

National Highways funding innovative new trial to treat carriageway spillages more quickly

When a major incident happens, essential police investigations involving detailed forensic work are often required.

While this forensic work takes place, access for National Highways teams to treat any spillages like oil and diesel is restricted.

Yet it can take just 90 minutes for fluids such as these to damage the road surface.

And if the surface cannot be treated in time, it means resurfacing work is required, adding to further congestion and delays for motorists caught up in the aftermath of the incident.

Now National Highways is joining forces with the Forensic Collision Investigation Network (FCIN) and Kier Highways for a special trial, involving significant research and development, and adopting ground-breaking innovation.

The trial, worth more than £270,000, is funded from the National Highways Innovations Designated Funds programme and incorporates techniques in a 'real-world' testing environment.

Forensic evidence such as tyre marks and debris – usually found on the road following a major incident – will be placed on the trial area, alongside diesel and oil samples, where specialists will test fluid-based treatments to see if they can absorb the spillages without destroying the evidence at the same location.

The products and their application will be put through their paces under strict testing conditions on the new 200-metre road surface at Santa Pod Raceway near Northampton.

National Highways On-Road Service Delivery Manager, Sian Norman said:

We're always looking to improve how we design, build, maintain and operate our road network.

This trial is incredibly exciting because it means we can look in detail at how some of the products work in treating spillages and what impact it might have on any forensic evidence on the road.

During any incident, we work very closely with police colleagues to make sure the area is kept sterile for forensic investigation but we're always aware that we need to get the road back open as soon

as it is safe to do so.

By investing in innovation, we can explore new technology and solutions to reduce disruption to road users and communities that live alongside our network.

We're really pleased to be working with the Forensic Collision Investigation Network and look forward to seeing how the trial progresses.

The estimated cost to the economy of a full carriageway closure during a busy period for around two hours is nearly £750,000.

If the road is fully closed for four hours, that increases to almost £3 million.

Following the trial, it is hoped that a new Standard Operating Procedure will be rolled out across England's police forces to ensure that the new approach is used consistently around the country.

Once in place, it will help to reduce closure times and costs incurred to motorists from congestion.

Head of the FCIN, Frances Senior said:

The Forensic Collision Investigation Network are delighted to work with National Highways on this innovative research.

All road users will have been impacted by post collision road closures at some point in time, but the police response to these incidents is often a painstaking and detailed process. Forensic examinations on our road network are unlike other forensic examination scenes, which can be processed slowly with more control over the elements and mitigating the impact on the public.

In partnership with National Highways and Kier Highways, we will jointly test our scientific methodology and approach, enabling us to obtain valuable data from which we can evaluate the impacts of spillage treatments on likely forensic evidence types.

I'd like to thank National Highways, Kier Highways and Santa Pod Raceway for enabling this trial to happen, our collective ambition to preserve and maximise forensic evidence whilst reducing the impact of road closures on the network will be hugely beneficial for everyone involved in major incidents.

Carla Vicente, Kier Highways project manager, said:

We have worked closely with National Highways and FCIN to find a suitable location where we could create a mock collision site. We

needed an area where we can replicate the strategic road network and safely trial sustainable products and new techniques that can treat spillages during an ongoing investigation.

This currently isn't common practice due to investigation sites needing to remain a sterile environment under a full closure. If the trial is successful and we can find a new product, application method and develop a way that allows the treatment of spillages to happen without compromising any evidence, the road can be opened quicker, reducing time, cost and disruption to customers.

Tarmac, one of the UK's leading sustainable building materials and construction solutions business, has resurfaced a stretch of the Santa Pod racetrack where cars often reach speeds of more than 300mph.

Richard Vine, Tarmac's regional director for contracting, said:

We are delighted to be supporting National Highways by using some typical highway surfaces, including Stone Mastic Asphalts (SMA) in one lane, a high-friction surface course in lane two and a third surface of hot-rolled asphalt and pre-coated chippings.

