

John Larkinson  
Chief Executive  
Office of Rail and Road  
25 Cabot Square  
London  
E14 4QZ

Nick Harris  
Acting Chief Executive  
Highways England  
Bridge House  
1 Walnut Tree Close  
Guildford  
GU1 4LZ

18 August 2021

Dear John

**RE: CEPA Report – Smart Motorways Stocktake Action Review**

Thank you for your letter dated 11 August 2021 advising of your publication of this report and requesting further information about our CHARM programme and resourcing. We welcome your continued support in reporting and monitoring progress against the *Smart Motorways Stocktake and Action Plan* to ensure we deliver the best outcomes for our road users, and continue to make the network as safe as it can be.

**CHARM Rollout**

There are two key elements to delivering our obligations for Stopped Vehicle Detection (SVD). Firstly, we are installing the roadside infrastructure and will share the programme for integrating SVD and CHARM with you. The second element is the automatic setting of signs in response to a vehicle being detected, with this functionality being delivered through CHARM. The programme for delivering this capability starts in the Yorkshire and North-East region in September, and is expected to be rolled-out across all remaining regions by June 2022. We will provide monthly progress updates as we complete the roll-out.

We fully recognise the potential risks when upgrading from one traffic management system to a new one. These are discussed as a standing agenda item at the monthly programme Steering Board. Accordingly, we can share key risks with you that have the potential to influence delivery of the programme and the corresponding mitigations to manage them. We carry out a [GG104 risk assessment](#) for CHARM in advance of each regional deployment and have developed specific mitigations should we lose the ability to set signs and signals or receive alarms from the SVD system. The GG104 standard sets out the framework and approach for the safety risk assessment to be applied when undertaking any activity that does or can have an impact on safety on Highways England's motorway and all-purpose trunk roads, either directly or indirectly.

We have a separate alerting tool that provides us with back-up capability and would see the signs set manually by Regional Operational Control Centre colleagues. To ensure our contingency planning remains robust, there are also operational response plans that include the provision of additional on-road resources focused on Smart Motorways, the deployment of pre-positioned vehicle recovery, and news media traffic alerts.

We recognise your request for further reporting to provide you with confidence that CHARM is being rolled-out to the agreed programme and functioning as intended. We remain flexible to your initial requests and have scheduled a meeting on 16 September 2021 to discuss the broader programme, and what information should be made available moving forward.

## Resourcing

From September, I confirm that we will provide you with a monthly report that shows our Traffic Officer recruitment, absence and attrition rates, together with performance against a 10-minute average response to attend stopped vehicles on Smart Motorways where the existing spacing between safe places to stop in an emergency is more than one mile.

We set out key principles and regional actions to achieve faster attendance by traffic officer patrols as part of Action 3 in the *Smart Motorways Action Plan*, and attach a national summary of this work (annex A). We understand the need to share with you how we will achieve this and have arranged a focus discussion on resourcing at the same meeting on 16 September 2021.

Thank you again for your ongoing support and vigilance as we work towards delivering the *Smart Motorways Stocktake and Action Plan*.

Yours sincerely



Nick Harris  
Acting Chief Executive

## CEPA Report – Smart Motorways Stocktake Action Review

**Annex A:** A national summary of the Regional Action Plans to support faster attendance by Traffic Officers. This document was developed in support of Action 3 in the *Smart Motorways Stocktake and Action Plan*.

### Faster Attendance by Traffic Officers

1. 1.9 “Detecting a stopped vehicle quickly and warning other drivers is the first response. A stranded motorist also wants to know that help will be at hand fast. We are committing to introduce additional traffic officer patrols on smart motorways where the existing spacing between safe places to stop in an emergency is more than one mile. We aim to reduce the attendance time from an average of 17 minutes to 10 minutes. This will mean reaching those who need assistance quicker and making them safer. This average response time compares favourably with the Police 15minute target for response time.”

### Smart Motorway Safety – Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/936811/smart-motorway-safety-evidence-stocktake-and-action-plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936811/smart-motorway-safety-evidence-stocktake-and-action-plan.pdf)

### Stocktake recommendation

1.1. Introduce additional traffic officer patrols on smart motorways where the existing spacing between safe places to stop in an emergency is more than one mile. Aim to reduce the attendance time from an average of 17 minutes to 10 minutes.

### Highways England response

1.2. We will make changes to traffic officer patrols on smart motorways where the existing spacing between safe places to stop in an emergency is more than one mile. Our aim is to reduce attendance time from an average of 17 minutes to 10 minutes, and to reach those who need assistance quicker. Roll-out will start as soon as possible, with full coverage of the relevant elements on our network by July 2021.

## 2. What we are doing?

### Patrol Route Strategies

2.1. We have reviewed all our existing patrol route strategies with a focus on improving response times within smart motorway sections with existing spacing less than 1 mile apart; whilst maintaining our commitment to clearing incidents within 1 hour 86% of the time (KPI2.3) across all our patrolled network (i.e. ALR and non-ALR sections)

2.2. We have introduced new patrol route strategies based on this review with more patrols located near the relevant Smart Motorway sections.

2.3. Patrol route strategies are reviewed on an ongoing basis within the Patrol Route Strategy Performance Group meetings to check if changes are working and to make further refinements.

### **Control Room Dispatch**

2.4. We are reviewing our process for allocating Traffic Officer resource within the control room to identify any issues or opportunities to increase accuracy and reduce time taken to dispatch a Traffic Officer to the scene.

### **Performance Monitoring**

2.5. We have working measures to give us good information on our performance and drive appropriate behaviours. These performance measures are for both desk-time and travel time. These are reported at a national level at the Operations Performance Team meeting.

2.6. Regions have adjusted existing management governance for KPI2.3 Incident Clearance rate (86% of incidents cleared within one hour) to now include ongoing review and actions to support improvements to response times in relevant sections of smart motorway. Data is used at a regional level at Patrol Route Strategy Performance Group meeting and at lower levels for outstation review.

## **3. Further Information**

3.1. We are working towards adjusting patrol routes in the South East and identifying strategies which maintain delivery of our corporate KPIs. South East has most of the sections of Smart Motorway with the longest response times.

3.2. Operations in the East region are under review to find an optimum operating arrangement once the M4 J3-13 section of Smart Motorway comes online.

3.3. Regions are looking at different approaches to how patrol route strategy adjusts as incidents occur. We are trialling different approaches with control room led, or proactive Traffic Officer led adjustments to park-up points.