Welcome

The Highways Agency is working to improve the M3 between junctions 2 to 4a.

The M3 Junctions 2 to 4a is part of a major strategic road network connecting people, communities and businesses, carrying over 130,000 vehicles per day.

We are improving this road as it currently suffers from high levels of congestion and unpredictable journey times.

We plan to do this by introducing a smart motorway scheme, using a range of technologies which have been successfully used in other parts of the country, such as the recently completed smart motorway scheme on the M25 motorway.

This scheme will relieve congestion and smooth the flow of traffic, improving journey times. These benefits will support economic development in the region by providing much needed capacity on the motorway.
Why is this work needed?

The M3 between junctions 2 and 4a is one of the busiest sections of road in the UK. It suffers with heavy congestion and unpredictable journey times, especially during peak periods.

Between junctions 2 and 4a, as part of the smart motorway scheme, we will convert the hard shoulder to a permanent running lane to ease congestion. This is known as ‘all lane running’.

Reducing congestion, removing major bottlenecks and improving journey time reliability will help local businesses to be more efficient.

Smart motorways deliver significant benefits for the investment and have many advantages over conventional widening:

- No need for additional land
- Less disruption from construction
- Better value for money
- Maintains the excellent safety record of England’s motorways
M3 smart motorways

Features of this smart motorway

- Safe roads, reliable journeys, informed travellers
- Low noise surfacing
- Signs
- Gantries
- Signals
- New CCTV cameras
- Concrete barriers
- Emergency refuge areas
- New and refurbished message signs
- Under carriageway ducts
- Technology ducting

An executive agency of the Department for Transport
Construction – what you will see and what is happening

A smart motorway is not a conventional road widening or construction scheme where works are obvious as the landscape has changed.

Smart motorways take place entirely within the highway boundary, making the best use of what is already there and adding new gantries and technology.

As we are making best use of what we already have, you won’t see lots of earth being moved and lots of heavy machinery being used all of the time. We will be working in specific areas with a mobile workforce working in small groups constantly moving along the entire length of the scheme.

We will also be carrying out a lot of work at night and behind the scenes so you won’t always see what is going on.
Building a smart motorway

We start by getting the site ready to carry out the major civil engineering works. Site surveys are carried out and vegetation is cleared to allow us to construct the scheme.

We install temporary traffic management to help keep our road workers, and road users, safe during the construction of the scheme. We will also be installing average speed cameras in readiness for when construction starts.

The civil engineering works then commence. At the northern end of the project we will carry out work in the central reservation first to prepare for and install new concrete safety barriers.

At the same time, work will commence at the southern end of the project starting on the London bound verge. This work includes deep drainage, gantry foundations, retaining walls, emergency refuge areas, ducting and safety fencing. Work then continues on the Southampton bound verge, which will be followed by the central reservation work to prepare for and install new concrete safety barriers.

Concrete barriers are far safer than the existing metal barriers. They are less likely to require repair if damaged and also stop vehicles crossing onto the other side of the carriageway in the event of an incident.
Building a smart motorway

We will then install the new gantries on the motorway. These will be installed at night under motorway closures.

Whilst this is going on we will also be working hard behind the scenes, away from the motorway. This work involves the testing of the new signs and signals and fitting out of the new gantries before they are installed on the motorway.

Finally new communications cables will be installed. This involves the installation of fibre optic cable to connect the new technology with our Regional Control Centre.

The new signs, cameras and signals are all tested in this phase to ensure they are working properly and ready to be brought into operation.

Once all the works are finished the new smart motorway will be switched on. Four running lanes will be operational in each direction and the speed limit will vary when congestion builds to keep people moving and ensure smoother, reliable journeys. This will help improve journey times and safety on one of the most congested sections of motorway in the country.
Construction

We plan our work carefully to minimise disruption. While work is underway, the maximum number of traffic lanes will be kept open, especially during the peak period.

During certain phases of the scheme, when we require additional working room on one side of the carriageway, we will manage traffic using a contraflow system.

The majority of our works are currently planned to take place Monday to Saturday, but there will be periods during which seven day working will be necessary.
Construction at night

We are committed to minimising disruption during the construction of this smart motorway, and wherever possible we will undertake the noisier operations during daylight hours. Noise levels will be monitored to ensure they stay within the level agreed with local authorities.

