

Safe roads, Reliable journeys, Informed travellers

# Annual Report and Accounts 2004 - 05



# England's Strategic Road Network



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# Annual Report 2004-05

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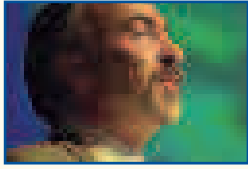
# Contents

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | Introduction                                    | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | About us  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>3</b> | An overview of our performance in 2004-05       | <b>13</b> |
| <b>4</b> | Making our customers' journeys more reliable    | <b>17</b> |
| <b>5</b> | Improving road safety                           | <b>23</b> |
| <b>6</b> | Ensuring that our customers are better informed | <b>29</b> |
| <b>7</b> | Respecting the Environment                      | <b>33</b> |
| <b>8</b> | Supporting our delivery                         | <b>37</b> |

# Appendices

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>Appendix 1</b> | Our Organisational structure                        |
| <b>Appendix 2</b> | Comparative performance against Ministerial Targets |
| <b>Appendix 3</b> | Internal Audit Certificate                          |
| <b>Appendix 4</b> | Highways Agency Accounts 2004-05                    |





# Chief Executive's Foreword

This is my second performance report as Chief Executive of the Agency, but my first following a full year in the driving seat.

2004-05 has been a year of significant achievement and innovation for the Agency:

- We ensured that our network remained open and safe for our customers;
- We developed our business and our organisation to ensure that we are fit for the future;
- We provided a renewed focus on delivering an improved customer service; and
- We delivered, or exceeded, all of the targets agreed with us by Ministers.

We achieved all of this during a time of considerable organisational change to enable us to introduce and support the new Highways Agency Traffic Officer service on the motorway network in the West Midlands.

We successfully fulfilled our traditional role of asset manager in maintaining the network and delivering a programme of network improvements. We opened seven major road improvement schemes to traffic, which will lead to reduced congestion, improved safety and delivery of environmental benefits. Our £48 million A650 Bingley relief road project in West Yorkshire, which has cut traffic congestion by more than half, became the first civil engineering project to win the prestigious Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award, beating off competition from 16 other nominees.

Our success in meeting our environmental targets continued with delivery of improved air quality, lower noise road surfacing and introduction of planting schemes to enhance the landscape. We planted our 50 millionth tree in a programme which begun in 1958.

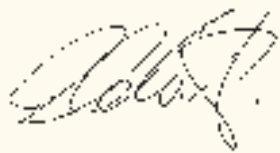
We also improved our performance in keeping the network open and our customers better informed. Our procedures for dealing with severe weather were further developed and operated very successfully during the winter of 2004-05. We have also developed our customer information delivery to help drivers plan their journeys and avoid delays. We used our new National Traffic Control Centre to provide information about road conditions through our traffic information website, the media, our telephone information line and motorway message signs.

During the year we welcomed many new colleagues. At Board level, we were strengthened by Denise Plumpton, Derek Turner and Mel Zuydam as executive members of the Board, and by John Doran and Alex Jablonowski as non-executive directors. Of the many others who joined us some 120, recruited as traffic officers, merit specific mention. Their customer focus and enthusiasm for their new role are critical to the quality of our future service.

Of those who have moved on from the Agency, I particularly want to thank David York, Mel Quinn (both Executive Directors) and Philippa Foster Back (non-executive director) for their contributions.

As we complete the celebration of our tenth year as an executive agency, we face the considerable challenge of moving towards 24 hours a day, seven days a week management of the strategic road network in England. Our rolling programme of Traffic Officer deployment on our roads will, for the first time, provide a round-the-clock service for our customers. We have already seen improvements in the management of unplanned incidents which cause traffic delays. By the end of 2006 our highly-trained personnel will be patrolling all of England's motorways 24 hours a day. Their aim will be to keep traffic moving and help make journeys on our roads as safe and reliable as possible.

We will continue to rely heavily on the hard work and commitment of all our staff. I am grateful for their contributions during the year and their ability to respond so positively to the evolving role of the Agency. I would also like to thank our supply partners for their contribution to what we have successfully delivered.



**Archie Robertson**  
Chief Executive

# 1 | Introduction

The purpose of this publication is to report to Ministers and Parliament on the Highways Agency's performance during 2004-05 in terms of delivery against its objectives and targets, as well as reporting on significant developments and other key challenges and achievements during the year.

Whilst this report is principally to inform Ministers and Parliament of the Agency's performance, it has been written in a language to make it widely accessible by our stakeholders, our customers and the public in general.

The Agency's objectives and targets are set out in its Business Plan, which is published annually and reflects Ministerial priorities.



