

M4 upgrade to smart motorway junctions 3 to 12

Project newsletter – Summer 2019



The M4 is the main strategic route between London, the west of England and Wales. It connects people, communities and businesses, carrying on average 130,000 vehicles per day and is prone to congestion. Highways England is improving the M4 between junction 3 at Hayes and junction 12 at Theale by upgrading it to a smart motorway.

Work to deliver 32 miles of new smart motorway started a year ago and activity is now underway all along the route including preparatory work on structures and verges, installation of new technology and construction work on the carriageway. We are making excellent progress on the western section between junctions 8/9 to 12 and have recently started work on the eastern part of the scheme with the first bridge replacements starting in the autumn. From Spring 2022, the completed smart motorway will increase capacity, reduce congestion and deliver more reliable journeys.

The M4

The M4 forms a vital part of our road network, linking London to Wales. As well as London, other urban areas in the region rely on junctions 3 to 12 for connectivity, including Reading, Maidenhead, Windsor, Slough and Hayes. Other transport hubs and tourist attractions also rely on this stretch of the M4, for example Heathrow Airport, Windsor Castle and Legoland. It is a vital transport link for the local area and the UK as a whole.

The M4 dates back to 1959 when the first section opened as the Chiswick Flyover at what is now junction 1. In 1961 the Maidenhead bypass opened, part of which would become the M4, then junctions 1 to 5 in 1965. Various sections of motorway roads were built from then until the English M4 in its current form was completed in 1971, followed by the Welsh M4 in 1993. The smart motorway between junction 3 to 12 is the next step in the evolution of the M4 and is part of the Government's smart motorways programme.

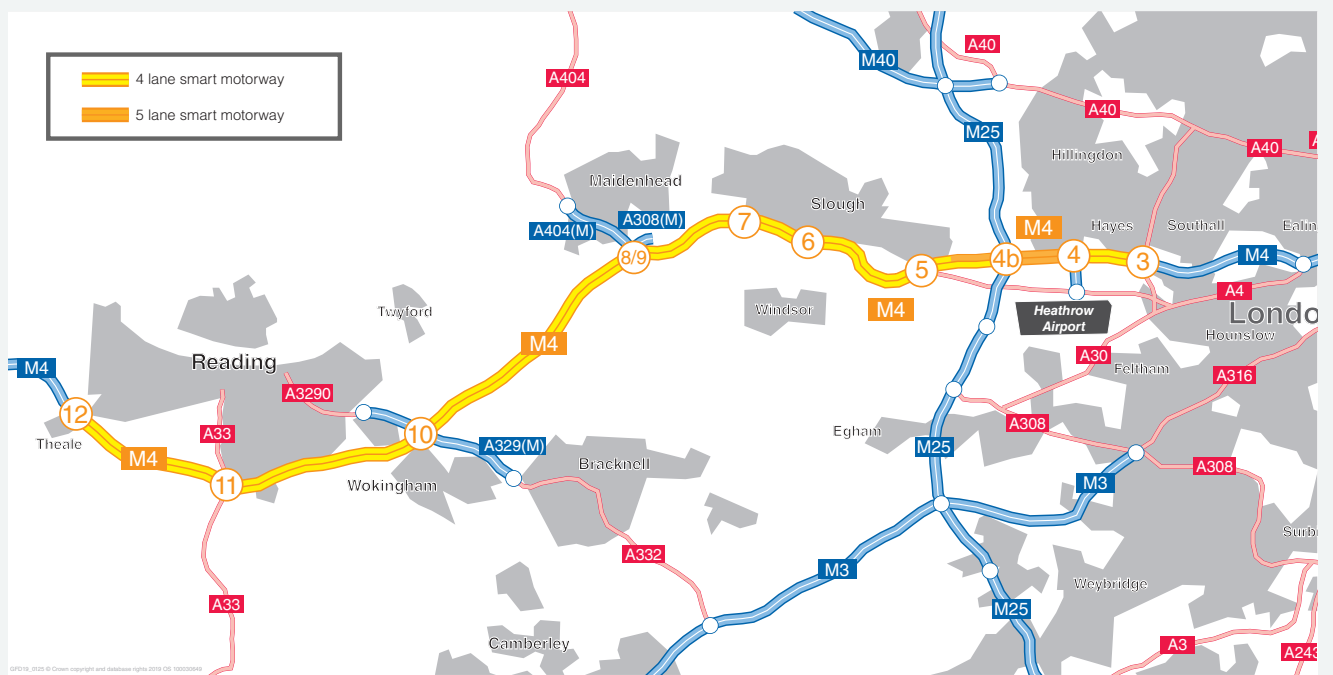
Highways England Delivery Director Mike Grant says:

