

[News](#) [Sport](#) [Business](#) [Opinion](#) [Ukraine](#) [Money](#) [Royals](#) [Life](#) [Style](#) [Travel](#) [Cult](#)[See all News](#)

Smart motorway cameras 'not facing the road'

Some devices are focused on the ground, pointing at the sky or looking at fields of sheep rather than roads where there is no hard shoulder

By Steve Bird

13 August 2023 • 11:19am



343

Broken CCTV cameras meant to spot motorists stranded in live lanes on smart motorways can leave National Highways staff struggling to get “eyes on” life-and-death emergencies, a whistleblower has said.

A source in one of the Government-owned company's control centres has revealed how staff are left "exasperated" after reporting failing cameras that do not get repaired for "ages".

Analysis by The Telegraph of the network's live feeds has revealed how some are focused on the ground, pointing at the sky, looking at fields of sheep or honed in on houses and industrial estates rather than monitoring motorways where there is no hard shoulder.

The study by the The Telegraph of camera footage from the M1, M6, and M25 showed some cameras were failing to return to their "homing position" after the tilt and zoom controls had been used by National Highways staff.

Other CCTV cameras were waterlogged or covered in condensation, obscuring the view.



Eyes down: a camera on the M6 is found to be pointing at the ground

A National Highways spokesman insisted that the CCTV camera's resting position is not "critical" to its performance because it can still be moved, adding that CCTV is one of a number of ways stranded vehicles are detected.

"We are aware of problems experienced by operators in relation to camera resting positions, and we are already working with camera suppliers to address this issue," she said.

During two days of analysis of live feeds, two live lane breakdowns were spotted on the M25 after cars came to a halt on live lanes after failing to reach an emergency refuge area.

In both cases, the “red X” symbol on overhead gantries closed the lane to traffic, and speed limits were imposed. No one was injured. In the first incident, a passing traffic officer spotted one stricken vehicle. In the second case, a member of the public alerted authorities, and the vehicle was towed to an emergency area with the help of the police.

However, the feed illustrated the perils faced by motorists, traffic patrol staff, and police who end up just feet from fast-moving lorries and cars.

In April, the Government announced all planned future smart motorways would be cancelled following numerous coroners finding how the removal of the hard shoulder had contributed to fatal collisions.

PAUSED AND PLANNED SMART MOTORWAYS TO BE SCRAPPED

— Paused schemes — Planned schemes



National Highways operates nearly 4,000 cameras either fitted to gantries straddling the carriageways or on 40ft (12m) high masts.

According to its website, the cameras, which do not enforce speed limits, provide staff at traffic operation centres a “bird’s-eye view” of the motorway network.

The source said a computer system called Dynac “loads up” cameras when an incident is detected.

“In the worst case scenario, CCTV may be broken so we can struggle to see anything,” the source added, explaining how some “infrastructure defects” had not been repaired despite being reported months ago.

“In other instances, the image can be very poor or obscured. Some may have been knocked from their homing position by bad weather.”

The Telegraph found nine cameras on the M25 had severe condensation, limiting the view. On the M6, some default positions looked at a power plant, a housing estate, fields of livestock, and the ground and sky.



A less-than-useful view of a power station

On the M1, some feeds were marked “FAULT: camera communication failure”, another said “optics management error”, while others showed only trees.

Claire Mercer, whose husband Jason died on the M1 smart motorway in 2019, said:

“National Highways is not taking the serious problems with smart motorways seriously at

all.

“Time after time the tech is shown to not be up to the job, and people are still dying.”

A spokesman for National Highways added how broken down vehicles on “all-lane running” smart motorways can be spotted by a “whole system of inter-related safety features”, including radar which covers the entire network.

“All plans for new smart motorway schemes have been cancelled, and we are investing £900 million until 2025 to improve the safety features of smart motorways. This includes work to fix broken traffic cameras,” she added.

Breaking News Alerts

The biggest news stories, as they happen



Sign up

Related Topics

Roads, Smart motorways, Department for Transport, Transport and industry, Motorways



The Telegraph values your comments but kindly requests all posts are on topic, constructive and respectful. Please review our [commenting policy](#).

Show comments

More stories



England embraced the dark arts to beat Australia in their own back yard



British Museum jewels stolen in huge security breach



Ukraine modifies British Challenger 2 tanks to protect them from Russian drones



Duchess wears £1,400 Ariel Gordon necklace in birthday photo



Families face inheritance tax trap after landmark legal case



The luxury riverside apartment owners trapped in a costly nightmare

More from News



AI could be fast-tracked to hospitals in NHS overhaul

By Michael Searles

16 Aug 2023, 9:35pm



Please come back to school, Gillian Keegan urges pupils demoralised by pandemic

By Louisa Clarence-Smith

16 Aug 2023, 9:31pm



Rishi Sunak rules out net zero referendum

By Nick Gutteridge

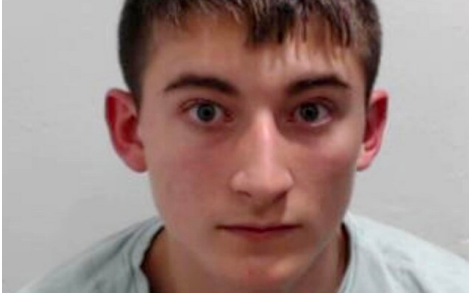
16 Aug 2023, 9:30pm



Pig kidneys can be transplanted to humans

By Joe Pinkstone

16 Aug 2023, 9:29pm



Teenager jailed for life for murdering boy on railway platform

By Daniel Sanderson

16 Aug 2023, 9:10pm



Pictured: Giant kebab costume that provoked bidding war

By Susie Coen

16 Aug 2023, 9:10pm

More from The Telegraph



England beat Australia to reach 2023 Women's World Cup final



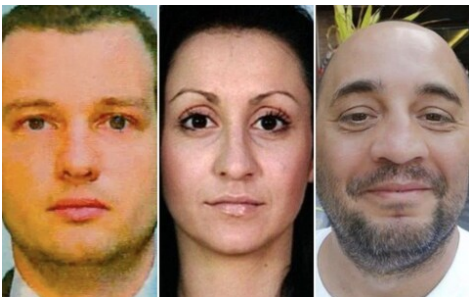
Fury of the silent majority is driving a global Right-wing counter-revolution



Ukraine-Russia war: Four Ukrainian soldiers killed in Russia by spy agency



Afghan war hero will be next chief of British Army



‘Russian spy ring’ lived at flat one mile from RAF base



The attainable classic cars that escape the Ulez

The Telegraph

Back to top ^

Follow us on:



Help Centre

About us

Telegraph Extra

Reader Prints

Branded Content

Syndication and Commissioning

Guidelines

Privacy

Terms and Conditions

Advertising Terms

Fantasy Sport

UK Voucher Codes

Betting Offers

Modern Slavery

Tax Strategy

Broadband and Mobile Deals

Wine Cellar

The Chelsea Magazine Company

Manage Cookies