Customers First Roadshows

## Our planning and reporting process

### Highways Agency Business Plan

The Business Plan is produced annually and covers the financial year from 1 April to 31 March. It sets out our delivery plans and how we will measure progress, together with our budget. It also provides an indication of our longer term direction in relation to the Government's transport vision.



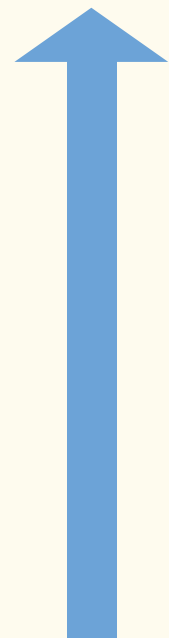
### Management Plans

The objectives and targets for customer service in the Business Plan are cascaded and supplemented by Directorate plans, team plans and ultimately individual performance and development plans.



### Highways Agency Annual Report and Accounts

This document formally reports the results of our performance against the business plan for that financial year. It is published and presented to Parliament. It explains our performance against our targets and our financial position and results are audited.



# 2 | About us

**Our ‘Customers First’ Vision:**  
**We put our customers first in everything we do, understanding and responding to their needs**

**Our 2004-05 Key Performance Indicator:**  
**Deliver a high level of road user satisfaction.**

## **Who we are and what we do**

The Highways Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Transport (DfT). We are responsible for operating, maintaining, improving and managing the strategic road network in England on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport. Our network includes the motorways and the trunk roads (the major A roads), valued at some £72 billion and carrying some 66% of the road traffic in England. A map of our network can be seen inside the front cover, and our formal aim, objectives and values are shown at Figure 1.1.

We fulfil our role by working closely with our partners and contractors so we can deliver an efficient but sustainable network that can meet the needs of all our customers who use our roads or are affected by them. We have also forged strong links with other road administrations in Europe and around the World for the exchange of information, experiences and expertise. Through these links we are able to learn of innovative ideas across the world. We are active participants in a range of high profile road-related organisations.

## **Fig 1.1: Highways Agency Strategic Framework** **Aim Safe Roads, Reliable Journeys, Informed Travellers**

### **Our prime objective – what we are here to do**

1. To deliver a high quality service to all our customers by:
  - Reducing congestion and improving reliability.
  - Improving road safety.
  - Respecting the environment.
  - Seeking and responding to feedback from our customers.

### **Our enabling objectives – how we deliver**

2. To ensure more effective delivery through better working relationships.
3. To implement best practice and innovative solutions to improve service now and in the future.
4. To be a good employer.
5. To be an efficient Agency with effective business processes and resource management systems.

### **Values – how we behave in fulfilling our objectives**

**Customer Service:** We put our customers first

**Teamwork:** We work together in dynamic teams and partnerships

**Improvement:** We encourage learning, innovation and flexibility

**Diversity:** We value people for their diversity and contribution

**Best Value:** We deliver effective services that provide value for money

**Integrity:** We build trust by acting with honesty and fairness

## How we are organised

Our Board includes our Chief Executive, nine executive directors and three non-executive directors who are responsible for managing delivery of the Agency's responsibilities. Our organisation structure can be seen at Appendix 1.

We have a small corporate centre in London and ten offices in eight locations throughout the country. We have a regional control centre at Quinton for our traffic officer service in the West Midlands and have secured the buildings required for the next six regional control centres to support our traffic manager role in the rest of the country. Details of our office locations can be found on the inside back cover.

## Customers First

In January 2005, we published our new corporate plan, 'Customers First'. This sets out our vision for the next five years and beyond for providing a continuously improving service to all our customers. 'Customers First' can be viewed on our website at [www.highways.gov.uk](http://www.highways.gov.uk). We have quoted each of the visions under the main sections of this report.



HA stand at the Commercial Vehicle Show, NEC Birmingham



Satisfaction survey

## Road Users' Satisfaction Survey

One of the key tools that we use for collecting our customers' views is our Road Users' Satisfaction Surveys.

In 2004-05 we asked more than 2,500 road users at their homes to rate how satisfied they were with various aspects of their last journey on our network and how well that matched their expectations. These included availability and maintenance of emergency telephones, provision and accuracy of signs, road surface noise levels, roadworks, reliable journey times and reducing the number of accidents. We achieved an average annual score of 87.6%

for motorways and 83.8% for trunk roads. The highest scoring service on motorways was for good direction signs. The highest on trunk roads was reliability of journey times, and in this case, performance exceeds expectation. Compared with the previous year accuracy of variable message signs has shown the biggest improvement over the year on both motorways and trunk roads.

We will continue actively to seek our customers' views through the surveys, through national and regional road users' committees and through other means. We will listen to what our customers say and we will respond to their concerns.