"One year on since work began, the project team is making great progress in upgrading the M4 to a smart motorway between junctions 3 and 12. This huge scheme is boosting economic development now by providing hundreds of jobs on site including many graduates and apprentices. Once complete that economic boost will continue through tackling congestion and improving journey times for the 130,000 drivers using the route each day.

"Our works are well underway up and down the route and we're about to get started on several complex bridge structures, including widening the New Thames Bridge at Bray and replacing 11 other bridges. We are working closely with our stakeholders across the region to keep them informed of our plans and to ensure that we remain sensitive to all road users. Our free breakdown recovery service is in operation throughout the roadworks and we're making sure all road users stay safe and well during their journeys. We'd like to thank everyone for their patience during our works and we look forward to leaving a great legacy that will bring benefits for all."

The timetable

The smart motorway will be complete and open for traffic by Spring 2022. We have so far completed about 15% of our work and we aim to open the western section between junctions 8/9 and 12 in stages during 2021.



Major milestones ahead

Alongside the work taking place on the motorway itself, preparatory work is underway on several bridges to create space for the smart motorway. This includes the New Thames Bridge at Bray which is being widened to accommodate the completed smart motorway. A pontoon is in place to divert the footpath ahead of main work starting in 2020.

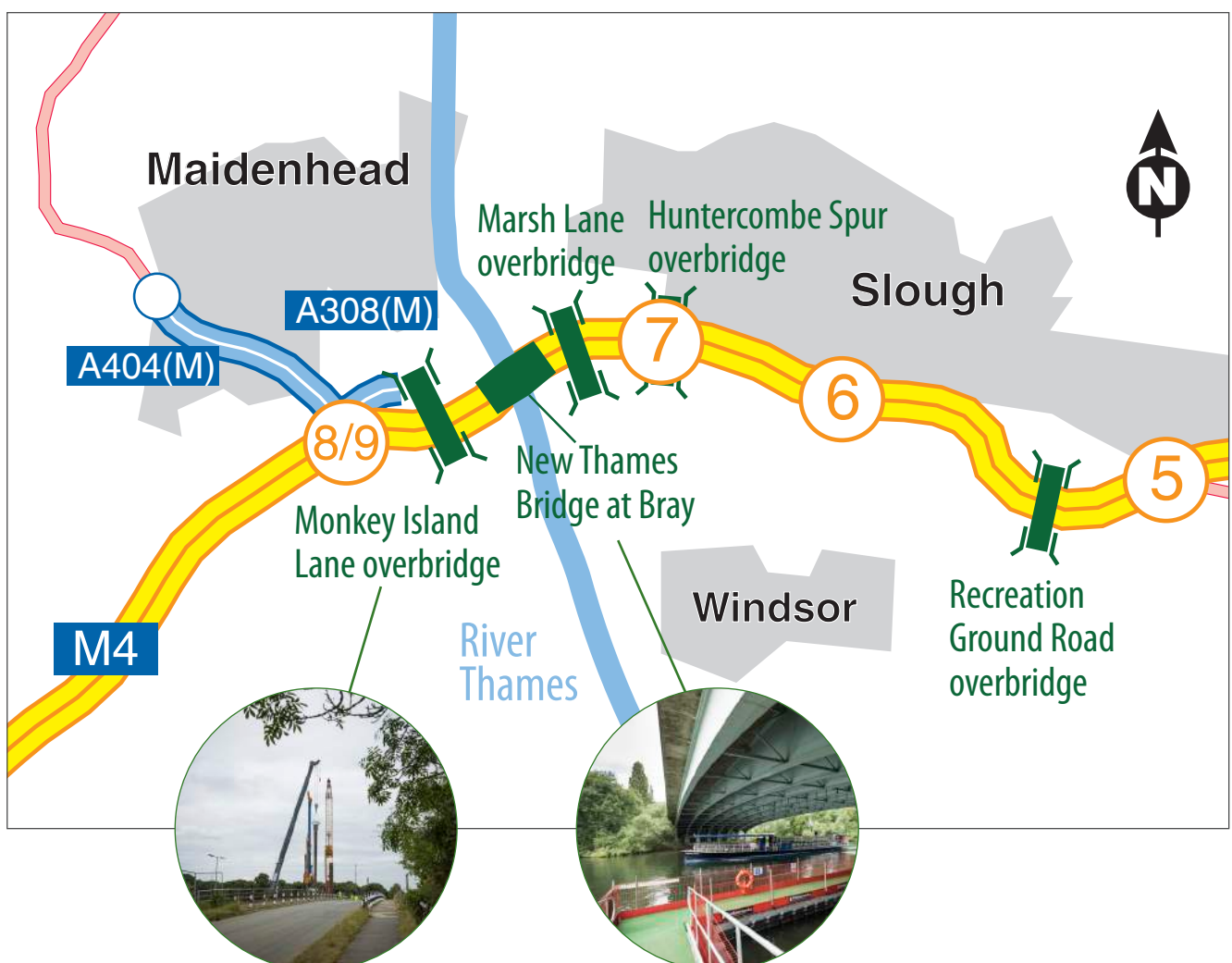
The replacement of several bridges also starts in Autumn 2019.

