

News story: Government publishes £6.1 billion programme of upgrades to major roads and motorways

Transport Minister Jesse Norman has unveiled a £6.1 billion programme of road improvements as part of the government's £23 billion upgrade to the road network in England.

Road users will benefit from shorter journey times, reduced congestion and increased capacity on roads, creating better local connections and improved passenger journeys as a result of these projects.

This includes the route for the new A19 Downhill Lane junction which has been published today (30 June 2017). The new junction will support the new international manufacturing park by significantly increasing road capacity, easing traffic and improving safety – as well as boosting the local economy.

Over the coming 6 months, the government will take the next steps on 55 road improvements across the country, including opening 8 schemes, consulting on 10 schemes and publishing final plans for another 29 schemes.

Transport Minister Jesse Norman said:

Road users across England should soon be seeing the benefits of these improvements in their daily lives, which are designed to link people better with their jobs, friends, family and local amenities, as well as connecting businesses with customers.

Over the next 6 months we expect to roll out our vital upgrade plan – taking next steps on £6.1 billion-worth of schemes and seeking to hear from local people, organisations and businesses to help shape our plans and ensure they benefit local communities.

And shortly I also plan to announce the winners of the 2017 to 2018 highways maintenance challenge fund, where the government will be investing £75 million to improve smaller local roads including through resurfacing, filling potholes and other infrastructure projects.

Upgrades include adding capacity to sections of the A1 in Northumberland. This shortens journey times, supports economic growth and improves access to and from the county.

Road users will also see proposals to increase capacity at the A12 Colchester Bypass to reduce delays and will also see a new strategic corridor to the south-west via the A303, which will improve journey times to enhance the world heritage site.

Other improvements include a more efficient Junction 19 on the M6 and an upgrade to the link between the Port of Liverpool and the motorway network.

The announcements are important next steps to progress the schemes announced in the [2014 road investment strategy](#), which outlines how £15.2 billion will be invested in our strategic roads between 2015 and 2021.

The schemes will be delivered by Highways England, which is responsible for the country's motorways and main trunk roads.

Jim O'Sullivan, Highways England Chief Executive, said:

Highways England is committed to delivering the government's investment programme to improve the strategic road network. These milestones are critical elements of our current work and we are extremely pleased that we are on track to deliver them.

Edmund King, AA president, said:

Drivers will welcome this much needed investment on some of the nation's most important routes.

As well as increasing capacity and smoothing traffic flow, we believe that significant road safety benefits can be to be achieved especially with the A1 improvements.

Following full consultations we hope that the proposed upgrades can be made quickly so drivers can reap the benefits.

Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation, said:

The first five-year road investment strategy reassured millions of drivers and businesses that their long-term travel needs were at last being taken seriously and provided for. But the fear has always been that road programmes, like the morning mists, have a tendency to fade away before our eyes.

This latest unveiling is therefore a particularly welcome demonstration that the promised money is not only available but is being spent on schemes that really matter, and that our calls to remember the local roads – where our journeys begin and end – are being heard.

East

Scheme

Next step

A12 Colchester bypass widen Consultation

| Scheme | Next step |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| A5 to M1 link | Scheme opening ceremony |

South East

| Scheme | Next step |
|---|------------------------------|
| M27 Southampton Junctions (London and south east) | Consultation |
| M271 Redbridge roundabout | Preferred route announcement |

London East

| Scheme | Next step |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| A12 M25 to Chelmsford | Consultation |

North East

| Scheme | Next step |
|--|------------------------------|
| A19 Downhill Lane | Preferred route announcement |
| A1 Scotswood to North Brunton | Preferred route announcement |
| A1 Northumberland (Yorkshire and the north east) | Preferred route announcement |

Midlands

| Scheme | Next step |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| A52 Nottingham junctions | Consultation |
| M42 J6 | Preferred route announcement |

Yorkshire

| Scheme | Next step |
|------------------------|------------------|
| M621 J1-7 improvements | Consultation |
| A1 Leeming to Barton | Scheme opening |

North West

| Scheme | Next step |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| M6 Junction 19 improvements | Preferred route announcement |
| M56 J11a | Preferred route announcement |
| A585 Windy Harbour | Preferred route announcement |

South West

| Scheme | Next step |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| A358 Taunton-Southfields | Preferred route announcement |
| A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross | Preferred route announcement |
| A303 Sparkford to Ilchester | Preferred route announcement |

News story: Manhattan Bridge safety bulletin published

Safety warning issued following a fatal auxiliary boiler explosion on container ship Manhattan Bridge at Felixstowe container terminal.