This will enable specialists to test many different scenarios. Anything that can be done to minimise the disruption of road closures caused by spillages is worthwhile.

National Highways Designated Funds programme is divided into four funding streams aimed at making the biggest difference and delivering lasting benefits; environment and wellbeing, users and community, safety and congestion and innovation and modernisation.

Other achievements include 124 biodiversity initiatives, 150 safety improvements on single carriageway roads to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured and over 6,500 lights and traffic signals converted to LED.

Find out more about [National Highways Designated Funds initiatives](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Extra protections for seafarers as government introduces new maritime laws

- new powers mandating ferries operating in and out of the UK pay national minimum wage to be brought forward
- 'minimum wage corridors' to be explored with like-minded countries to ensure workers are paid an agreed minimum wage
- Transport Secretary calls on Insolvency Service to disqualify P&O Ferries Chief Executive

The UK government has today (30 March 2022) announced a suite of new measures to protect seafarers, following P&O Ferries' decision to summarily sack 800 workers earlier this month.

The Transport Secretary confirmed he will bring forward new legislation to ban ferries that don't pay their workers the National Minimum Wage (NMW) from docking at British ports. It means all ferry staff working in and out of British ports, and when in UK waters, will earn the NMW, closing a legal loophole between UK and international maritime law that P&O Ferries ruthlessly exploited.

To ensure seafarers are protected straight away, the Transport Secretary has instructed ports to refuse entry to ferries not paying workers the NMW from today – immediately replicating the effect the new laws will have when introduced in the coming weeks. Also, HMRC will continue to target their enforcement activity, investigating any ferry operators that they suspect do not pay their workers minimum wage.

As a leading maritime institution, the government has called on the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to hold an international summit to discuss workers' rights at sea and to revise the status quo on seafarers' basic pay rates around the world.

The Transport Secretary has also written to France, the Netherlands, Ireland and Denmark to propose bilateral agreements that would ensure routes between the countries become 'minimum wage corridors' where nationals from either country must be paid an agreed minimum wage. This means that when travelling on the Short Strait, seafarers are always paid an agreed minimum wage.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

We can boast some of the highest maritime standards in the world, but for too long some employers have managed to avoid showing workers the most basic respect.

Ensuring a fair wage for our seafarers means UK workers are not undercut by employers and it reiterates the UK flag as one of the most respected in the world.

P&O's behaviour has appalled the nation and I want to make it absolutely clear we will not tolerate their actions or allow anyone else to follow suit – and this package of measures will act as a strong deterrent.

Following the conduct of Peter Hebblethwaite, the Transport Secretary has asked the CEO of the Insolvency Service to consider whether the P&O Chief Executive should be disqualified as a director.

It comes as the Business Minister Paul Scully announced plans for a new statutory code on the practice of 'fire and rehire' to clamp down on controversial tactics used by employers.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

P&O's use of aggressive employment tactics has been completely unacceptable and we are clamping down on employers who flagrantly fall foul in protecting the rights of their workers.

By ensuring ferry staff working in and out of British ports are paid the National Minimum Wage, this new package will protect UK workers from being ruthlessly exploited by employers, while making sure they receive a fair day's pay.

Today's updates mean more than 21,000 seafarers across the UK will no longer be undercut and puts the UK ahead of any EU state in its protection on pay.

British seafarers are recognised as some of the most highly skilled worldwide and the UK's [Maritime 2050 strategy](#) sets out a plan for a fairer global maritime industry.

Ian Hampton, Executive Director, Stena Line, said:

Stena Line welcomes the package of changes proposed to address the present inequalities that exist for seafarers working on regular ferries services to and from the UK.

We have a long-held strategy of employing local seafarers onboard our vessels. Today's announcement protects that strategy and in addition creates the necessary consistency and equality needed across the sector.

Buoyed by the highest number of maritime training providers out of any country, the government is launching a new recruitment website for seafarers and maritime employers to connect, supporting the recovery and development of

the transport industry. This will specifically target P&O Ferries workers made redundant, as well as the sector at large.