# 3 | An overview of our performance in 2004-05

**Our ‘Customers First’ Vision**  
We are a progressive, adaptable organisation, with the skills and capabilities we need to deliver an effective and efficient service to customers and provide the best possible value for money.

Our performance against the targets set for us by Ministers is shown in Figure 2.1. Meeting our targets is a significant achievement and demonstrates the benefits of the increased efforts we have invested in driving up our performance levels. Full details of our performance against our targets are shown in Figure 2.1.



Ferrybridge Motorway interchange, M62

## Fig 2.1: Performance against 2004-05 Targets

Full explanatory background to the targets is provided in Appendix 4 of the 2004-05 Business Plan

| Indicator  | 04-05 Target   | Result   | Commentary  |
|--|--|--|---|
| 1 Deliver the programme of improvements to the strategic road network.   | <p>Achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 440 progress points<sup>1</sup> for the M1, M6 and M25 schemes, compared to the end of 2003-04 forecast score of 250.</li> </ul>   | MET  | 455 points delivered against an amended list of schemes, as approved by Ministers. See footnote.  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 95% of the major schemes progress points required to reach the score of 5572 compared to the end of 2003-04 forecast score of 4590.</li> <li>Complete 20 of 26 priority action sites at junctions</li> </ul>   | <p>REVISED TARGET MET (See Commentary)</p> <p>MET (See Commentary)</p> | <p>Target amended by Ministers following the Spending Review 2004 settlement. 5643 points delivered against the revised target of 5572. The original Business Plan target was to reach the score of 6500.</p> <p>22 sites were surveyed and improvement work on 18 of the sites completed. After completing surveys on the remaining 4 sites the Agency concluded that on value for money grounds no further work should be undertaken.</p> |
| 2 Deliver a demonstrable reduction in incident-related congestion and minimisation of road works-related congestion. | <p>In establishing the Regional Control Centres (RCCs), achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>West Midlands RCC and traffic officers commence service. Achieve 92 of 100 points.</li> </ul>  | MET  | 92 points achieved.   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>140 of 155 progress points<sup>2</sup> for all other RCCs and traffic officers</li> </ul>   | MET  | 147 points achieved.  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and Implement a management system to monitor and report on incident-related congestion in the West Midlands.</li> </ul>   | MET  | Target achieved August 2004.  |
| 3 Make information available to influence travel behaviour and inform decisions.                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make publicly available by March 2005 – and maintain thereafter – traffic information for the Agency’s network via a website and a dedicated voice recognition interactive telephone service.</li> </ul>  | MET  | Target achieved.  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide by March 2005 – and maintain thereafter – on the Agency’s motorway network, strategic route advice using the variable message signs (VMS) available, for all incidents causing more than 15 minutes predicted delay, and monitor its accuracy.</li> </ul> | MET  | Target achieved.  |

| Indicator  | 04-05 Target   | Result | Commentary  |
|--|--|--------|---|
| <b>4</b> Deliver the Agency's agreed proportion of the national target. By 2010 reduce by a third (i.e. to 3327) the number of people killed/seriously injured on trunk roads compared with the 1994-98 average of 4991. | Reduce by at least 832 to 4159.  | MET    | The number of people killed or seriously injured was reduced to 3907  |
| <b>5</b> Maintain the network in a safe and serviceable condition.   | Achieve a road surface condition index <sup>3</sup> score of 100 ±1. See footnote  | MET    | Condition index achieved was 99.4.  |
| <b>6</b> Mitigate the potentially adverse impact of strategic roads and take opportunities to enhance the environment taking into account value for money.   | <p>Achieve at least 95% across the 5 sub targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air Quality: Improve quality of at least 2 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) sites</li> <li>• Biodiversity: Achieve at least 5% of HA Biodiversity Action Plan extending across 15 priority targets</li> <li>• Landscape: Introduce no less than 4 planting schemes</li> <li>• Noise: Treat at least 50 lane km of concrete road surface with lower noise surfacing</li> <li>• Water: Treat at least 5 outfalls identified as posing a pollution risk to watercourses</li> </ul> | MET    | <p>2 Air Quality schemes delivered.</p> <p>6.64% Biodiversity outputs delivered through 17 schemes.</p> <p>11 Landscape schemes delivered.</p> <p>117.2 lane kms delivered through 8 schemes. Additional funds allocated to address Ministers' Priorities.</p> <p>5 Water Outfalls delivered.</p> |
| <b>7</b> Deliver a high level of road user satisfaction.   | Achieve from the road user satisfaction survey an average annual score of at least 85% for motorways and at least 80% for trunk roads.   | MET    | Cumulative results were:<br>Motorways - 87.6%<br>Trunk Roads – 83.8%  |

<sup>1</sup> The major schemes progress points method is an enhanced way of measuring and monitoring progress of the targeted programme of improvements (TPI). Each major scheme incorporates a number of events, including 4 'key events' and points are awarded when they are completed. Key events comprise: invitation to tender, award of contract, start of works and road opening. Progress points up to a maximum of 100 are awarded for each road scheme.

