and investment experience, Richard will provide intelligence on the ground, deciding what tailored action is required in China, and playing a vital role in our future global trading relationships.

DIT Permanent Secretary, Antonia Romeo, said:

I'm delighted to welcome Richard to this important new role in DIT, and look forward to working with him to maximise British trade with the Chinese market.

Establishing a network of HMTCs across the world is an important step in building the capability of the Department. HMTCs will be experts in their regions, providing a clear vision and direction to

the department's global operations.

HM Trade Commissioner for China, Richard Burn, said:

China presents unrivalled opportunities for British companies. My role as HM Trade Commissioner for China will be to build on the strong links already in place, as we intensify the 'golden era' of UK-China trade. My top priority will be to achieve better market access for sectors in which the UK excels.

Since the start of the visit on Wednesday, Dr Fox has witnessed the signing of a number of commercial deals and also addressed business leaders at a Digital China event promoting future collaboration opportunities between healthcare and big data providers.

Dr Fox also attended a Britain is GREAT reception, showcasing the UK's creative, consumer, tourism and hospitality sectors.

The visit culminated in today's China-UK Business Forum, bringing together hundreds of British and Chinese business leaders, including Ali Baba CEO Jack Ma.

About Richard Burn

Richard Burn is currently DIT Director General in China.

Richard has extensive business experience in China, including with Diageo, APCO and Batey-Burn, a market access and investment consultancy he co-founded and ran from 1989 to 1999. Richard has worked closely with government in China and the UK, including as former Prime Minister Sir Edward Heath's Private Secretary.

About HMTCs

All of the new HMTCs will cooperate closely with HM Ambassadors and High Commissioners, the wider diplomatic network, and other HM Government colleagues based in countries in their region, in a joined-up and co-ordinated government effort overseas to promote UK trade and prosperity.

Two of the roles will also have Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Consul-General responsibilities in the cities where they are based.

In total, there will be 9 geographical areas that the HM Trade Commissioners will cover:

- Africa
- Asia-Pacific
- China
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia Network
- Europe

- Latin America
- Middle East
- North America
- South Asia

Further HMTCs will be appointed shortly.

[Press release: Minister for Africa welcomes new EU sanctions against South Sudan](#)

New European Union sanctions have been [announced](#) today (Friday 2 February), targeting three South Sudanese former and current officials responsible for serious human rights violations and obstructions of the political process.

Paul Malong, Malek Reuben Riak and Michael Makuei Leuth will now be subject to sanctions by all EU member states, effective immediately.

This action comes ahead of the start of new peace talks hosted by Ethiopia in Addis Ababa on Monday 5 February. These talks aim to restart the peace process following the repeated breaches of the cessation of hostilities agreed between South Sudanese government and opposition forces in December 2017.

Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

It is more vital than ever that those undermining the process recognise the price of their actions. The UK has played a leading role in pushing for these sanctions at an EU level and it is right that we are taking tough action against those who continue to act against the interests of the South Sudanese people.

We remain committed to supporting the peace process and urge South Sudan's leaders to participate in good faith to agree a political solution and end the suffering of their people.

Conflict has devastated South Sudan, causing a humanitarian, political and economic crisis. Over one and a half million people are on the brink of famine – twice as many as the same time last year. Over four million people, a third of South Sudan's population, have fled their homes causing Africa's largest refugee crisis.

Further information

[News story: UK to play a major role in space weather mission concept](#)

Solar loops after eruption. Credit: ESA/ROB.

Space weather occurs when the sun ejects material which can be highly charged, super heated and hazardous to manmade infrastructure and human life in space.

The new mission aims to put a spacecraft at a fixed point away from the line between the sun and the Earth, known as the 5th Lagrange point, so it can monitor for these events and provide an early warning system. Three out of four teams developing the platforms and instruments to support the European Space Agency (ESA) mission are from the UK.

Airbus UK will lead on developing the overall mission, with the focus on mission operations, the spacecraft platform, and on how this interfaces with the instruments. STFC RAL Space will lead the development of instruments to observe the sun and heliosphere and UCL Mullard Space Science Laboratory will lead the development of instruments to make measurements of the solar wind. OHB, from Germany, will lead the fourth consortium, aiming to develop a competing platform, with all proposals to be assessed by ESA.

Supporting the UK's growing space sector is a core part of the government's Industrial Strategy, which aims to bring together the UK's world-class research base with business investment, ensuring we continue to develop the technologies and industries of the future.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

"This project has the potential for UK space and engineering expertise to help ensure vital communications, navigation and power networks are protected, and is a great example of what we can achieve through continued scientific collaboration with our European partners.

"As set out in the Industrial Strategy, the UK's space sector is going from strength to strength, boosting the economy, employing around 40,000 people and developing innovative services with a global impact."

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

"The UK is a world leader in providing space weather forecasts and this mission will help the Met Office's Space Weather Operations Centre improve

this further. It's a great example of the value of our work as a member of ESA to science and industry in the UK."