Due to the high volume of vehicles that use this route, we need to maintain the existing lane capacity during the day. However, there is not enough space to do this and provide a safe working area for our road workers, including machinery, vehicles and other equipment. This will mean that a large section of work can only be carried out at night when traffic flows are considerably less than during the day and when we will be able to close lanes or even sections of the motorway.

By carrying out the work 24/7 the overall scheme construction can be accelerated and long term disruption minimised.
Safety at roadworks

You will see roadworks or traffic management on sections of the motorway. This will include hard shoulder closures, temporary safety barriers, narrow lanes and 50mph speed limits enforced with average speed safety cameras.

The traffic management has been designed to provide a safe working area in which to construct the scheme and at the same time maintaining the existing motorway capacity. For your safety and that of road workers, when travelling through roadworks, you should follow the signs and keep within the speed limit. Driving through half a mile of roadworks at 50mph takes just ten seconds more than at 70mph.
Environmental assessment

We have done an environmental assessment that covers a range of topics, including noise, air quality, ecology, cultural heritage, materials use and impacts on the landscape.

The assessment found that the scheme will not have a significant effect on ecology, cultural heritage, material use and impact on the landscape.

We know that a number of areas along the motorway already suffer from poor air quality, which affects the health of local people. If we do nothing, congestion will continue to rise and this situation will get worse.

Earlier this year, we consulted on a proposal to implement a maximum mandatory speed limit of 60mph on the M3 between junctions 2 and 4a which would have applied between 07:00 and 19:00 seven days a week. The Transport Secretary rejected this approach as the Government’s preferred option for managing local air quality on the M3.

The Highways Agency is now rigorously investigating alternatives as work progresses during the next 12-18 months. Any alternatives must provide the same degree of demonstrable and verifiable benefits as the imposition of the 60mph speed limit provides in mitigating poor air quality and so avoiding significant air quality impacts. If any proposals continue to include varying speed limits, they would only apply when absolutely necessary.

Any effects as a result of the scheme were assessed in accordance with the Highways Agency’s published guidance and best practice.
Low noise surfacing

Environmental assessments indicate that this smart motorway will not make current noise levels any worse.

However, we have now agreed to bring forward our maintenance programme and incorporate resurfacing the four lanes of the carriageway with low noise surfacing as part of this scheme.

This is great news for tax payers, road users and local residents. Bringing forward this work will be more cost effective, will achieve best value for the tax payer, will cause less disruption to the travelling public and communities living close to the motorway.

Thin surface course system (lower noise)

Hot rolled asphalt (HRA) (coated chippings embedded in asphalt)
Incident management within roadworks

The entire length of our works will be covered by CCTV cameras which will be monitored 24/7 by our dedicated control room.

They will quickly be able to spot breakdowns and dispatch our free, 24/7 vehicle recovery service to recover vehicles quickly and take occupants to a safe location.

You can also do your bit.

A number of delays could be avoided if people regularly maintained their vehicles and ensured they have enough fuel to complete their journey.
Key parties involved in the scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding roads through</th>
<th>HIGHWAYS AGENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designer</td>
<td>URS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery partner</td>
<td>Balfour Beatty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial assurance</td>
<td>CORDEROY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Highways Agency and its partners are committed to minimising disruption to the public and keeping local residents and businesses fully informed as the project progresses.

We value and prioritise customer service and will work hard to reduce the impact on local residents, motorists and businesses.
Contact us

We are committed to keeping residents, businesses and other interested parties informed and up to date as the construction of the smart motorway progresses. We have a number of ways you can contact us and to receive updates on the scheme.

On the web:
www.highways.gov.uk/m3j2-4asm
Here you can find latest news, scheme maps and publications about the scheme. You can also sign up to our mailing list to find out about any changes directly to your inbox.

By email:
M3Junction2to4aSmartMotorways@highways.gsi.gov.uk

On Twitter:
@HAttraffic_seast

On YouTube:
Highways Agency (official channel)

By phone:
Highways Agency Information Line – 0300 123 5000*

By post:
M3 J2-4a Smart Motorway
Highways Agency
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham
B1 1RN