Recreation Ground Road overbridge, primarily a pedestrian and cycle route linking Datchet to Upton Court Park, will be demolished in late September. The M4 between junctions 5 and 6 will be closed over the weekend of **27 - 30 September 2019** for this activity. The new bridge will be in place by Summer 2020. Weekend closures start at approximately 20:00 on the Friday and finish by 06:00 on the Monday.

Marsh Lane overbridge will be demolished in mid-November. The M4 between junctions 6 and 8/9 will be closed over the weekend of **15 - 18 November 2019** for this. Local traffic will be diverted via Lake End Road overbridge until the new Marsh Lane bridge is complete towards the end of 2020.

Monkey Island Lane overbridge preparation work is well underway – construction of the new bridge will begin during the mid-November closure and the existing structure will remain in place until the replacement is ready.

Huntercombe Spur overbridge at junction 7 will be demolished the weekend of **29 November - 2 December 2019**, and the M4 between junctions 6 and 8/9 will again be closed over the weekend. A temporary overbridge will be in place throughout the construction process. This will be installed during the weekend closure of **15 - 18 November 2019** so that there will be minimal interruption to traffic on the junction.



What is a smart motorway?

Smart motorways are a technology driven approach to the use of our motorways, increasing capacity and relieving congestion while maintaining safety.

Smart motorways help make journey times more reliable, at less cost than traditional widening schemes, meaning better value for the tax payer.

Key features of a smart motorway include:

Variable mandatory speed limits

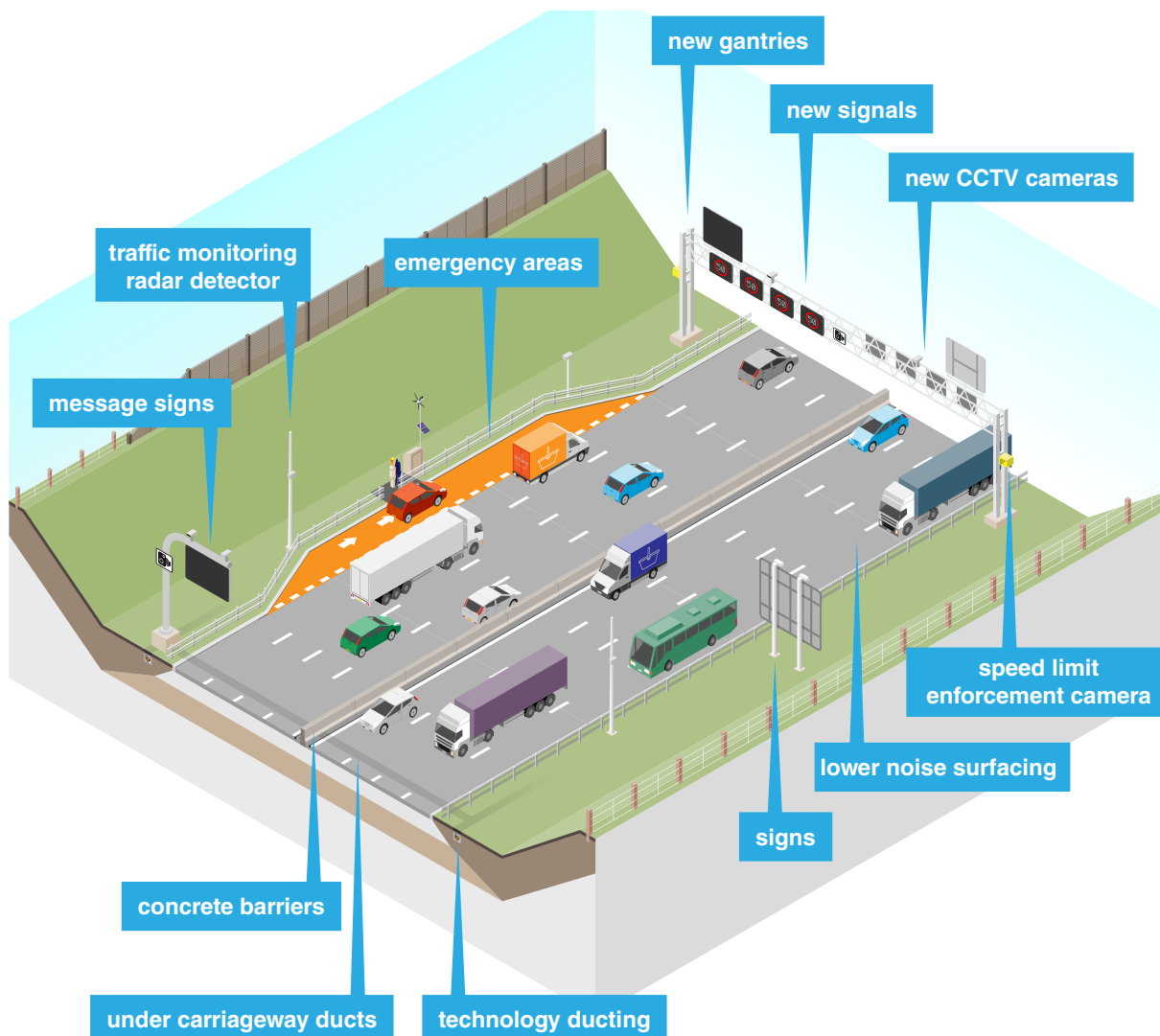
- Speed limits will be set to smooth traffic flows.
- The limits will be clearly displayed on overhead gantries and roadside signs.
- Signs will be used to inform drivers of conditions on the network and when variable speed limits are in place.

All lane running

- The hard shoulder will be permanently converted into a traffic lane.
- Drivers should obey all signs, including speed limits and lane closure instructions and should not stop on the motorway except in an emergency.

Emergency areas

- There will be highly visible emergency areas.
- There will be an emergency telephone in each emergency area.
- This will connect you to Highways England's Regional Control Centres and will pinpoint your location.



Driving safely through our roadworks

We understand that roadworks can be frustrating, but they are an essential element of any road upgrade project. We plan our work so it takes place in the safest and most cost-effective way, with minimum disruption to road users.

The traffic management we have installed on the M4 consists of 3 narrow lanes plus signs and signals to keep you informed of planned work. To ensure the safety of road users and our workforce, there is currently a 50mph speed limit through the works. Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras monitor the average speed of traffic over a section of road, or network of roads. It is used in the UK, including on the M4, to control speeds and to safely manage vehicle traffic speeds through roadworks where we have put in narrow lanes.

The 50mph speed limit through our roadworks is legally enforceable so please do not exceed this as you may receive a penalty notice. Just because workers aren't visible, it doesn't mean they are not present. This is especially true when operations take place at night, but also applies when visibility is restricted by works vehicles and equipment.

What if I break down in the roadworks?