<sup>2</sup> A progress points framework was put in place to track the establishment of Regional Control centres, Traffic Officer Services and partnerships with police. Points are awarded for the completion of key deliverables in various geographical areas.

<sup>3</sup> The measure of road surface condition is based on surveys covering rutting, unevenness, cracking and skid resistance. The target takes account of the fact that it is not practical or sustainable to maintain the whole road network in as-new condition. The condition at which the road network is to be maintained each year is equated to a road surface condition index score of 100 and is the target level at which the road network will be maintained. To allow for variability/uncertainty in annual condition scores, a tolerance is allowed in the target.

### Our Financial Performance

2004-05 was an extremely successful year in terms of our financial management. We managed to remain within our total budget of £4,796M by some £16M – a variance of less than 0.3%. Figure 2.2 below provides the year-end position:

This is a significant performance improvement over previous years and results from the considerable effort in improving financial management processes over the year, resulting in improved financial and budgetary control.

Our audited accounts can be found at Appendix 4.

**Fig 2.2: 2004-05 Financial Performance (£M)**

| Budgetary Area | Estimate (Spring Supplementary Estimates) | Outturn      | Variance  |             |
|----------------|---|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Resource       | 4,173                                     | 4,171        | 2         | 0.04%       |
| Capital        | 623                                       | 609          | 14        | 2.0%        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>4,796</b>                              | <b>4,780</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>0.3%</b> |

# 4 | Making our customers' journeys more reliable

**Our 'Customers First' Vision:**  
Our customers will enjoy more reliable journeys on a network that is sustainable, strikes the best environmental balance and provides best value.

**Our 2004-05 Key Performance Indicator:**

1. Deliver the programme of improvements to the strategic road network.
2. Deliver a demonstrable reduction in incident-related congestion and minimisation of road works-related congestion.

## **Introduction of Traffic Officers**

2004-05 marked a significant step in the changing role of the Agency to a network operator. On 26 April 2004, Highways Agency Traffic Officers started patrolling the motorways around the West Midlands for the first time. Since then they have responded to over 16,000 incidents to assist motorists and help keep traffic flowing. They have also used powers granted in the Traffic Management Act 2004 to operate rolling roadblocks, previously the exclusive domain of the police.

Our Traffic Officers on road and in the control centre are now dealing with incidents in the West Midlands including answering emergency roadside telephone calls, removing debris, monitoring the network, operating rolling road blocks and, where appropriate, dealing with traffic management of incidents. This service will be expanding to cover all English regions over the coming year.

*"The introduction of Traffic Officers on the motorways around the West Midlands is already demonstrating that road users are receiving improved levels of service. The Highways Agency Traffic Officers are increasingly dealing independently with routine traffic management issues, which releases police officers from tasks that previously fell to the service to deal with. Ultimately the police can concentrate more on tackling crime and dealing with major incidents. Our partnership is growing stronger every day and I am confident that it will continue to flourish with the public seeing measurable benefits with regard to their on road experiences."*

*Chief Superintendent Nick Croft  
Central Motorway Police Group  
April 2005*

**Fig 3.1: Major Improvement Schemes that opened to traffic in 2004-05**

- A1 Stannington Junction**
- A10 Wadesmill Colliers End**
- A120 Stansted - Braintree Improvement**
- A2 Bean - Cobham Phase 1**
- A21 Lamberhurst Bypass**
- A34 Chieveley / M4 J13 Improvement**
- A63 Selby Bypass**

**Improving the road network**

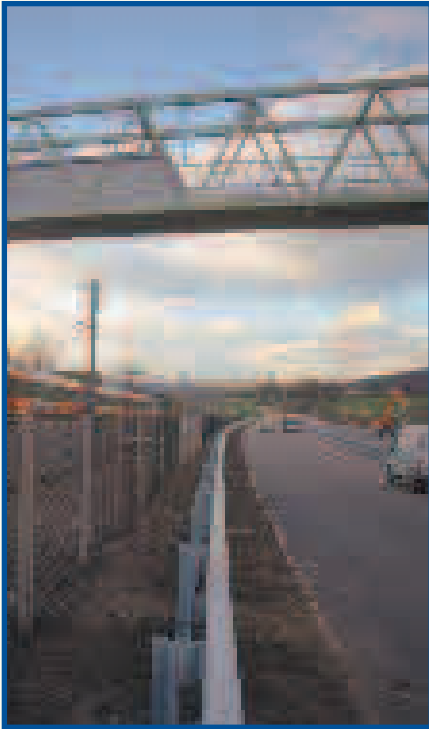
We undertook a number of schemes throughout the year to improve both the capacity and safety of our network.

