

Customer Feedback Report: Quarter 4 (January – March) 2013-14



HEADLINES

- Highways Agency Information Line (HAIL) reporting serious concerns regarding closures of major routes and problems with the signing of diversion routes. Communication needs to be looked at to prevent multiple closures from taking place and affecting large parts of the network in the same area.
- Positive feedback from Network Rail, expressing thanks for successful collaboration during the reconstruction of Pytcheley Bridge which was part of their plan to upgrade the Midland Mainline.
- New procedure implemented for handling calls regarding claims for damage caused to vehicles due to potholes
- Cycling and Touring Club (CTC) raise concerns on safety issues.
- Problems with flooding on the M25 show how co-operation between the Agency, Connect Plus, local authorities and utility companies saved the situation.

Purpose of the Report

The Agency's strategic plan sets out our vision of being the world's leading road operator by providing a service that our customers can trust. Part of that is delivering what we promise to our customers, and the plan contains the commitment that we will actively listen to, and promptly respond to, their needs. The Department of Transport's strategic road network performance specification requires the Agency to demonstrate a clear link between its business decisions and customer feedback.

The Customer Beacon network is an essential part of the delivery of these commitments. This document summarises the Customer Beacon reports for Quarter 4 (January to March) 2013-14. The reports give details of the feedback received from customers during the quarter and actions taken in response to that feedback.

Customer Issues

Customers complained about the delays caused by a lane closure on the A11. They were unhappy that there was no evidence of work taking place and a lack of signing. We explained that a 24/7 lane closure on the A11, between the A505 (Abington) and the Worsted Lodge junction, had been implemented for overnight safety barrier repairs out overnight. In response to the complaints we increased communications publicising the nature of and reasoning behind the closures.

A customer contacted the Agency after having checked that his planned route from Lincolnshire to Buckinghamshire was uninterrupted by road works. However, he encountered a diversion that added over twenty miles to his journey. The customer stated that he had previously planned journeys using the website only to end up detouring late at night and was upset that we didn't publish certain road closures. The customer was advised that the HA website is not updated in real time but that live traffic information can be found on the Traffic England website.

Public consultations were held in March to present the M4 Junction 3-12 Smart Motorway scheme. Much of the feedback regarding Smart Motorway's was positive with customers commenting on how well the M42 scheme was working. Concern was raised that while the works for the M4 were going ahead, traffic would be diverted onto local roads causing congestion for the villages and towns. Customers thought that more should be done to work with local authorities to reduce disruption. The Agency were able to explain to the customers that by using CCTV, we will be able to shut lanes off in time to move the traffic over if there is an accident or a breakdown on the network. The team are taking all comments from the Exhibitions away to address before the next consultation to be held later in the year.

Following upgrades to the signalling equipment at M23 Junction 9 a fault appeared in the signal controller causing excessive delays. As an interim measure and following the complaints received, we decided to turn off the traffic signals at this location until we were able to install the new controller. This greatly improved traffic flows and was appreciated by the users of this junction.

A number of customers have repeatedly contacted the Highways Agency regarding the operation of the traffic lights at Junction 3 of the M55. They believe the lights are a danger, and the junction operated better without them. We are aware of the long standing issues here and last week as an interim measure, following inordinate delays on the A585 southbound approach, we took the decision to switch the lights off and undertake a review of the junction over the next two months.

A customer raised a number of complaints about the road surface on the M1 near Junctions 11 and 13 commenting that the carriageway is in a terrible state due to the number of potholes and requires urgent attention. We advised the customer that the defects had been identified by our weekly safety inspections and works to fill the potholes had been scheduled or were being carried out.

Concern was expressed by a local cycling group regarding the diversion of trunk road traffic onto part of National Cycle Route. We are deploying additional signing to warn drivers that there may be cyclists ahead.

The Agency liaised with the Cycling and Touring Club (CTC) who had raised concerns over potential safety issues at the junction on the A1058 Coast Road. As a result we are now looking at options to enhance pedestrian and cycling provision as part of the overall scheme.

In January the Agency received reports that an infiltration pond was overflowing and flooding properties near the A20 in Pinks Hill, Swanley. Investigations found that rain water was cascading down the local road and that the council's road gullies were blocked. This issue was first dealt with in December 2013, but there were follow up complaints of further flooding in January and February 2014. The cause of the flooding hadn't been established but because the flooding was affecting local properties we arranged to carry out the cleaning of local council road gullies. We also carried out a partial clearance of the surface water drainage pipe and, assisted by the local Fire Brigade, pumped out drainage and helped with the provision of sand bags. We visited the site regularly to monitor the level of the water in the infiltration pond and met with local residents.. A meeting was arranged to agree a joint action plan with Kent County Council. The local MP, Michael Fallon, was kept informed of developments and regular meetings were held with local residents.

Flooding onto the carriageway as a result of heavy rainwater coming off neighbouring fields resulted in a closure of a lane on the A27. To try and resolve the issue and get the A27 to full capacity as soon as possible, we secured funding for a specialised high-volume pump to allow us to pump excess water faster than it accumulated.