The MAIB has today issued a safety bulletin to highlight urgent safety lessons that have arisen following the auxiliary boiler explosion on board the container ship Manhattan Bridge at Felixstowe container terminal, England resulting in one fatality and one serious injury on 19 January 2017.

The bulletin contains details on the background and events leading up to the accident, initial findings, the safety issue and safety lessons, [read more](#).

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch is assisting the Japan Transport Safety Board (JTSB) in carrying out an investigation and the JTSB will publish a full report in due course.

Speech: "We cannot turn a blind eye to activities undertaken by Iran which violate Security Council resolutions."

Thank you Mr President. And thank you to Jeff, Sebastiano, and Joao for sharing your analysis with the Council today.

I'm glad that my last open session in this Council is focusing on one of the most important diplomatic achievements in recent memory.

As the third Secretary-General's report on resolution 2231 shows, at its core this is a diplomatic achievement that does endure. Earlier this month, the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed Iran's continued full compliance with its nuclear-related commitments. Iran's total stockpile of uranium remains within agreed limits, and Iran has continued to permit and facilitate monitoring of its nuclear sites.

I reiterate in this Chamber today the United Kingdom's commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and our support for its full and equitable implementation.

To ensure the deal's continued success, Mr President, all parties must fully uphold their commitments and improve mutual trust and cooperation across a full range of issues. Sadly the latest report of the Secretary-General does highlight some less than positive issues which must be addressed in relation to the provisions of Annex B as set out in Resolution 2231.

The first of these relates to the 29th of January launch this year by Iran of a Khorramshahr medium-range ballistic missile. Since we've already had several Council sessions on this important issue and further consideration in the "2231 format" of the Council, I won't dwell on it. But just for the sake of clarity, I want to reiterate our position that this launch was inconsistent with the provisions of Resolution 2231. We reiterate too, the Secretary-General's call on Iran to refrain from any future launches which contribute to regional instability.

We are also concerned by the continued reported violations of restrictions prohibiting conventional arms transfers as set out in the Secretary-General's latest report, including new evidence of an attempted arms shipment from Iran to Somalia.

Furthermore, the widespread reports of multiple violations of travel ban provisions, including new infringements by Major General Qasem Soleimani, are particularly worrying given the regional sensitivities.

So putting all these issues together, it is clear that these activities are having a detrimental impact on regional security. Yes, we agree with Iran that the biggest threat to the region is a shared threat to us all; we all need to combat ISIL and defeat terrorism. Yes, we want the international community to work with Iran to encourage it to play a more transparent and constructive role in regional affairs. But we cannot turn a blind eye to activities undertaken by Iran which violate Security Council resolutions and sponsor proxy forces in regional conflicts. This further complicates efforts to reach peaceful settlements and undermines Iran's future prosperity and security.

Finally, it is important that we remember the inherent reciprocity of the JCPOA. So, we encourage all Member States and parties to the agreement to uphold their commitments, including ensuring that the Iranian people gain further tangible benefits from sanctions relief. We are encouraged by the progress being made to promote trade and investment opportunities in Iran, and we hope that the next 6 months will build on these successes. Full implementation of the provisions of Resolution 2231 by all parties is the only way to ensure the continued success of this important deal.

Mr President,

As this is my last session in the open Chamber, I did also just want to say a very brief word of thanks to the interpreters for making me comprehensible in 6 languages, it's not easy – my aunt used to do it. Secondly, to all of you for the cooperation that you've shown me and for the work that you do in what is a massively important institution that is very important for the most vulnerable of all people on this planet.

Thank you.