The Targeted Programme of Improvements (TPI) covers all schemes costing over £5 million. In 2004-05 we opened 7 of these schemes to traffic, delivering some 32 miles of either new or improved road to the network (see Figure 3.1). Works were started on a further 7 schemes during the year and 21 new schemes were added to the programme. Contracts were awarded to take forward 14 of the TPI schemes.

The major schemes “progress points” method is an enhanced way of measuring and monitoring progress of the TPI schemes.

Each major scheme incorporates a number of “events” and points are awarded when they are completed. Key events comprise invitation to tender, award of contract, start of works and road opening. Progress points up to a maximum of 100 are awarded for each road scheme. In 2004-05 we reached the score of 5643 against a revised Ministerial target of 5572 points.

Schemes costing less than £5 million form part of our ‘Making Better Use’ programme. Initial results from the post-opening evaluation of these schemes show that they provide good value for money. Typically they deliver better results than forecast and help make roads safer and less congested. For example, the partial signalisation of the Concorde roundabout on the M4 spur, which provides access to Heathrow Airport, has reduced congestion valued at some £1.2 million a year for a cost of approximately £250,000.



A650 Bingley Relief Road

## Case Study

### Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award

**We aim to design schemes that have a real impact and benefit on the communities they serve.**

**One such scheme was the A650 Bingley Relief Road, for which the Agency won the 2004 Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award in October 2004. The Award recognises excellence in design quality and procurement practices in publicly funded building schemes. It was the first civil engineering project to do so.**

**The road has benefited the people of Bingley by cutting traffic congestion there by more than half. Its design presented a tough challenge to both designers and contractors during construction. It incorporates no less than 26 structures and bypasses Bingley town centre, taking a route between an electrified railway and canal. It also traverses a peat bog designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and cuts through a major landfill site.**

### **Priority Action Sites**

The Agency has a programme of Priority Action Sites where schemes are considered for reducing congestion and improving safety at junctions. The Agency completed work on 22 Priority Action Sites during 2004-05, 18 of which resulted in improvement work being completed. The remaining 4 sites did not have any improvement work, following their survey and assessment, on value for money grounds. The Agency has now finished 41 schemes out of a total programme of 92.

### **Monitoring our progress on reducing congestion**

During the year we created a journey time database for our core network. This database will be one of our key tools over the coming years in monitoring and responding to areas of congestion on our network.

The database stores our best estimate of journey time for each junction-to-junction link on the network for each 15-minute period. By having this information we will be able to identify and respond to congestion hotspots more readily. It will also provide information to support the setting and monitoring of congestion targets, both in the short and the long term.

## **Easing travel problems**

Whenever possible, the Agency takes steps to avoid disruption to the travelling public at times of high demand. Examples of this in 2004-05 included the lifting of roadworks on the M6 Thelwall viaduct for the Christmas period and the co-ordination of roadworks to avoid delays to people travelling to the Motorshow at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham.

## **Innovative ideas**

We investigated the potential of introducing high occupancy vehicle lanes (HOV) on the motorway network and announced the first trial on the M1 between St Albans and Luton. If this is successful, it could make a worthwhile contribution to our efforts to reduce congestion and influence travel behaviour.

In summer 2004 the M5 Junctions 19–20 trailer trial, which restricted the use of trailers and caravans to the inside lane of the motorway, enabled us to learn valuable insights into some of the causes of congestion.

### **Active Traffic Management**

We continued to progress the Active Traffic Management pilot motorway scheme on the M42 started in 2003. The scheme combines a number of new technologies and existing motorway features to make our customers' journeys more reliable by reducing congestion, providing better information to drivers and responding to accidents on our roads more quickly and effectively. This will eventually involve using a series of tools such as variable speed limits and hard shoulder running, together to make the best use of existing road space to ease congestion, thereby improving the reliability of journey times.

### **Influencing Travel Behaviour**

During 2004-05 we formed an Influencing Travel Behaviour team to lead on developing and implementing ideas for influencing motorists and their travel behaviour to reduce congestion. They are supported by a network of regional champions. Initial successes during the year included engaging with a number of large traffic generating employers, which are near to congested stretches of the network, and persuading them to adopt workplace travel plans. The new team has also engaged with South West Tourism and Blackpool to produce travel information leaflets to encourage tourists to plan their journeys and consider using other modes either to get to their holiday destination or travelling whilst on holiday.