The Agency received several complaints from customers concerning overnight noise made by works at the Crusader Roundabout on the A453 where the Highways Agency was carrying out improvement works. The noise was keeping children awake and was causing ill health due to lack of sleep. Our contractors visited the customers and apologised for the disruption. They explained that the phase of work was complete and that minor works would be undertaken over the next few weeks. The contractor informed the customers that all future night works would be notified in advance. The contractor explained that they try to limit the noise produced by the use of specialist plant equipment and by using noise limiting methods.

The M4 elevated section is undergoing essential maintenance to the underside of the structure. This requires traffic management on the A4 below and night time working which is noisy for local residents and disruptive to traffic on the A4. There have been complaints from residents about these works, particularly about the noise. The Agency spoke to residents and local businesses to ensure they are kept fully informed of the work we are carrying out. Modifications have been made to the way we are carrying out the work by restricting the noisier parts of the work to certain hours and screens have been provided to keep noise levels down as much as possible. We have liaised with residents and Transport for London (TfL) to try and start work earlier in the evening, but unfortunately this has not been possible due to TfL's network requirements. There has been regular contact with residents.

Compliments

A customer emailed HAIL to praise the good work in dealing with flooding in the Worcestershire area. The customer advised that he had seen a massive improvement and general good management of the flooding in this area.

Thanks from a customer: *"I would like to pass on my congratulations to the people who have done the recent work on the widening of the M6 motorway. The work, design, and the way in which it now flows is a credit to all the workers who have made it all happen. I now commute in to Birmingham City Centre in half the time I previously did. People are too quick to complain in today's society, and I think that all the people who have worked on this project are a credit to the companies they work for"*

Compliments from a customer who advised that since the A36 has been resurfaced " it is a pleasure to drive on".

A customer praised the good work in dealing with flooding in the Worcestershire area. The customer advised that he has seen a massive improvement and general good management of the flooding in this area.

Grateful thanks from a customer for the assistance given when their car broke down on the M25. The help received meant they did not miss their flight and were able to have their planned two week holiday.

Thanks received: *"The guys who recovered my car following an accident on 13 February. The guy who called the recovery truck comforted me and reassured me as did the guy who drove the truck. I felt they both deserve a big thank you. The truck driver took me home and then proceeded to go back and get my boot scooter as I am registered disabled and he did not want me to be without it. Outstanding generosity on his part."*

Thanks from an elderly gentleman who received assistance from traffic officers and a special police constable on a cold, wet, dark February evening when it was reported that a vehicle had been left in the live lane at Clover Leaf on the A14. The carriageway was made safe and the confused elderly driver was found walking along the roadside approx. 1.5 miles away. The driver was escorted to a place of safety whilst his vehicle was towed to a layby. The recovery services were called and the elderly gentleman was sent on his way to his family.

From a local resident: *"I just wanted to say a big THANK YOU to all for helping make Stoketon Cross (A38 near Plymouth) a safer crossroads! I think the new crossroad design is much better: It has slowed the traffic down but kept it moving. Made it feel safer to wait in the middle of the road with the islands at either end. The signage has improved its visibility to all road users. I am sure it will prove to be a much safer place to cross."*

Motorists contacted the Agency regarding the recent finished scheme at Greenodd "We are frequent travellers between Newby Bridge and West Cumbria, using the road junction at Greenodd. This is just to thank you and your colleagues for the lovely new roundabout which makes turning right much easier and safer. The contract seemed to be completed with the minimum of disruption and when the landscaping has matured, I

am sure it will all look very attractive” “I would like to say that the holdups have been minimal and I wanted to thank you and your team. The roundabout is looking lovely and everyone is to be commended for their hard work in keeping the traffic moving” They were also complimented by a local councillor “I am so impressed with the Greenodd Roundabout and the way the work and traffic has been managed.”

A customer emailed the Agency regarding his pleasure that our contractor had made a fine job of cutting back foliage/grass on the cycle track between Montford Bridge and Felton Butler on the A5. He asked us to pass on his thanks to the contractors and hoped that this will be kept up.

A resident thanked the M25 team for organising the new planting. *“Very much appreciated by all those in the community that view and hear the motorway.”*

Thanks for clearing overgrown vegetation along a cycle path near A34 Botley Interchange *“The path has been cleared and it has made such a difference. Thank you and your team for getting this done.”*

A customer called to report that a street light on Watling Street wasn't working. He was really pleased when he looked out his window the following morning and the light was working. He commented that they must have; *“really got your skates on”*.

A compliment from a local councillor on the A26 who reported a sign that had been knocked over; he called back to say please pass on his thanks to the local depot for getting the 40mph sign put back up, *“efficient as always”*.

Following a report of a missing dog on the M3 in Surrey: *“Many thanks for your email and all your efforts. I am very pleased to tell you that my daughter's dog Joey has turned up safe and well. Please pass on my thanks I am very grateful for all your help.”*

<p>We need your feedback</p>

We hope that this report will help to show how important customer feedback is to the Highways Agency. Should you wish to let us know what you think about any aspect of our work, good or bad, please get in touch. Telephone: HAIL: 0300 1213 500 or email ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk

Customer, Stakeholder and Partnership Team

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