

# Press release: Wider lanes for drivers on M62 smart motorway near Rochdale

Drivers on a 5-mile stretch of the M62 near Rochdale can now benefit from wider lanes, helping to improve the flow of traffic on one of the busiest motorways in the region.

Temporary narrow lanes have been removed between junctions 18 and 20, marking the start of a phased opening of the North West's first smart motorway scheme to tackle congestion and improve journey times.

The Highways England project will use new technology to provide better information to drivers and variable speed limits to keep traffic moving at a steady speed. Extra lanes will also be opened on the M62 before the Christmas getaway, increasing capacity on the stretch of motorway between Greater Manchester and Yorkshire by a third.

Jon Stokes, Senior Project Manager at Highways England, said:

I'm pleased we've been able to remove the temporary narrow lanes on the M62 – benefiting the 180,000 drivers who use the route every day. Nearly 600 people are currently working to complete the smart motorway and we will open each section along the route as soon as possible.

When the smart motorway is complete, drivers will be able to travel in an extra lane on the M62 and variable speed limits will help to keep traffic flowing – tackling the stop/start conditions and tailbacks caused by sudden braking.

Overnight closures will continue to take place between junctions 18 and 20 on the M62 to carry out resurfacing work and to commission the new smart motorway technology.

The closures will be in place between 10pm and 6am, Sunday to Thursday, and between 9pm and 10am on Friday and Saturday nights. Overnight closures will also continue on sections of the M60 for major construction work on the smart motorway.

The scheme is Highways England's most complex smart motorway project, affecting the second busiest motorway in the country and covering 13 junctions – an average of one junction every 1.4 miles.

The full scheme stretches between junction 8 of the M60 near Sale and junction 20 of the M62 near Rochdale. The next stage of the phased opening will see the removal of the temporary narrow lanes between junctions 8 and 10 on the M60 later in the autumn.

The new technology will be tested to ensure the 100 traffic sensors which have been installed along the 17-mile route are working effectively, before the new electronic variable speed limit signs are switched on from junctions 8 to 10 on the M60 and junctions 18 to 20 on the M62 by the end of the year.

The temporary narrow lanes are due to be removed between junctions 15 and 18 on the M60 in early 2018, and from the final section of roadworks – on a 5 mile stretch of the M60 between junctions 10 and 15 – in spring 2018. The new variable speed limit signs are due to be switched on between junctions 10 and 18 by summer 2018.

When the smart motorway is complete, traffic sensors will automatically monitor the flow of traffic and adjust the speed limit accordingly. A total of 50 CCTV cameras will also provide 100% coverage of the route, and allow Highways England's traffic officers and the emergency services to respond quickly to incidents.

More details are [available on 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.

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## **[News story: Smart Meters Bill introduced to Parliament](#)**

Measures to ensure consumers continue to get the most out of their smart meters have been introduced to parliament in the Smart Meters Bill today (Wednesday 18 October).

Every home and small business in Great Britain will be offered a smart meter by the end of 2020, saving consumers billions of pounds over the course of this vital national infrastructure upgrade.

The Bill, first announced in the Queen's Speech, will enable the Government to continue to regulate the roll-out of smart meters up to completion at the end of 2020.

It will also help the Government to act on the results of any findings made after 2020 that could improve the experience for consumers and small

businesses.

The legislation will also ensure consumers are protected in the unlikely event that the company running the national smart meters communications infrastructure, currently the Smart Data and Communications Company, were to become insolvent.

This will bring the programme in line with other utilities such as water and energy network companies.

Energy Minister Richard Harrington said:

The roll-out of smart meters continues at pace with almost 7.7 million already operating in Great Britain and nearly 350,000 being installed every month, bringing an end to estimated bills and helping people to save energy and money.

Every home and small business will be offered a smart meter by the end of 2020. The Bill published today will ensure consumers continue to get the most from their smart meters once installed, during and beyond the roll-out.

