



ROTHERHAM

Advertiser



FRIDAY, October 4, 2019

£1 MAKING YOUR VOICE LOUDER

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TOO LITTLE TOO LATE

'WASTE OF PAINT':
Examples of orange
zones and, below,
Claire and Jason

'Paint wouldn't have saved my Jason'

THE widow of a motorist killed after his car broke down on a "smart motorway" saw red over plans to improve safety by painting emergency refuge areas orange.

Claire Mercer (43) said Highways England's changes — including extra signs to show the distance to the next stopping point — would have done nothing to save 44-year-old husband Jason and fellow motorist Alexandru Murgeanu (22).

The two drivers died in June after being hit by a truck on the former hard shoulder of the M1 between Meadowhall and Thorpe Hesley as

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they exchanged details following a minor shunt.

Claire, of Moorgate, has called for a judicial review into the move to opt for all-lanes-running motorways, which she said had been "sneaked in through the back door".

She added: "My husband was a mile away from a

refuge area. Painting it orange would not have made a difference.

"If it's out of sight, it's out of sight."

A poll of Advertiser readers found 91 per cent believed smart motorways should be scrapped.

Rotherham MP Sarah Champion, who is backing Claire's legal action against Highways England over Jason's death, said: "The so-called 'smart' motorway is nothing of the sort.

"Improvements to signage for

emergency areas would be welcome, but they don't go nearly far enough. There are fundamental concerns with all lanes running and these proposals would do very little to mitigate the loss of the hard shoulder.

"Rather than properly invest in our road network, the Government has chosen to increase capacity on the cheap, at the expense of the safety of motorists.

"I stand shoulder to shoulder with Claire in calling for all-lane running to be scrapped."

Smart motorways have no mandatory hard shoulder and use lane closures in cases of breakdowns or accidents.

Government-run Highways Eng-

Continued on page 4



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**WARNE: WE
MUST FIND
OUR SWAGGER** p33

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Blaze at cricket ground

FIREFIGHTERS dealt with a blaze at Wickersley Old Village Cricket Club on Wednesday.

Crews attended Northfield Lane at 9.30pm and used dry powder to stop the accidental blaze, which was in an electricity meter box outside the clubhouse.

The club described it as a "small fire" and said there was no damage to the facilities.

A post on Facebook added: "Thank you to staff for their prompt action and the members for their co-operation, not forgetting the fire officers who dealt with the problem."

Car shot

A CAR was shot at as two vehicles were damaged in Tinsley.

Police were called to Raby Street at about 5.50pm last Friday.

A spokeswoman said: "Officers found two damaged cars. One of the cars appears to have been shot at."

Anyone with information is urged to call 101 quoting incident 714 of September 27.

You can also call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111.

ART CLASS:
Beatrix Biglin and Amelia Beaumont
191322-05



STREET TREAT:
Pupils playing games
191322-02



Word: MICHAEL UPTON
Photos: DAVE POUCHER

THERE were new road markings outside a school as pupils made a stand against dangerous parking and pollution.

Beech Avenue at Listerdale Junior Academy was closed to traffic as kids and their parents left their cars at home and used the road to play games and draw pictures.

Listerdale, which was marking the start of Walk to School Month, has teamed up with travel body Modeshift STARS for a series of initiatives to boost safety and cut car use.

And on the day, activities included a park-and-stride walking bus from the local pub, playground games like hop-scotch, free bike repairs and cycling and scooter skills training sessions.

Last year the school carried out its own air pollution monitoring and found that nitrogen dioxide levels outside the gates more than doubled in term-time compared to the summer holidays.

Principal David Simpson said: "We're really keen in improving the health and wellbeing of our pupils, whilst improving access for local residents."

"We are constantly going the extra mile and we know that the journey to school is an important part of the school day."

"Not only do we want to pupils, parents and staff to arrive to school safely but we also want to encourage them to travel in a way that keeps them fit, active and healthy whilst improving air quality for all."

Kids play as school shuts street

ROAD SKILL!

ROAD SKILL!

Painting the M1 orange

● From page 1 land insisted they were already safe but said the new-look refuge areas would make them even safer and help vehicles be recovered quickly.

The roads agency said the move — covering the M1 between the Alfreton and Stocksbridge bypass junctions and between Denby Dale and the M62 from junctions 25 to 30 — was part of an ongoing programme to make emergency areas as easy as possible to spot and deter drivers from using them in non-emergency situations.

Programme sponsor Paul Unwin said: "Smart motorways are as safe as traditional motorways, which are already among the safest roads in the world."

"We recognise that as well as being safe, drivers want to feel safe and we have and will continue to make some changes to the design of motorways."

"This includes making emergency areas more visible by making them bright orange which should also discourage drivers from using them in non-emergency situations."

The agency said that all new road schemes would cut the maximum spacing between places to stop in an emergency from every mile-and-a-half to around every mile.

But Claire said independent research had found that the refuge areas were currently much further apart than Highways England claim — up to four miles — because the agency took into account slip roads and service stations.

Work started on the M1 this week and will be carried out overnight Monday to Friday, with lane closures between 8pm and 6am.

There are 56 emergency areas that will be repainted on the M1 and M62.

Drivers are encouraged when using smart motorways to "follow the signs", including the red X signs and variable speed limits, and know what to do if they break down.

In an emergency, the advice is to get off the motorway or onto an emergency area or hard shoulder and use the free orange phone.

Get out of the left side of your vehicle, and behind the barrier if you can, and call your breakdown provider or Highways England on 0300 123 5000.

● Claire Mercer is hosting a music festival at Lavens Farm in Morthen this weekend to help fund her legal action. Search for Mercet on Facebook for more information.

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Market leader Awards day off for Joan... at 90

A 90-year-old market trader — who gets up at the crack of dawn six times a week — will give herself a well-earned day off after being nominated for a national award.

Grandma Joan Ward has sold fruit and veg from her Wath stall for the last 67 years.

Now she has reached the finals of the Active Agers category in global hearing specialist Amplifon's search for the "best of British" heroes.

And Joan will keep the shutters down — for one day only — later this month to attend the awards lunch at the Army & Navy Club in London.

Joan (right) wakes up at 6.30am every day and sets out her stall — even carrying sacks of potatoes — by 8am. She even drives the van and collects deliveries.

"I don't need a walking stick or frame to get round my stall," she said. "I might be 90 but I honestly feel more like 60."

Joan's life as a greengrocer started after she stopped for a chat with market trader Fred Ward at his stall.

Eventually they got married and Joan joined Fred running the stall in 1952, and continued after his death in 2006.

Joan, who owns Wath's Value

For Money Market in Rotherham, where her business is based, said: "I'm not thinking of giving up my stall yet."

"As long as I feel fit and able, I will continue working."

"I've got to think about my customers, some who I have known for donkey's years. I don't want to let them down."

"I love to chat to the people who come to buy my fruit and veg. And children I served years ago now bring their own children to the stall, which is lovely."

The Amplifon awards are in their fourth year and aim to celebrate remarkable people and

pets. The winners will be judged by a panel including Falklands War hero Simon Weston and presented with their awards by the Duke of Kent.

Joan was born in her gran's fish and chip shop and helped deliver fruit and veg from her father's horse and cart as a young girl.

She said: "I have never really thought about my age because the years have gone by that fast. Time flies when you are working hard."

Her sister Pat (79) runs a café in the market, and daughter Catherine (60) a card shop.