Speech: “The spectre of biological, chemical, or nuclear materials falling into terrorist hands is the nightmare scenario.”

Thank you Mr President. Thank you also to USG Nakamitsu and her team, and particularly to Joe Ballard. It’s always good to have the OPCW with us here in this Chamber and the cooperation between our institutions is vital.

While this agenda item is a regular feature of this Council’s programme of work, there is in fact nothing regular about it. The spectre of biological, chemical, or nuclear materials falling into terrorist hands is the nightmare scenario for many of us in this Chamber.

The use of such materials by terrorists is sadly not a hypothetical. Thanks to the hard work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism in Syria we know what happens when terrorists’ hateful intent is paired with these equally hateful weapons. We saw the results in Daesh’s sulphur mustard attack on Marea in August 2015, leaving residents blistered and burning. Other cases are also under investigation.

Clearly, preventing weapons of mass destruction falling into terrorist hands is a vital lynchpin for preserving international peace and security.

That’s why it’s so crucial that, following the Comprehensive review and the adoption of resolution 2325, the Committee focuses on reaching the ultimate goal of full worldwide implementation; turning 1540 into reality. As the Committee does this, it must take account new and emerging challenges from the evolving terrorist threat and advances in science and technology.

The Committee must also look to improve technical assistance, including by strengthening the 1540 Committee’s process for matching Member States’ requests for support with offers for assistance. And we must do all we can to encourage Member States to submit their reports on national implementation of 1540. That applies in particular to those few remaining states yet to submit a national report.

So there is a lot to do, Mr President. But the Committee shouldn’t do it alone. Indeed, the challenges we face are far too great to just rely on the 15 governments around this table. We must strengthen regional and international cooperation and outreach to civil society and industry to support implementation efforts. Every country and every sector has a role to

play and we should embrace their help.

Mr. President,

While we must take every step to ensure that these terrible weapons never fall into the hands of terrorists, we must also never overlook the horrific, and sadly growing, allegations of use of these weapons by state actors.

The United Kingdom unreservedly condemns the use of any chemical weapon in any circumstance. In particular, we're horrified at reports that Kim Jong Nam was apparently killed with VX in Malaysia earlier this year. If it's confirmed that a nerve agent, one banned by the Chemical Weapons Convention, was used at the instigation of a state, then this would be yet another troubling rejection of international norms.

The United Kingdom has also concluded that the Assad regime has continued to use chemical weapons against its own people, in breach of international law and the rules of war. We look forward to receiving further reporting from the OPCW Fact Finding Mission on chemical weapons use in Syria. Once we have the results of those investigations, the international community must then send a united response.

Let me close by calling on the 1540 Committee to redouble its efforts. The United Kingdom is committed to playing our part in ensuring that the Committee succeeds in its vital task ahead. The cost of failure, of allowing further weapons of mass destruction to fall into the hands of those who wish to wreak havoc, is simply too high to bear.

Thank you.

[News story: Introducing the Open Call for Innovation](#)

From 3 July 2017, the Enduring Challenge will be known as the Open Call for Innovation. This change is first of several planned changes for this funding route.

The [Open Call for Innovation](#) will continue to provide a route into defence and security for any supplier who thinks they have an idea that can benefit UK Defence and Security, at home or abroad. It exists because we can't possibly know all the potential solutions and novel approaches out there – whether that's more advanced technical capability, how we work or operate, or how we train our people. As well as all our existing suppliers, we want to attract those who haven't worked with defence and security before.

Earlier today, we held the final decision conference for the Enduring Challenge. We're delighted that 21% of proposals were approved for funding from cycle 3. The decisions have been released in the Accelerator submission service and the successful winners should be on contract within 3 weeks. Those who were unsuccessful will receive feedback by the end of July.

Since its [launch in January](#) by Harriett Baldwin, Minister for Defence Procurement, the Enduring Challenge has held 3 decision conferences to assess 83 proposals. 12 applications (14%) were approved for funding and received an average of £82,600 in research funding.

Cycle 4 is currently in assessment. Cycle 5, under the new banner of Open Call for Innovation is open.