

M6

junction 21a to 26

motorway upgrade

Winter 2024

Welcome to the fifth edition of the M6 junction 21a to 26 scheme newsletter, keeping you informed about our motorway upgrade activities.

Motorway upgrade to more than double emergency areas

A major upgrade being delivered on the M6 between Warrington and Wigan will now include more than double the originally planned places for drivers to stop in an emergency.

Up to 12 new emergency areas are now being included in the scheme, in addition to the original 10.

The addition of the extra emergency areas, combined with delivery challenges experienced during construction, mean that the new opening date for the upgrade is spring 2025.

While our motorways are among the safest in the world, we recognise that some people have concerns about being able to find a safe place to stop in an emergency on all lane running motorways (ALR).

We have listened to drivers' concerns and the new emergency areas on the M6 are part of a £390million programme to build over 150 additional emergency areas on ALR motorways, in operation and construction.

Emergency areas, which have bright orange surfaces and are spaced regularly along the motorway, provide drivers with a place to stop if their vehicle breaks down or if they're involved in an accident.



M6 junction 21a to 26 scheme.

More complex ground conditions than expected, knock-on delays to our drainage programmes, and extra mine treatment work in an area with a history of old mine workings, have also had a cumulative impact on our original completion date.

We've also had to remove larger areas of non-native invasive weeds in grass verges throughout much of the scheme, causing changes to our work schedule. A comprehensive landscaping plan is in place to replace lost trees and shrubs before the completion of the scheme.

We'd like to apologise for any inconvenience the new opening date causes, but also reassure you that we're working hard to complete our work safely and as quickly as we can.

When we complete our work, the extra lane in each direction and additional technology will provide much-needed capacity and more reliable journeys for drivers, especially at peak times.



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Work we've done and what's next?

Since starting construction we've completed work to upgrade the central reservation safety barrier. This has involved replacing ten miles of barrier between junctions 21a and 26 of the M6.

The new concrete safety barrier reduces the risk of vehicle crossover between carriageways, enhancing the safety of road users, and reducing congestion and delays from incidents.

We've also resurfaced all of the new lane four on both carriageways with a low noise surface. As well as this, we've installed nearly 20 miles of drainage pipes, 20 miles of communication cabling and 65 new gantries.

Our earthwork undertaken to date has excavated nearly 150,000 cubic metres, which is equivalent to 60 Olympic sized swimming pools.

Between now and spring 2025, we'll be completing key elements of the scheme such as:

- delivering extra technology including CCTV and stopped vehicle detection to enable safer journeys
- installing up to 22 emergency areas for motorists to use in the event of an emergency
- converting the hard shoulder into an extra running lane to provide much-needed extra capacity for the 120,000 motorists that use this stretch of motorway on a daily basis

We will continue to manage the roadworks to keep any disruption to an absolute minimum. We will keep three lanes open at all peak times, and limit other restrictions like closures overnight or at weekends when traffic levels are lowest.

You can sign up for our scheme traffic bulletin by emailing:

m6j21a-26smartmotorway@nationalhighways.co.uk

Our work in the community

Since starting construction we've been working with communities in Warrington, Wigan and St Helens.

This has involved supporting Millbrook Primary School in Shevington with their organic honey project that aims to raise funds for the school. We have given thousands of pounds to the school for equipment, as well as colleagues time in helping to build the bee network and vegetable plots.

We've also worked closely with Warrington UTC pupils to support their STEM activities. And helped students

from Standish Community High School in Wigan with mock interviews as they prepare to leave full time education.

As well as this, we've given guidance to people at St Helens Jobcentre as part of its kickstart interviews initiative.

Our work within these communities will continue until we've completed the project. We'll be offering support and funding to ensure we leave a lasting positive impact on the areas affected by the scheme.



Colleagues from the scheme have visited Warrington UTC to support pupils with STEM activities

We recently found out there used to be a bench outside our site compound where locals could stop to rest while walking.

The old bench is now long gone, so we decided to purchase a new one for people to rest their weary legs. We'll be leaving the commemorative bench after the compound area is restored to agricultural land following completion of the scheme.



The bench is already being used by locals as a resting spot.

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

Sign up for future updates

Want to receive all the latest news on this project but haven't signed up for updates yet? Don't worry it's not too late.

All future updates will be in the form of an e-newsletter which you can sign up to on our webpage: **nationalhighways.co.uk/m6-j21a-26**.

It's just one of the ways we're helping to protect the environment.

You can also follow us on Twitter **@HighwaysNWEST**. If you need a hard copy please contact us and let us know.

How to find out more

If you'd like any more information about the project, please visit our project webpage at **nationalhighways.co.uk/m6-j21a-26**

You can sign up to receive weekly email updates about our planned closures by emailing **m6j21a-26smartmotorway@nationalhighways.co.uk**

If you have any questions, you can contact us by:

- phone on **0300 123 5000** (24-hour Customer Contact Centre)
- email at **info@nationalhighways.co.uk**
- post at **M6 junction 21a to 26 Project Team, National Highways, 2 Colmore Square, Birmingham, B4 6BN**

Scan this QR code with your smartphone to go straight to our webpage



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