

Sneha Patel
Deputy Director, Highways



Duncan Smith
Executive Director, Operations

13 January 2022

Dear Duncan

Smart Motorways Stocktake Action Plan – faster traffic officer response times

As you will be aware, ORR is responsible for monitoring and reporting on National Highways' delivery of the 18-point Smart Motorways Action Plan. This remains an ongoing and high-profile area of delivery for ORR, funders and wider stakeholders.

We recognise and welcome National Highways' work to date, with the completion of 13 actions from the plan. While nine actions remain outstanding, National Highways is broadly forecasting to meet its commitments across the action plan.

However, ORR has concerns about National Highways' delivery of action 3 - faster attendance by traffic officer patrols. National Highways has set a target date of September 2023 to complete this action, alongside an internal target of July 2021 to achieve a 10-minute average response time. This internal target has been missed and we are not satisfied that the company is demonstrating sufficient progress towards achieving this action.

While our ongoing engagement and our review of the monthly data¹ has provided some evidence of National Highways' progress in delivering this action, we require greater assurance of National Highways' performance and delivery in achieving the 10-minute average response time. Therefore, we are writing to require National Highways to provide the following:

- a report by 04 February 2022 that includes:
 - a revised (from July 2021) internal expected date for achieving the 10-minute average response time, that we will hold it to account for delivery to;

¹ [20210811 CEO letter - Nick Harris, CEPA report.pdf \(orr.gov.uk\)](#)

- the full list of levers that will be deployed in each region (including any initiatives specific to a region) by the revised internal target date;
 - rationale as to why any given lever is not being used in a region;
 - how and when National Highways will assess and quantify the impact of each lever being applied;
 - how the delivery/success of each lever will be evaluated through the process, subsequent sharing of best practice, considering any amendments to the deployment of activities as necessary;
 - how and when the budgeted resource level of traffic officers will be achieved; and
 - how any current or future risks to achieving the 10-minute average response time will be mitigated.
- increased engagement between ORR and each region through monthly meetings, commencing in February 2022. This will help improve our understanding of, and confidence in, the activities being undertaken, the governance in place and the progress being made across the regions to deliver the plan and achieve the 10-minute average response time by the target date.
 - an updated CHARM roll-out programme and formal impact assessment by 28 January 2022. This will help us better understand the level of slippage across the programme and associated impact on achieving the 10-minute average response time.

Upon receipt of this information, we will look in detail at the activities being undertaken and whether each region understands the impact of each lever being applied and can quantify this. As part of our evaluation, we will undertake gap analysis of the levers per region, review the risk mitigation in place and assess milestone delivery. We will also continue to review the number of vacancies for traffic officers and consider whether National Highways is doing all it reasonably can to reach the budgeted resource level.

As part of our scrutiny of the revised CHARM programme, we will assess any changes made to the original roll-out programme. Our review of National Highways' impact assessment will enable us to assess the wider roll-out, including associated programme schedules.

Please note that if we are unsatisfied with the response we receive to this letter and/or we still require further confidence in National Highways' ability to deliver this action, then we may consider further escalation.



We look forward to your response on this (starting with the provision of the updated CHARM roll-out programme and formal impact assessment as referred to above) and our ongoing engagement on the delivery of the Smart Motorways Action Plan.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Sneha Patel', is positioned below the 'Yours sincerely' text.

Sneha Patel