See the Transport Secretary's statement to Parliament on [P&O Ferries: new powers to protect maritime workers](#), 30 March 2022.

[P&O Ferries: new powers to protect maritime workers](#)

Madam Deputy Speaker, last week I stood at this despatch box to address the House on the shameful sacking of 800 seafarers by P&O Ferries.

No British worker should be treated in this way. Devoid of any dignity or respect. And our maritime workers who, with great dedication and sacrifice, supported this country during the pandemic deserved far better than to be dismissed, via a pre-recorded Zoom, in favour of cheaper overseas labour.

In response, we urged P&O Ferries to reconsider. These calls have fallen on deaf ears. Instead, Chief Executive Peter Hebblethwaite, in front of Parliament no less, set out how he deliberately broke the law. And, in an act of breathtaking indifference, suggested he would do the same thing again.

Measures being announced

Madam Deputy Speaker, P&O Ferries' failure to see reason, to recognise the public anger and to do the right thing by their staff has left the government with no choice.

I am, today (30 March 2022), announcing a package of 9 measures that will force them to fundamentally rethink their decision. This will send a clear message to the maritime industry that we will not allow this to happen again. That where new laws are needed, we will create them. Where legal loopholes are cynically exploited, we will close them. And where employment rights are too weak, we will strengthen them.

Enforcement

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me start with the enforcement action we are taking. Far too many irregularities exist between those who work at sea and those who work on land. Even where workers have rights, they are not always enforced.

So the first measure I can announce is that HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will be dedicating significant resource to check that all UK ferry operators are compliant with the [National Minimum Wage](#) where they should be. No ifs, no buts.

Second, I have asked the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to review their enforcement policies, checking they are fit for purpose now and into the future.

The House will recall that the MCA is carrying out inspections of P&O's ferries. And so far, 2 ships – the European Causeway and the Pride of Kent – have been detained after failing safety inspections.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not compromise the safety of any vessel and P&O will not be able to rush new crews through training and expect them to sail – this work is ongoing.

Third, we will take action to prevent employers, who have not made reasonable efforts to reach agreement through consultation, from using fire and rehire tactics.

A new statutory code will allow a court, or employment tribunal, to take the manner of dismissal into account and, if an employer fails to comply with the code, impose a 25% uplift to a worker's compensation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have made no secret of my view that P&O Ferries' boss – Peter Hebblethwaite – should resign. He set out to break the law and boasted about it to Parliament.

So, I have written to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Insolvency Service, conveying my firm belief that Peter Hebblethwaite is unfit to lead a British company, and have asked them to consider his disqualification.

The Insolvency Service has the legal powers to pursue complaints where a company has engaged in, and I quote, so-called "sharp practice".

Surely, the whole House agrees that nothing could be sharper than dismissing 800 staff, and breaking the law whilst doing so.

It is, of course, for the Insolvency Service to decide what happens next, but in taking this fourth step I want to ensure that such outrageous behaviour is challenged.

Seafarer welfare

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a hard truth that those working at sea do not enjoy the same benefit as those working on land. Which brings me to the fifth element of our package today. A renewed focus on the training and welfare elements of our flagship maritime strategy.

We are already investing £30 million, through the Maritime Training Fund, to grow our seafarer population, but I will go further, pursuing worldwide agreements at the International Labour Organisation, where we'll push for a common set of principles to support maritime workers including:

- an international minimum wage
- a global framework for maritime training and skills

- tools to support seafarer mental health

Attractiveness of a UK flag

Sixth, we know that P&O Ferries exploited a loophole – they flag their vessels in Cyprus to escape UK laws. So we will take action on this too.

We've, therefore, decided that from next week, our [reforms to Tonnage Tax](#) come into effect, making it easier for maritime businesses to set up in the UK, with unnecessary red tape removed, as well as provisions no longer relevant now we're outside the EU.