# 5 | Improving road safety

**Our ‘Customers First’ Vision:**  
Our customers and those who work on our roads will enjoy improved safety.

**Our 2004-05 Key Performance Indicator:**

**4. Deliver the Agency’s agreed proportion of the national target. By 2010 reduce by a third (i.e. to 3327) the number of people killed/seriously injured on trunk roads compared with the 1994-98 average of 4991.**

**5. Maintain the network in a safe and serviceable condition.**

## **Reducing road user casualties on our network**

We want to reduce the numbers of road users seriously injured or killed. We are well on our way to achieving the Ministerial target to reduce these numbers by a third by 2010. Accident investigations and targeting appropriate road improvements where accidents occur remain a key part of the measures undertaken. Increasingly we are also adopting a much wider approach by improving standards and working practices, working with partners, and influencing drivers to prevent accidents occurring as well as mitigating their consequences.

2004-05 saw the milestone achievement of 30% of the motorway network being protected by queue detection systems, which alert motorists

that there is stationary or slow moving traffic ahead. During the year we also introduced guidance and standards for the use of crash absorbent signposts that are forgiving if motorists collide with them, minimising injuries. We also announced a new policy towards concrete central reservation barriers, that prevent cross over from the opposite carriageway. These barriers need less maintenance or repairs when they are hit so avoid potential delays to traffic. In future we will be installing them on motorways as standard practice.

We also increased the frequency of surveys that monitor the skid resistance of roads and automatically linked the data to accident records to immediately spot where improvements may be needed.

## Case Study A14 Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge

Hundreds of local residents queued up to be among the first to cross a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the A14 between Milton and Cambridge. For over 25 years people wishing to travel between the two places had been forced to travel significant extra distances. Opened in May 2004, the £2 million bridge is proving attractive to users, the numbers of which are increasing due to the route being shorter and safer. It was named after Jane Coston, a Cambridgeshire County Councillor and former Milton Parish Councillor who campaigned for the bridge for many years.



### Working with partners to improve road safety

We have continued to work with our road safety partners such as the Driving Standards Agency. We have discussed ways to reduce the number of accidents involving heavy goods vehicles with the freight industry. Discussions with motorcycle groups have led to a number of targeted safety campaigns. We also trialled modified safety barriers that may reduce injury to riders at particular sites.

## Roadworker Safety

We encourage and promote safe working practices on our schemes and for all those who work on our roads. We try to influence road users to help us to protect our workforce by driving safely. During 2004-05 we promoted the 'safe driving through roadworks' campaign to reduce the number of roadworkers killed and seriously injured.

### Protect people who protect people like you. Drive safely through roadworks

- **Keep to the speed limit – it is there for your safety**
- **Get into the correct lane in good time – don't keep switching**
- **Concentrate on the road ahead, not the roadworks**
- **Be alert for works traffic, leaving or entering the roadworks**
- **Keep a safe distance – there could be queues in front**
- **Observe all signs – they are there to help you**



HA stand, East of England show

## School visits

We always like to get involved in schemes and initiatives to encourage safety among young people. A typical example was the school visits carried out in partnership with Surrey County Council Road Safety Officers after a number of incidents where objects were thrown off motorway bridges. As a result of this, we have formed links with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) who now plan to include warnings on 'stone-throwing' in their junior citizen events.

## **Case Study** **M6 Thelwall Viaduct**

**After over two years of maintenance work, the M6 Thelwall viaduct was fully opened to the public four months ahead of schedule.**

### **Maintaining our network so that it is safe and available for use**

Keeping the network maintained accounted for the largest proportion of our expenditure. We successfully ensured that our network remained in a good condition, achieving a road surface condition index score of 99.4, meeting the target of  $100 \pm 1$ . The measure of road surface condition is based on surveys covering rutting, unevenness, cracking and skid resistance. The target takes account of the fact that it is not practical or sustainable to maintain the whole road network in as-new condition. The condition at which the road network is to be maintained each year is equated to a road surface condition index score of 100 and is the target level at which the road network will be maintained. To allow for variability and uncertainty in annual condition scores, a tolerance is allowed in the target.

We carried out a wide range of maintenance activities including:

- Regular inspections to identify where maintenance was needed
- Repair and maintenance of roads and bridges
- Resurfacing
- Maintenance of lighting equipment and communication systems such as emergency telephone and electronic signs
- Debris and litter removal;
- Salting roads for winter conditions

## **Dealing with the impact of severe weather**

We continued to successfully deploy our improved winter maintenance procedures to ensure that our customers could continue to use the network safely. We have also conducted research into the use of 'safecoat', a molasses type liquid which is added to road salt. It helps prevent some damage to the gritters from salt action and helps the salt stick to the road surface better. It should have the effect of using less salt because more of it sticks to the road surface and is more environmentally friendly with less salt getting into the drainage systems.



