

The Telegraph

I was left crushed in my lorry on a smart motorway. Now I may never drive again

Martin Broadbelt, a lorry driver of 25 years, smashed into a recovery vehicle that was stationary in a live lane

By [Steve Bird](#) 11 June 2022 • 4:32pm



Martin Broadbelt has said 'scrapping the hard shoulder is madness' following his devastating crash on a smart motorway live lane CREDIT: Jon Super

A lorry driver of 25 years has said he will never drive again after his truck smashed into a recovery vehicle that was stationary in a live lane on a [smart motorway](#).

Martin Broadbelt suffered a crushed leg, five broken ribs and had to be cut free from the wreckage after failing to swerve out of the way.

[National Highways](#) did not spot the recovery vehicle, which was assisting a van with a puncture, on CCTV in time to close the lane to traffic.

The M6 where the accident happened is also not fitted with "stopped vehicle detection" (SVD) technology meant to identify stranded cars.

Mr Broadbelt, 50, agreed to become the first lorry driver to speak out about the [threat posed by stationary vehicles in live lanes](#) where the hard shoulder has been scrapped, as he fears more deaths will occur.

He explained how it was difficult to tell whether the vehicle was moving or not.

'I thought the recovery truck was still moving'

“I thought the recovery truck was still moving. It was only in the last moments as I got close that I realised it was stationary. I swerved, but it was too late,” he said from his Wigan home.

“I got crushed; my left leg’s tibia bone was broken and five of my ribs were shattered.”

Numerous inquests into live lane smart motorway deaths have heard how the “looming effect” can confuse motorists into wrongly thinking static vehicles are moving.

“I’ve been driving professionally for 25 years. But, I don’t know if I can get back in a lorry ever again,” he continued.

“A month earlier, I had to swerve to avoid a mother and child getting out of a broken down car on the inside lane. I could have killed them.

“Scrapping the hard shoulder is madness. It’s about saving money over and above safety.”

'Mr Shapps should overturn this policy straight away'

Mr Broadbelt, who required therapy to help cope with trauma of the crash, believes Grant Shapps, the Transport Secretary, has failed to address the issue by [only halting some of the roll out](#) of smart motorways.

“The Government says it has stopped building smart motorways. Anyone driving on the motorway network knows they are introducing new ones. Mr Shapps should overturn this policy straight away.”

Staffordshire Police was alerted to the crash on the northbound carriageway between Junctions 12 and 13 shortly after 5am on February 23.

They called National Highways who closed the lane to traffic. Mr Broadbelt was trapped inside the wreckage drifting in and out of consciousness. He spent weeks in hospital but since his release also suffered a blood clot in his leg requiring yet more treatment.

Staffordshire Police said Mr Broadbelt was not arrested over the crash. No one else was injured.

Claire Mercer, who is campaigning for smart motorways to be abolished after her [husband was killed on the M1](#), said: “Lives are continuing to be lost and ruined while the Government procrastinates and pretends it is doing something with report after report. Ministers are not listening to the public.”



Claire Mercer's husband Jason was killed on the M1, and she has since campaigned against smart motorways CREDIT: Asadour Guzelian

Andrew Butterfield, the head of service delivery for National Highways, said the lane was closed “as soon as we were made aware of the collision by police”.

“Smart motorways have a range of measures which are not present on other types of high-speed roads and we’re investing hundreds of millions of pounds to make England’s network of motorways and major A-roads even safer,” he added.

A Department for Transport spokesman said new smart motorway schemes have been “paused” while more safety data is collected.

“We are completing schemes which are in construction – given they are all more than half completed and leaving traffic management in place for the duration of the pause would lead to significant disruption to road users. They will all have stopped vehicle detection in place when they open”.