By increasing the attractiveness of the UK flag, and bringing more ships under it and, therefore, protecting more seafarers.

Bilateral agreements

Madam Deputy Speaker, much of maritime is governed by international laws, obligations and treaties. This means that we cannot hope to solve all these problems alone.

So, the seventh plank of our package today is to engage our international partners. Now, this week, I have contacted my counterparts in France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland and Germany to discuss how maritime workers on direct routes between our countries should receive a minimum wage.

I am delighted to say that the response has already been very very positive, particularly with the French Minister for Transport. I will now work quickly with my counterparts to explore the creation of minimum wage corridors between our nations, as we will also be asking unions and operators to agree a common level of seafarer protection on these routes, as well.

Legislation

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have set out how we will step up enforcement. How we will support the workforce in the long term. How we will get more vessels under the British flag. How we are working with international partners to create minimum wage corridors.

But I know the House is expecting legislative changes too. We had originally come to this chamber today to announce changes to the National Minimum Wage Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, after seeking expert maritime legal advice, it's become clear that this just wouldn't be possible.

The issue is this – maritime law is governed by international conventions that would too easily have overridden any changes. So Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not let that stop us. Seafarers deserve the same wage certainty as onshore workers. Safe in the knowledge that, at a moment's notice, they won't be undercut by cheaper overseas labour. So today, we are providing that

certainty.

I can announce to the House – as our eighth measure – our intention to give British ports new statutory powers to refuse access to regular ferry services which do not pay their crew the National Minimum Wage.

We will achieve this by using primary legislation to amend the Harbours Act 1964, and it means that if companies like P&O Ferries want to dock in ports such as Dover, Hull or Liverpool, they will have no choice but to comply with this legislation.

Crucially, it means that P&O Ferries can derive no benefit from the action they have disgracefully taken. They have fired their workers to replace them with those who are paid below minimum wage. As a result of this measure, this cynical attempt will fail.

So my message to P&O Ferries is this: The game is up. Rehire those who want to return. And pay your workers – all of your workers – a decent wage.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the government wants to bring this legislation forward as quickly as possible. But it's important to get it right. We are legally bound to consult with the sector on any changes and unlike P&O, we take consultation seriously. So, legislative change will not be possible overnight.

But to that end, I can announce the ninth, and final, measure we will be taking. Today, I will be writing to all ports in the UK explaining our intention to bring legislation as quickly as possible. But, in the meantime, instructing them not to wait.

I want to see British ports refusing access to ferry companies which don't pay a fair wage as soon as practical.

They will have the full backing of the government and I have instructed the MCA to get behind this action too – and they've indicated that they will.

Conclusion

Madam Deputy Speaker, this issue has united the whole House, indeed the whole country, in anger at those responsible, and in sympathy for those affected.

Now, we are proudly a pro-business government. But not business like this. We will never support those that treat workers with the callousness and disrespect that we've seen. British workers aren't expendable. They are the backbone of this country.

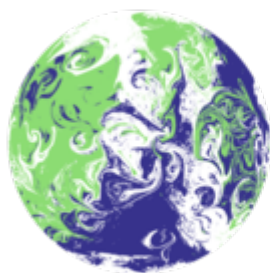
This robust package of measures announced today will give our maritime workers the rights they deserve, whilst destroying the supposed gains P&O Ferries hoped to obtain. And they will send a clear message that if you're using British waters and British ports to ply your trade, then you must accept British laws.

And I commend this statement to the House.

[COP President meets Pacific leaders to discuss COP26 and the path to COP27](#)

News story

Summary of the meeting for 'The Road to COP27: Pacific Dialogue with UK COP26 Presidency' on 23 February 2022, where COP President Alok Sharma met with Pacific leaders, ministers and stakeholders to discuss COP26 and the path to COP27.