If you can't reach a motorway service area or leave the motorway at the next junction:

- All traffic passing through road works is monitored by our 100% CCTV coverage 24hrs a day, every day. This allows us to react quickly to breakdowns and motorway obstructions occurring within our roadworks.
- If for any reason your vehicle breaks down, put your hazard warning lights on to help other drivers to see you and to help our control room staff spot you on CCTV.
- If you are in the left-hand lane and it is safe to do so, leave your vehicle through the left-hand door and wait behind the barrier if possible. If you can't get out stay inside your vehicle and await assistance. Please remember to keep your seat belt on and dial '999' if there is an emergency.
- We provide free roadside recovery in the roadworks so you will be picked up by our recovery teams and your car will be taken to a suitably safe place to be attended to.
- We also have a Customer Care Centre at our compound near junction 10, from which motorists can continue on their way.



M4 smart motorway summer roadshow

Following on from the second round of Public Information Events we hosted in Spring, our communications team has been out to talk to customers all along the M4 smart motorway route. In addition to our regular visits to Reading services, the team has also been to business parks, supermarkets, and presented to staff at Heathrow Airport and other companies and organisations in the region. This is part of our engagement and communications programme that will run throughout the project focused on our customers in the local community, businesses and users of the motorway travelling from across the country. If your business or community would be interested in hosting a pop-up exhibition or presentation, please contact us to discuss further.



Responding to our customers

The M4 smart motorway project is working with Transport Focus, the passenger and road user watchdog to better understand the needs of our customers.

Working in partnership with Highways England, Transport Focus published its latest piece of road user research specifically about the M4 junction 3 to 12 smart motorway upgrade on 29 May 2019.

It's the first time that Transport Focus has undertaken such research on a road project, the aim being to provide the M4 team with a useful baseline of customer satisfaction during the early construction phase. Transport Focus used customer focus groups, stakeholder interviews, on-line surveys and intercept interviews at service areas to gather 'in-the-moment' feedback as well as recalled experience.

Customers were asked about their awareness of the project, information provided about the works, their expectations and experiences of the works and how much they knew about smart motorways and the benefits that the scheme would eventually bring.

The detailed insight is being used to understand what the project is doing well and what areas need to improve, to hopefully increase road user satisfaction. It's intended to repeat the research again to see how awareness and attitudes change over time and the team will continue to work with Transport Focus to monitor this as the scheme progresses.

The report can be found on the Transport Focus website here:

<https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/upgrading-the-m4-to-a-smart-motorway-road-users-views/>



Encouraging careers in engineering

The M4 smart motorway team will be launching the project's education outreach programme in Autumn 2019. The project will be engaging with local schools along the route of the scheme, with the aim of educating children and young people about civil engineering, construction, road safety, design - subjects that fit into the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) curriculum.

The team have already visited several schools and universities in the area to talk to students about engineering and the link to STEM skills. By using our team of STEM ambassadors, made up of recent graduates and apprentices alongside staff who are further into their careers, we aim to help students explore educational and career opportunities and inspire the next generation of engineers and in particular encourage women to join the industry.



The Highways England project team, which includes lead contractor Balfour Beatty VINCI, lead designer Arcadis Jacobs and our many sub-contractors, has a wealth of experience in delivering STEM activities.

If you are interested in a visit to your school, college or university, please contact us for more information.



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

During construction, narrow lanes and reduced speed restrictions will be put in place to create a smooth and safe flow of traffic through the works and to protect workers. Additionally, traffic management barriers will be needed. Three narrow lanes will be available for road users during peak hours.

Wherever possible, noisier works will be undertaken during daytime hours to reduce disturbance. There will be temporary closures of the carriageway and slip roads on some occasions (mostly at night) with advance warning signs and clearly signed diversions put in place.

We would like to introduce our new engagement website, hosted by Commonplace: <https://m4j3to12smartmotorway.commonplace.is/> Commonplace is an interactive web-based platform for engagement with communities, and we are using this to invite residents and road users to give their views on our delivery of the project. It also has a news page which will be regularly updated by the team throughout the project with closures, events and construction information. We hope you will find this useful.

If you have any questions or comments and would like a response please continue to email, call or write to us.

Find out more

You can find out more about the plans and forthcoming works by visiting our website at: www.highwaysengland.co.uk/m4j3to12 or following the South East regional twitter feed: [@highwaysSEAST](https://twitter.com/highwaysSEAST)

Closure information is available at the Traffic England website: www.trafficengland.com Please check before you travel.

Contact us:
email: M4J3to12smartmotorways@highwaysengland.co.uk
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