



Department for Transport

Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR
Tel: 0300 330 3000

Michael Rawson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Web Site: www.gov.uk/dft

Our Ref: 427353

19 May 2023

Dear Mr Rawson

Thank you for your letter of 18 April addressed to Minister Holden regarding the cancellation of all planned smart motorways. Your enquiry has been passed to Correspondence Team, Strategic Roads Division for a response.

As you are aware, on the 16 April the Government announced that all plans for new smart motorways have been cancelled, recognising the current lack of public confidence felt by some drivers and wider cost pressures. This will mean that the 11 schemes currently paused from the second Road Investment Strategy (2020 – 2025) and the three earmarked for construction during the third Road Investment Strategy (2025 – 30) will be removed from the Government's Road building plans. Two schemes that are already over three quarters constructed will be completed (M56 junctions 6-8 and M6 junctions 21a-26) as leaving traffic management in place or reverting to a conventional motorway would lead to significant disruption to the travelling public and could potentially lead to drivers using less safe roads. We will continue to track public confidence in smart motorways and consider the latest safety and economic data.

Every death is one too many and our thoughts are with the families who have been affected. The safety of road users driving on the road network is of paramount importance to the Government. Overall England has one of the safest road networks in Europe, and the latest safety data shows that smart motorways are some of the safest roads on England's Strategic Road Network.

Existing smart motorways provide increased capacity on some of our most congested sections of motorways without the need for road widening which would be extremely costly. Any reduction in capacity on our Strategic Road Network could put more drivers and passengers at risk of death or serious injury if they were to divert on to less safe local roads. In addition, reinstating

the hard shoulder whilst maintaining the overall road capacity would result in significant disruption to road users over an extended period of time, disrupt local communities and come at a significant environmental and financial cost.

However, we know that people need to feel safe as well as be safe and we recognise that drivers may feel less confident when driving on smart motorways. That is why we have committed £900m to add further safety features to smart motorways already in operation. This includes adding additional places to stop in an emergency and more technology to help spot stopped vehicles, which has now been completed.

Thank you for taking the time to write, we will continue to invest in giving motorists clear advice when using existing smart motorways, to help improve public confidence.

Yours sincerely

Correspondence Team, Strategic Road