

[Press release: Share your views on plans for the A417 Missing Link](#)

On 15 February 2018 Highways England will launch a consultation on options to upgrade a three-mile stretch of the A417 near Birdlip in Gloucestershire.

Known locally as the 'missing link', this stretch of single carriageway road between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout restricts the flow of traffic on a key route which is otherwise dual carriageway. Upgrading this section to dual carriageway will help unlock Gloucestershire's potential for growth and secure opportunities for housing and jobs, as well as improving life in local communities.

The A417 passes through the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and so any solution will be designed sensitively to meet the special character of the landscape, environment and history.

The improvement is being made possible by the Government's £15bn investment in motorways and major A roads and will be delivered by Highways England.

Project manager Mike Goddard said:

Our plans will deliver reliable journey times between the Thames Valley and West Midlands, offer a safer journey for drivers and protect the special character of the landscape.

Upgrading this route has been a key focus for the community and we would encourage as many people as possible to share their views on the different options to help us shape the best possible outcome.

Highways England is holding a public consultation between 15 February 2018 and 29 March 2018. Once the consultation officially launches, full details of the options for consideration and feedback forms will be available online via the [scheme website](#), along with dates and venues public information exhibitions.

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: Getting ready for the Customs Declaration Service](#)

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will begin a phased launch of the Customs Declaration Service (CDS) in August 2018. CDS will replace the existing Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system, with all declarations taking place on CDS from early 2019.

CHIEF currently processes declarations to facilitate the international movement of goods between the UK and non-EU countries. CHIEF will continue to run for a time to aid the transition to CDS.

Why CDS is replacing CHIEF

CHIEF is one of the world's largest and most sophisticated electronic services for managing customs declaration processes, but it's nearly 25 years old and can't be easily adapted to new requirements.

The decision to replace CHIEF with CDS was made before the EU referendum, however CDS will be scaled to handle any potential increases in the volume of declarations that may result from the UK's exit from the EU.

How this will affect importers and exporters

If a trader imports or exports goods outside the EU, they or their agent will be currently using CHIEF to:

- process declarations for goods entering and leaving the UK or EU through ports and airports
- calculate and pay the correct duty and taxes
- complete customs information electronically

They will still be able to do these things on CDS, but there will be differences:

- they will need to sign into CDS on GOV.UK through a Government Gateway account
- CDS will offer several new and existing services in one place – for example, traders will be able to view previous import and export data on pre-defined reports, check the tariff, apply for new authorisations and simplifications, and check their duty deferment statement
- online help will include self-service tools, guides and checklists

Some additional information will be required for declarations in order to align with the World Customs Organisation Kyoto Convention, currently being implemented in the UK through the Union Customs Code (UCC):

- an audit trail of previous document IDs
- additional party types, such as the buyer and seller
- possible additional commercial references or tracking numbers
- levelling – change between ‘Header’ and ‘Item’ for some data items

To align UK customs data with international standards, there will also be changes to:

- location of goods identification (based on UNLOCODE)
- the warehouse type code list
- item tax lines, including method of payment codes
- unit of quantity codes (ISO)
- the way customs procedures are quoted
- the number of items on a declaration – CDS will allow a maximum of 999 items on a customs declaration instead of the current 99 items on CHIEF

An updated tariff manual will be available in April 2018.

Alerting importers and exporters about using CDS

HMRC is currently building and testing CDS with industry, software providers and Community System Providers (CSPs). CSPs operate computerised inventory systems that control the physical movement of import and export freight at UK ports and airports.

CDS will be phased in between August and early 2019, with CHIEF continuing to run during this time to aid the transition. Importers, exporters or their agents will be informed by their software provider when they need to provide the additional information in order to start making declarations on CDS.

To keep informed about CDS, please send your name and email address to communications.cds@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk to register for email updates.

The updates will provide regular information on CDS and any preparations you may need to make ahead of CDS going live.

There will also be regular updates about CDS on GOV.UK and through trade associations.

[Speech: Gold standard: The Touchstone Award](#)

This article first appeared in the January 2018 edition of [TStoday](#).

In our current multichannel retail world, where consumers have direct access

to global markets, it is essential that hallmarking continues to be enforced. Jewellery represents a particular opportunity for deceit because the person buying the article has no way of knowing whether their 18ct bangle is gold to the core, the fashionstatus trademark on their bracelet is genuine, or their prized cufflinks are merely plated with a thin layer of gold that will soon wear away, to expose base metal below.

High precious-metal prices, the popularity of more expensive brands, and the difficulty in identifying whether an item is what it purports to be, are all driving criminal activity. This can range from a slightly maverick workshop using under-carat components for repairs, to serious organised crime, funded by the mass sale of counterfeited products such as Tiffany, Pandora and Links of London.

Spotting non-compliance

The situation is exacerbated by the lack of consumer understanding of hallmarking legislation. A survey conducted in April 2017, with a Department for Business, Energy and Industry Strategy consumer panel, found “spontaneous awareness of hallmarks was initially extremely low”. When prompted, many people claimed to understand it, but the survey showed their knowledge to be poor and largely inaccurate. So, the consumer is relying on the jeweller to be trustworthy. As a result, enforcement of the legislation depends upon continual trade vigilance and trading standards enforcement.

High street non-compliance is relatively easy to spot. Many Touchstone applications chronicle proactive campaigns that have started by checking that dealers: are displaying notices explaining hallmarks; have correctly calibrated weighing scales; and stock hallmarked items in store. Pursuing non-compliance with these basic requirements regularly reveals significant long-term offences, leading to prosecutions for trademark infringements, among others.