In 2016 the UK Space Agency committed €22 million, over 4 years, to ESA's Space Situational Awareness (SSA) programme.

Matt Perren, Head of Future Projects at Airbus space in the UK, said:

"A mission to the 5th Lagrange point will significantly enhance our capability to protect our planet against space hazards. We are excited to make available Airbus' experience as leader of cutting edge solar observation and Lagrangian missions to support ESA and the UK Space Agency in strengthening the resilience of our valuable assets in space and on Earth."

Dr Richard Cole, who will be managing the study contract at UCL, said:

"UCL has a long track-record in the science of space weather and in building instruments to investigate it. I am very pleased that UCL is able to lead a team of European institutes in developing this important mission that will help us develop an early warning system for space weather and better predict its harmful effects on both ground- and space-based technologies – something we've never been able to achieve before."

Dr Jackie Davies, Consortium Lead for this study at STFC's RAL Space, said:

"This mission is a fantastic opportunity to apply the extensive scientific and space instrument expertise and heritage here in STFC RAL Space to a growing societal problem. We have been advocates for such a space weather mission over many years, based on RAL Space's leadership of the pioneering Heliospheric Imager instruments on NASA's flagship STEREO mission. It is extremely satisfying to achieve this goal and we are now looking forward to the challenge of leading a multi-instrument, multi-national instrumentation development programme."

Rare extreme space weather could disrupt modern technology by causing geomagnetic storms affecting satellite navigation, shortwave communications and power grids. A recent ESA study estimated the potential socio-economic impact in Europe from a single, extreme space weather event could reach €15 billion. Much of this disruption could be avoided through accurate forecasting.

ESA is planning to select a final design for the spacecraft and its instruments based on the results of these studies, which are due in about 18 months.

Press release: Camera footage helps secure fisheries conviction

Body worn camera footage captured by Environment Agency officers on patrol has been used to support a conviction for the first time.

Callum Bell, 26, of Lyndsey Street in Houghton-Le-Spring, was fined for obstructing Fisheries Enforcement officers during an incident at Ouston near Chester-le-Street in June last year.

The footage shows Bell using insulting and threatening behaviour towards the two officers as they investigated an illegal fishing offence.

He appeared at Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court on Wednesday, 31 January, where he pleaded guilty to two offences of wilfully obstructing the officers in the execution of their duty, and two offences of using threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour towards the two officers. He was fined £534 and ordered to pay costs of £530.

In a separate offence from the same incident, David Daniel Bilverstone, 23, of Northlands in Chester-le-Street was charged with fishing without a licence. He failed to appear and the case was proved in his absence. He was fined £110 and ordered to pay costs of £180.

Threatening towards officers

Acting on behalf of the Environment Agency, Chris Bunting told the court that on 18 June last year, the enforcement officers were carrying out a patrol of the freshwater lake Ouston Springs. They saw Bilverstone fishing with a rod and Bell seemingly asleep on the bankside.

One of the enforcement officers took Bilverstone aside to fill in an offence report form. He said he goes sea fishing and claimed he didn't know he needed a licence.

At this point Bell awoke and walked towards where the officers were standing by the lake side. It was apparent he was affected by alcohol. He quickly became aggressive and threatening towards the two officers.

He tried to grab the offence report book, threatened to push them in the lake and twice lunged towards one of the officers, trying to grab the officer's baton from its holster. Over the course of several minutes he continued to be verbally abusive, repeatedly swearing and making threats.

Even after the officers had finished dealing with the illegal fishing offence, he continued to shout abuse towards them from across the lake.

When interviewed, Bell said he was drunk and hadn't meant to obstruct the officers. In court, he offered an unreserved apology for his actions.

'Safety of staff is paramount'

Rachael Caldwell, Environment Agency Enforcement Team Leader for the north east, said:

Bell was told on more than one occasion that he was being recorded by the cameras but he continued to be threatening and abusive.

Our officers are doing an important job to ensure people are fishing legally and taking action against those that aren't. The safety of our staff is paramount and they shouldn't have to put up with any kind of abusive or threatening behaviour.

This is the first time cameras worn by our officers have been used to support a conviction. Our preference is to prevent hostility in the first place and I hope this serves as a warning to others that their actions are being recorded and will be used in future court proceedings. Hopefully people will think twice before acting in such a way.

Environment Agency enforcement officers in the north east first trialled the use of body worn cameras last year to help reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour, assaults and threats against staff. It's expected they will be rolled out to teams elsewhere in the country in the coming months.

The cameras – which are the norm among many enforcement agencies – can be used in a variety of ways, including at visits to poor performing waste sites, illegal waste sites, during fisheries and navigation patrols and even during incident response.

Officers must follow clear guidelines on use of the cameras, including telling people they are being filmed, and deleting any footage after a month unless it is used for evidential purposes.

Fishing is free for children under 16, although those aged between 12 and 16 still need a junior licence. For anyone over 16, a full annual licence costs from just £30, with some short term and concessionary licences also available. [You can buy your rod licence online](#)