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## **[News story: Anti-Slavery Day 2017](#)**

The UK is leading the way in tackling the scourge of modern slavery on behalf of some of the most victimised, brutalised, and exploited people in the world. I recently met young female victims of trafficking at a safe house in Nigeria and heart-breaking testimonies like theirs vividly demonstrate that this evil crime needs to be eradicated.

Anti-Slavery Day provides a wake-up call to anyone who thought slavery had been consigned to the history books. We have doubled our spending on trying to wipe out modern slavery. We want to clamp down on this barbaric trade which destroys the lives of more than 46 million innocent victims worldwide, and too often reaches our shores.

It is absolutely right that in both the UK and beyond, we are stepping up our efforts. We will not accept a world where human beings are bought and sold.

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## News story: Helping veterans obtain the financial support they are entitled to

London VAPC assists ex-servicemen to claim pensions.

All Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees (VAPCs) are able to help veterans find the financial support available to them.

London VAPC member Gill Grigg said:

I was recently contacted by a former member of the Royal Air Force who has lived in Europe for a number of years. He was concerned about the pension situation of his wife should he die.

He could remember receiving letters from the administrators of the Armed Forces Pension Scheme informing him that he could make extra payments but did nothing about it. He was shocked to recently receive information which he understood to mean that upon his death his widow would not receive a pension.

He had served from January 1961 to October 1978. The rules are that prior to 6 April 1975, there was no provision for a preservation of pension benefits. However, from that date the rules changed and a defined pension scheme was introduced. I therefore suggested that he contact the UK Pensions Division and the Forces Pension Society. Having done so, I'm pleased to report that he has received confirmation that his widow would receive an Armed Forces Family Pension.

Her colleague, Penny Long, who is also a member of London VAPC, said:

By chance, at a Christmas Party, I sat next to the wife of a retired Naval Officer who was suffering from a terminal illness. Along with a number of navy personnel, her husband believed that an officer could not receive benefits from the War Pension Scheme.

Penny and Gill ensured that a Veterans UK Welfare Manager visited the couple. His medical condition was recognised as attributable to his service and resulted in the award of a War Disablement Pension. Following the death of the officer, a War Widow's Pension was awarded to his widow.

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## [News story: An Inspection of 'Right to Rent' – Call for evidence](#)

The Chief Inspector is seeking contributions from members of the public and stakeholders for his latest inspection

The ICIBI has begun work on an inspection of 'Right to Rent' (RtR). This concerns the measures in the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts intended to create a 'hostile environment' for individuals in the UK without valid leave by requiring landlords and letting agents to check the immigration status of prospective tenants before entering into a tenancy agreement.

The ICIBI will examine:

- planning for the initial introduction of RtR, including success criteria, and the identification and mitigation of risks and issues
- evaluation of Phase 1 of RtR (rolled out in Birmingham, Walsall, Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton from 1 December 2014) and how this informed the development of RtR, including sanctions for non-compliance
- evaluation of RtR sanctions (introduced from 1 December 2016)
- take up' of RtR measures by Home Office enforcement and casework teams, specifically the issuing of civil penalties, pursuit of criminal prosecutions, immigration controls and removals
- joint working and data-sharing between the Home Office and other government departments, agencies and other bodies

The evidence gathering process has started and the inspectorate's established stakeholder groups will shortly be asked for their input. However, the ICIBI is keen to receive written evidence from anyone who has knowledge and experience of any of the above areas. Please write to:

[chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk)

Please note that this inspection will not examine any unintended consequences of RtR, for example discrimination against would-be tenants, increased homelessness, or displacement. There have been reports by others on these issues, notably 'Passport Please' a study by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrant (JCWI), and there has also been media coverage. While they have raised important questions, the ICIBI does not have the capacity to conduct a meaningful examination of the unintended consequences of RtR at this time. However, this topic is likely to feature as the ICIBI continues over the next couple of years to look at the full range of 'hostile environment' measures the Home Office has introduced.

The deadline for submissions is 10 November 2017.