

# Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on international investigation into Syria chemical weapons attack

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) publishes a statement on its investigation into the chemical weapons attack on Khan Sheikhoun in Syria on 4 April 2017. The OPCW confirms that deadly nerve agent sarin was used in the horrific attack.

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## Alcohol-related deaths falling in Wales

The Welsh Government's Annual Statement of Progress for Liver Disease shows that in 2015, 807 people died from liver disease, an increase of 131 deaths (19.4%) over the past five years. Alcohol-related liver disease accounts for over a third of liver disease deaths.

However, the report shows a fall in alcohol-related deaths, from 504 in 2012 to 463 in 2015.

The report also shows:

- **Reduced alcohol consumption:** Over the past five years, there has been a reduction in the number of adults reporting alcohol consumption above the former recommended daily guidelines, from 44% in 2010 to 40% in 2015 – however far too many people report drinking above the former recommended guidelines and this will continue to be a focus for NHS Wales.
- **Increased expenditure on liver disease:** Spending on gastrointestinal problems (which include liver disease) has increased from £339.3 million in 2014-15 to £362.6 million in 2015-16.
- **Improved access to treatment for hepatitis C infection:** There is no restriction on access to treatment for hepatitis C infection in Wales, making Wales the only country in the UK, and one of the few in the world, to not place such a restriction. All of the patients with hepatitis C that are known to services in Wales and who are still accessing care have now been treated. During 2016-17, 772 individuals were treated for the hepatitis C infection in Wales with a cure rate of around 95%.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“In Wales, we want to reduce the number of people getting and dying from liver disease. We want to ensure people – whatever their age – value good liver health, and are aware of the dangers of excess alcohol, obesity and blood borne viral hepatitis. We want everyone to take personal responsibility for their lifestyle choices and reduce the risk of acquiring preventable liver disease.

“During 2015-16 there has been continued progress in the care of patients with liver disease in Wales. We’ve seen a reduction in the number of alcohol-related deaths over recent years, but we know there’s much more to do.

“Services are improving throughout Wales, despite dealing with complex demand. The service needs to continue to undergo change if it is to cope with patients and their needs.”

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## [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**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Next step</b>
A12 Colchester bypass	widening Consultation
A5 to M1 link	Scheme opening ceremony

## **South East**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Next step</b>
M27 Southampton Junctions (London and south east)	Consultation
M271 Redbridge roundabout	Preferred route announcement

## **London East**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Next step</b>
A12 M25 to Chelmsford	Consultation

## **North East**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Next step</b>
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**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Next step</b>
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

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## Heritage sector worth over £900m to Wales

The report, which collects data from 18 of Wales' premier Heritage organisations, and highlights an increase of 4.4% in the number of visits to sites in the last seven years has been welcomed by Economy Secretary Ken Skates.

He said:

"This report captures the crucial role of the heritage sector in Wales, which has helped inspire and define our nation.

"It's fantastic to see the sector going from strength to strength. Heritage in Wales is now worth over £960m and supports over 40,500 jobs with membership of heritage bodies in Wales now standing just short of 440,000.

"The sector is increasingly ready and willing to innovate and embrace different ways for the public to engage with and enjoy our rich heritage. Indeed many of our magnificent sites have played a central role in the successes of our recent Year of Legends and Year of Adventure tourism campaigns.

"In Wales we have a unique, diverse heritage which is the envy of

many and a source of great pride to us all. We will continue to work closely with the sector to support them in ensuring that these positive trends continue.”

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## **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 (JTSC) in carrying out an investigation and the JTSC will publish a full report in due course.