**COP26
PRESIDENCY
UK 2022**
DELIVERING THE
GLASGOW CLIMATE PACT

On 23 February 2022, the UK COP26 Presidency ran a regional dialogue for the Pacific governments, negotiators, CROP agencies, private sector, and civil society, to provide a meaningful opportunity for the region to discuss Pacific responses to the outcomes at COP26.

The Dialogue also enabled an inclusive, whole-of-society discussion to identify priority areas for climate action in the Pacific and implementing the Glasgow Climate Pact (GCP) in the lead up to COP27.

Published 30 March 2022

[Russia must stop peddling disinformation about its war against](#)

Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE, 30 March 2022

Thank you Mr Chair. This statement is delivered under the topic raised by Ukraine and I request that this be accurately reflected in the Journal of the Day.

Mr Chair, just over a month ago President Putin launched his unprovoked, premeditated and a barbaric attack on Ukraine. Just over a month ago, the Ukrainian people were living ordinary, peaceful lives. Now, as a result of President Putin's actions, the UNHCR estimates 3.8 million people have fled Ukraine to neighbouring countries and a further 12.7 million are stranded in conflict-affected areas within Ukraine. The humanitarian situation that President Putin has created is truly horrifying.

The indiscriminate destruction of civilian infrastructure and the horrendous amounts of violence unleashed on the Ukrainian people is abhorrent.

For weeks, frustrated Russian military commanders have been attempting to break the Ukrainian peoples' spirit and resolve by subjecting them to a near continual onslaught from: Multi-launch Rocket Systems, ballistic missiles, artillery, cruise missiles, cluster munitions, thermobaric rockets, and unguided air dropped munitions. Maternity wards, schools, homes and other civilian infrastructure have been bombed without any regard for civilian life. Families are being starved out in freezing basement shelters and targeted as they flee. These are not the actions of a Great Power. They are reprehensible and cowardly.

All those carrying out war crimes should know they cannot act with impunity. Indiscriminate attacks against innocent civilians amount to war crimes, for which those who are complicit, must be held accountable.

The once great Russian military has been frustrated and outsmarted by our Ukrainian friends who, against the odds, have snarled up Russia's invading army, inflicting defeat after defeat. Their resistance remains staunch and well-coordinated. The vast majority of Ukrainian territory remains in Ukrainian hands. Ukraine has taken up the fight and shown the world the meaning of bravery and courage.

Mr Chair, the Russian government's attempt to redraw the map of Europe in blood, and conquer an independent and democratic state by force of arms is an attack on the security and freedom of Europe. The United Kingdom, along with many others, repeatedly warned that this would be a massive strategic mistake and would come at a severe cost. In this regard, we continue to support Ukraine, our friends, in their fight for their homeland.

Last week, [Prime Minister Johnson announced that the UK would provide 6000 more defensive missiles to Ukraine](#). This now more than doubles the defensive lethal aid provided to date to a total of more than 10,000 missiles.

Additionally, 25 million pounds of financial assistance for the Ukrainian military was also announced.

I would reiterate, all of our support to the democratic sovereign nation of Ukraine is defensive in nature and will help them defend themselves against this Russian war of aggression.

Mr Chair, President Putin badly miscalculated in Ukraine. His Plan A has failed, his ridiculous false pretexts exposed for the world to see, and yet, his government continues to peddle disinformation and censor free speech to try and cover up his lies.

Those complicit in the Kremlin's unprovoked aggression and those who peddle its blizzard of lies to hide the truth from the Russian people should be ashamed. They have lost their last shred of credibility with the international community. How can they stand in front of the mirror and look at themselves with dignity or self-respect? How can they look at their family and friends with integrity? Their part in the Kremlin's unprovoked, premeditated and barbaric attack on Ukraine has led the Russian people into a quagmire and turned Russia into an international pariah. Shame on them.

We will make the Russian government pay the price of its actions. The UK stands with the Ukrainian people in their fight for their homeland. We will work with our partners – for however long it takes – to ensure that the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the independence of Ukraine is restored.

Thank you. And I ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.