

M6

Junctions 13 to 15

Project newsletter November 2020



Welcome to our fourth edition of the M6 junction 13 to 15 motorway scheme newsletter.

We're pleased to announce that we're entering the final stage of construction of the new motorway on the M6 between junctions 13 and 15 and the scheme will open ahead of schedule in late summer 2021.

The route, which runs for 27km from junction 15 near Stoke to junction 13 south of Stafford, is one of the busiest sections of road in the UK. It's used by over 127,000 vehicles per day and suffers from heavy congestion and unpredictable journey times, especially during peak periods.

Early completion of the project is down to several factors, including the use of contraflow allowing for a larger working area in the verge to complete work quicker and lessons learnt during the primary phase of the project, which have driven efficiencies across work areas. Fewer cars on the road over spring and summer 2020 has also given teams the opportunity to start night shifts earlier in the evening to complete work more effectively.



Picture: Construction workers on the M6.

“The huge challenge of upgrading such a long and busy section of the M6 to a motorway makes its early completion a fantastic achievement. This is thanks to a successful collaboration with our designer, Jacobs Atkins and our delivery partner, Kier. Through excellent planning and innovative engineering, we’ve been able to improve the completion date by at least 6 months.

I’d also like to attribute the scheme’s success to our stakeholders, with whom we’ve built strong relationships over the last three years. These include Stafford County Council Highways, Stafford

Borough Council Environmental Health, the emergency services, local councillors and MPs. My special thanks also go to you, the residents and businesses of Stafford for your patience, support and feedback. With your help we’ve reduced disruption to a minimum and we are on track to deliver some real, lasting benefits for the borough of Stafford itself. These are in addition to what will be improved capacity and smoother journeys on the M6 for hundreds of thousands of motorists.”

**Highways England Project Sponsor,
Peter Smith.**

Works update

The team has made great progress over the last few months considering the strict safeguarding measures in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19, in line with Public Health England guidance. We’re running at 60mph throughout the full northbound section of the scheme. The project took part in initial trials to assess if the higher speed limit improved customer journeys. The 60mph limit has been found to reduce motorist’s journey times, tailgating and lane switching. It’s a great result for road users.

We’ve installed three superspan gantries, the largest structures on the project, spanning both the north and southbound carriageway between junctions 14 and 15 and have another

three to install in November. Each one weighs over 38 tonnes and has a width of 40 metres. The gantries are built off site, transported on trailers from the north-east and then lowered into pre-constructed foundations using a specialist crane. This technique is quicker and less disruptive than building them at the roadside.

The newly-resurfaced lane one travelling north is coned off and closed to traffic while we complete some final work in the roadside verge. We’re striving to complete the final stage of construction between junctions 14 and 13 on the southbound carriageway by early 2021 and will continue to commission and test the new motorway electronic signage and equipment in the new year.



Picture: A superspan gantry.

M6 closures and how they have affected residents

We know that full closures of the M6 between junctions 13 and 15 have affected many residents living on the A449, A34 and surrounding roads in Stafford over the last two years and for this we're sorry.

Staffordshire County Council Highways has been working hard to improve the road surface on the diversion route, completing resurfacing of a section of the Stone Road and Wolverhampton Road in 2019. In addition, carriageway repairs have been undertaken on the Stone Road between the roundabout junction with Eccleshall Road and the roundabout junction with Beaconside. These works took place during October half term in an effort to minimise disruption on the network as much as possible.

To further reduce disruption, we installed several traffic calming measures along the diversion route including three electronic speed signs on the A449 and Stone Road and we've been in constant contact with the Road Haulage Association to communicate the message about the effects speeding HGVs have on residents. Throughout the duration of the project, we've been using a contraflow on the M6 between junctions 13 and 15. This is a temporary arrangement whereby traffic is transferred from its usual side to share the other half of the carriageway with traffic moving in the opposite direction.

The contraflow allows for more room in the verge so we can complete complex construction activities during the day. When we do work at night, rather than closing the motorway completely, we've been able to divert traffic into the contraflow and not through Stafford. To date we've saved 166 closures of the motorway between junctions 15 and 13 north and southbound.

Thanks to contraflow, we've been able to reduce the number of full closures and use of the diversion routes on the project by approximately 47% compared to previous schemes where a contraflow has not been used. It's one of the reasons why the scheme will finish early. Furthermore, a longer-term benefit of the motorway will be the extra fourth lane, which will allow for greater capacity to hold traffic on the M6 during an incident rather than diverting it through Stafford.

It's important to note that there will be further unavoidable overnight closures until next summer. We only close the motorway at night and when there is no safe alternative to carry out the work. However, we'll continue to do everything we can to minimise disruption and the use of diversion routes and we thank residents for their patience.