Online sales are far more difficult to monitor. There is undoubtedly a significant lack of compliance online, with goods without a hallmark or incorrectly described being offered by businesses and private individuals on their websites, as well as on specialised jewellery marketplaces and resale platforms, such as eBay. Policing and enforcing compliance within the increasingly significant global, online market is a universal problem across all sectors. Within this market, there is little control over quality, or the reassurance and legal verification of a hallmark.

Consumer detriment

With local resources overstretched, there is a worry that trading standards officers will focus on more obviously life-threatening or sinister sectors, such as counterfeit drugs, loan sharks or faulty electrical goods. However, every hallmarking investigation reveals evidence that the centuries’ old law is not being observed and, frequently, there are other illegal activities related to such infringements. These could be apparently minor, such as illegal weighing scales, but the level of cheating that can be achieved by

this practice is significant.

At the other extreme, trading in counterfeit luxury jewellery items could be part of serious organised crime. There is always significant detriment to the consumer and, in many cases, it is the most vulnerable in our society who are being cheated.

Last year's Touchstone applications, from across the UK, reflected complaint intervention, proactive enforcement projects and information operations. There was also evidence of positive longterm activity in hallmarking operations from all applicants. This is encouraging news, but much more is required if effective enforcement is to be exercised over the ever-expanding online offer of jewellery from around the world now accessible in the UK.

Celebrating success

The winning Touchstone application for 2017 came from the London Borough of Ealing. Its success was down to a well-planned and executed series of inspections, after information that jewellery without a hallmark was on sale in the area.

A range of activities in various high-street premises was headed up by team leader Peter Clark, assisted by enforcement officers Mohammed Tariq and Brian Gohery. Their investigations revealed major noncompliance with the [Hallmarking Act 1973](#) by the jewellers inspected.

A carefully staged approach started with visits to advise all jewellers of their legal requirements. Subsequent visits led to jewellery without a hallmark being seized from several of the 24 premises visited. Inspection by the London Assay Office revealed that 82% of seized items were not hallmarked, and 22% were fraudulently described as 22ct, when they could only have been hallmarked as 18ct or – in one case – 9ct because of under-carated solder. Successful prosecutions followed, with non-compliant traders receiving more than £11,000 in fines. A hallmarking project is now embedded within the Ealing TS annual service plan and priorities.

As ever, the [winning team](#) was well rewarded for its efforts. The Touchstone Award was announced at the 2017 CTSI Conference dinner in Harrogate, and presented to Ealing by chair of the British Hallmarking Council Noel Hunter.

To engage the rest of the council and raise the profile of trading standards within the authority, the award was presented again at an event in Ealing in November. Finally, the team enjoyed its prestigious training day and excellent lunch with the London Assay Office team at Goldsmiths' Hall.

The 2017 Touchstone applications demonstrated the importance of hallmarking enforcement. It is vital that our trading standards authorities continue to deliver this.

We look forward to receiving your applications for the 2018 Touchstone Award and recognising the hard work of trading standards teams in this area.

Author

Marion Wilson is a member of the British Hallmarking Council's education and enforcement committee.

[Press release: FCO statement on forthcoming Legislative Council by-election in Hong Kong](#)

We are concerned by the rejection of Agnes Chow's nomination for the forthcoming Legislative Council by-election. The right to stand for election is a fundamental right enshrined in Article 26 of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights.

Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy, and its rights and freedoms, are central to its way of life, and it is important that they should be fully respected.

[News story: New members announced for Ofsted board](#)

Dame Kathryn August and Pamela Scriven QC have been appointed to serve on the Ofsted Board for 3 years. John Hughes has been re-appointed to serve for an additional 3 years. Linda Farrant and Paul Snell's terms on the Ofsted board have ended today.

Julius Weinberg, chair of the Ofsted board said:

I have encountered great pride and professionalism every day since I joined Ofsted. It is made up of people who want to make a positive difference to children's lives and help give them a better future.

So I am delighted to welcome Kathryn and Pamela to the Ofsted board, and I am sure their individual expertise and experience will be hugely valuable to the organisation. I am also pleased that John is staying on.

I would like to wish Linda and Paul all the best after they leave.

I'm grateful for the huge contributions they have all made to the Ofsted board.

Below is some further information on the board members:

Dame Kathryn August

An education consultant, former head teacher, Ofsted Inspector and National Leader of Education, Dame Kathryn August will bring extensive experience of secondary education and a clear understanding of academies and multi-academy trusts to the board.

Pamela Scriven QC

A QC with extensive experience as a lawyer, Pamela Scriven has significant social care and safeguarding expertise and has had a number of board level roles in her professional life.

John Hughes

A former BP executive with a background in risk management and strategy, John Hughes also previously worked as an FE College lecturer, a teacher and head of physics at a secondary school in London.

Ofsted's board is chaired by Professor Julius Weinberg and also includes John Cridland CBE, James Kempton and Venessa Willms OBE alongside HM Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman.

Further information

The appointments were conducted and agreed in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) and were made on merit; political activity played no part in the decision-making process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations and the code of practice, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if any declared) and other information, to be made public.

The details of the application process and job description were published online and the essential criteria were:

- The ability to think strategically and to contribute to strategic development in different contexts;
- High level management and/or board experience in the public, voluntary or private sectors;
- The ability to build effective relationships at high levels and/or between organisations;
- A commitment to Ofsted as an inspectorate and regulator, and its role in improving standards in education, children's services and skills; and
- Significant expertise and/or experience working at a senior level in children's social care, including child protection, further education, and/or financial management.

The desirable criteria were:

- Experience or expertise in the maintained secondary school sector; and
- Experience or expertise in information technology and knowledge management.

The roles are remunerated at £8,282 per annum, based on 20 days' work.