Picture: Electronic speed sign installed on Stone Road.

We've also been hard at work bringing real benefits to the Borough of Stafford itself through the following initiatives:

Stafford Brooks Partnership

A multi-million pound scheme to improve water quality, reduce flooding and boost wildlife around the rivers and watercourses in Stafford has moved a step closer thanks to a £150,000 funding grant from Highways England.

The grant will fund the initial environmental feasibility study to develop, plan and cost a five-year plan for the Stafford Brooks project.

The project wants to make major improvements to habitats in the drainage areas from the Rivers Sow and Penk, creating more green space for families to enjoy.

It is a partnership between Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency and aims to attract more wildlife by improving areas around the rivers as well as more visitors.

Community initiatives - Smart Giving

Throughout the duration of the project we've developed an offering called Smart Giving. It is a way for the project to offer real commitment and give practical help and support to local community projects, charities, educational establishments or vulnerable groups. Smart Giving is intended to provide a commitment of time and resource from the project and its supply chain partners to benefit communities around Staffordshire. We want to leave a legacy in the community where some of the heavy construction activities may have a disruptive effect. Here are just some of the groups we've helped since construction began:

Eccleshall Scouts

While the Scouts were busy having fun over the summer break, we delivered and installed a 20ft x 10ft shipping container to provide extra storage space. We spent a week preparing the ground before carefully lifting the container into place. "This will help us with the storage of our equipment. The extra space and upgrade of our facilities will make a tremendous difference to the group" - **Scout Committee Chair, Sue Chell.**

The Donna Louise

The Donna Louise is a children's and young people's hospice in Staffordshire supporting children with life-limiting conditions and their families. We've been fundraising through weekly donations in return for fruit. We also painted over faded white lines in the charity's carpark, improving the disability parking bays. We went to visit staff at the charity to hand over a cheque and take a tour of the building, which provides a sensory room, counselling and bereavement support, parent and sibling care groups, art, music and play therapies, physiotherapy, and so much more.

"Great job team, thanks for the cheque and the carpark looks a thousand times better. Thank you so much for doing this, your support is very much appreciated"

**Chris Belyavin, Relationship Manager,
Donna Louise**



Picture: Presenting a cheque at the Donna Louise in 2019 before social distancing measures came into effect.

Stafford Manor High school

We provided staff and pupils at Stafford Manor High School with a new, smoother and sustainable access road surface. We trialled an innovative rubber surface material, which contains rubber car tyres. The technology will be used nationally to help solve the tyre disposal issue, most of which are currently shipped to Mexico for landfill at huge environmental cost. The old surface removed from site was returned to a national coating plant to be recycled.

In addition, the project has raised just over £10,000 for charity including money donated to the Intensive Care Society and the Peter Pan Centre in Stoke.



Picture: The Kier team with Councillor Carolyn Trowbridge at Stafford Manor School in 2019 before social distancing measures came into effect.

Burton Bank footbridge – giving back to the community

As you may be aware, in March 2019 we removed the Burton Bank footbridge.

This was to create additional headroom so heavy goods vehicles can use the hard shoulder once we complete the motorway upgrade. Since then, we've been carrying out value for money assessments, which show that replacing the bridge does not represent the best value for taxpayers' money. After consultation, the

decision to remove the right of way by Burton Bank footbridge was made by the Secretary of State and the 'stopping up order' was approved in September 2020. This means that Highways England can invest in alternative community projects including one or more of the following:

- upgrading the Burton Manor Road underpass by improving the lighting and footpath
- providing funding for improvements to two crossings close to the nearby Burton Manor Primary School
- improving parking for all the community at the heavily used Burton Manor area



Picture: The demolition of Burton Bank footbridge.

“I am pleased to see the residents’ suggestions of road safety measures near Burton Manor Primary School and improved parking in the Burton Manor area are being considered. This popular area, with a wide variety of excellent shops, is a hub of activity for many locals. Extra parking will make a real difference for shoppers and shop owners alike. Any improved crossing facilities would not only be great for schoolchildren but for all locals, the school patrol crossing officers do an excellent job but extra safety for them and anyone crossing has to be a bonus”.

**County and Borough Councillor,
Carolyn Trowbridge.**

We believe that these proposals will provide a greater benefit by improving safety and accessibility for all the local community.

Expert assessments and discussion with Stafford County Council will be carried out before any decisions are made.



Picture: The last sheet pile to be installed on the project.

If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will help you.

Contact us

If you would like to be added to our priority stakeholder e-mail list, so that we can regularly update you regarding temporary closures and upcoming work on the M6, please contact the project inbox: **M6j13-15@kier.co.uk**

Alternatively, you can call us on **0300 123 5000**.

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