Work on the M6 rock face

### **Strengthening links with the Met Office**

We were involved in developing with the Met Office guidance to the public on what to do in preparation for, and whilst travelling in, severe weather. A new winter driving leaflet was issued in December 2004. A team of resident meteorologists, provided by the Met Office, was based at the National Traffic Control Centre during 2004-05 on a pilot basis. They provided detailed, road-orientated weather forecasts and an assessment of weather-related disruption for press communications and the website. The aim was to see whether this helped to improve the quality and consistency of messages to drivers in severe weather. The overall success of this pilot is currently being assessed to enable us to decide whether this should be continued for future years.

# 6 | Ensuring that our customers are better informed

## Our 'Customers First' Vision

Our customers will have easy access to reliable, accurate information when and where they need it to help them better plan and complete their journeys.

## Our 2004-05 Key Performance Indicator:

### 3. Make information available to influence travel behaviour and inform decisions

Although many members of the travelling public take steps to plan their journeys, many simply jump into their vehicles and set off without any reference to travel bulletins or information. We believe that, by improving the information available to our customers, we will be able to influence their travel behaviours and decisions. This in turn will help to combat congestion and improve safety.

In August 2004 we set up a new Information Directorate to sit at the heart of the Agency's strategy for improving information to customers. It now leads in providing better information to help drive the Agency's internal performance and providing information to the millions of road users.

We are now undertaking market research to benchmark traffic information services. This is being done so we can evaluate the effectiveness of new services in relation to user knowledge, satisfaction and behaviour. Through this activity, we will be able to confirm if the services we offer are delivering their objectives. It will also provide a steer on the direction of future services we need to provide.

### **National Traffic Control Centre**

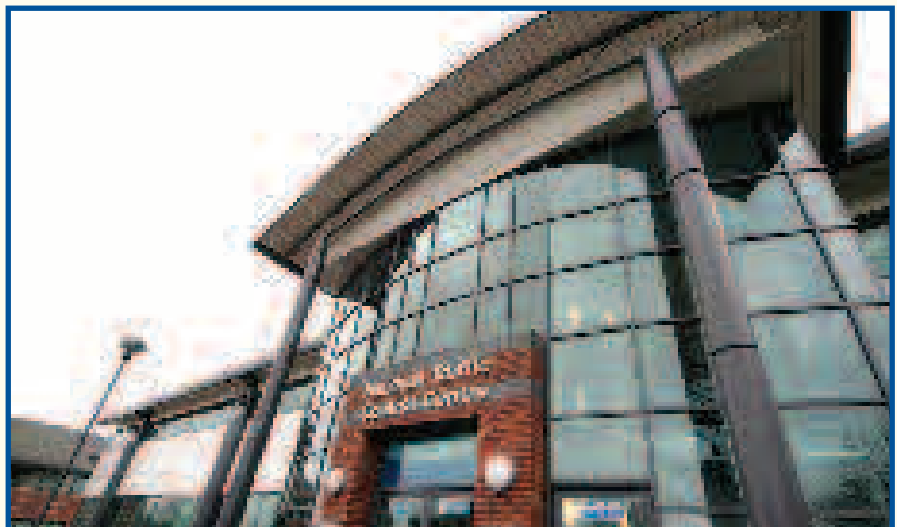
The National Traffic Control Centre first became operational in 2003-04 and now enables us to monitor traffic conditions along the Agency's network 24 hours a day, seven days per week. This information is vital in informing road users about road conditions which we are able to do via variable message signs on the network, the media, our information line and website. This information is also available via the Transport Direct web information service ([www. transportdirect.gov.uk](http://www.transportdirect.gov.uk)).

### **Traffic Forecaster**

Customers can now use the door-to-door journey planner on the Transport Direct service mentioned above to plan their journeys. A traffic forecaster works out the likely travel speeds on the network at a future time and date, using historical data held within the journey time database and provides information to help road users avoid the worst congestion.

### **Electronic message signs**

We now have over 2000 electronic messaging signs around the Agency's network, including over 1400 electronic variable messaging signs. These signs are important in keeping our customers informed as we move towards 24/7 operations.



National Traffic Control Centre

## Website

We re-launched our website in July 2004. It now includes a new traffic information section providing real-time traffic information via Traffic England and a new traffic forecasting service. The website is now visited over 2 million times per month.

## Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act came fully into force on 1 January 2005. By the end of March 2005 the Agency had dealt with over 100 requests for information under the Act and responded to over 90% of requests for information within the statutory deadline of 20 days.

## Leaflets and publications

Each year we publish more than 200 different leaflets and publications to help keep the travelling and wider public informed of our activities and to invite feedback. We produce information on summer and winter driving conditions and leaflets to inform residents and the travelling public of impending schemes. Feedback questionnaires are included in leaflets to give the public the opportunity to comment on performance and provide suggestions on how we can improve.



Leaflets and publications

## **The Highways Agency Information Line (HAIL) Tel: 08457 504030**

In 2004-05 our Information Line operators responded to just over 75,000 calls and the Agency dealt with nearly 13,000 pieces of correspondence from the public and their representatives.

The Highways Agency Information Line (HAIL) offers customers a single point of contact so that enquiries can be received and either answered immediately or routed to the most appropriate team for a response. The last 12 months have seen a 12.5% increase in telephone calls and a 26.5% increase in emails via the corporate web site.

HAIL is co-located in the National Traffic Control Centre and operates along side the Agency's National Incident Liaison Officers. Advisors have a variety of on screen resources to enable them to answer queries promptly. Information on major incidents on the network is fed to HAIL advisors who then disseminate to callers. Advisors are well placed to deal with real time variable message sign queries and seek feedback from our customers.

Customer queries can be diverse but common types of call are requests for information on road works, congestion, journey planning, environmental issues such as litter and noise and recruitment enquiries.

In January 2005, HAIL advisors attended a reception hosted by the Prime Minister at No.10 Downing Street in recognition of civil servants who worked over the Christmas Holidays. 49 calls were dealt with on Christmas day and on Boxing day there were 102. Most of these were weather related due to a light snowfall across the country.

# 7 | Respecting the environment

## Our 2004-05 Key Performance Indicator:

### 6. Mitigate the potentially adverse impact of strategic roads and take opportunities to enhance the environment taking into account

#### **Using renewable energy on our network**

Providing lighting and powering communications equipment on our network consumes a considerable amount of energy – equivalent to the energy consumption of a city the size of Norwich. We have signed supply contracts to ensure that over 15% of this electricity is generated from renewable sources such as wind power and therefore emits no carbon. In addition the other 85% is being supplied from good quality Combined Heat and Power (CHP) generation plant. In comparison with other forms of generation, CHP plant reduce carbon emissions by between 10-50%.

#### **Reducing traffic noise**

We continued delivery of our programme of noise reduction measures around our network. This included laying some 117 lane kilometres of quieter road surfacing during 2004-05. This is more than double the target placed upon us for this year, as we were able to re-allocate funding to deal with some of the noise concerns of our customers.

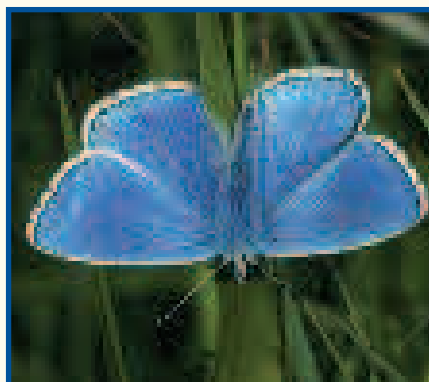
We also published the results of a survey of residents living near a selection of sites where acute noise problems had been identified and noise barriers or quieter road surfacing had been provided. In nearly every case, responses from the same people who had previously been interviewed about their attitudes to noise and the effects of traffic noise on their environment before the measures indicated a significant reduction in their level of dissatisfaction.

## Biodiversity

We achieved our target on biodiversity by helping to conserve the complex systems of habitats and species which are part of the trunk road network. This included creating 100 kilometres of species-rich hedgerows within new road schemes that will meet the biodiversity needs of local areas, specific types of grassland sites and habitats for species such as the Adonis blue butterfly.

## Water quality and drainage

During 2004-05 we delivered our target of treating 5 water outlets on our network that posed a threat to watercourses nearby. We have also continued to progress our research in this area in partnership with the Environment Agency and are now over halfway through that programme. When we have finished this research we will be able to better assess the impact of our road designs on aquatic environments.



Adonis Blue butterfly

## Respecting our nature and wildlife

In March 2005 we planted our 50 millionth tree. Our tree-planting programme started in 1958 and now comprises some 15,000 hectares of planting, predominantly woodland edge habitat which is much favoured by wildlife.

Planting also has benefits in screening traffic from the view of residences and places of work, and integrating roads into the adjoining landscape. We completed 11 landscape schemes in 2004-05. Planting on the A3 at Thursley received the British Association of Landscape Industries' award for excellence.

Other instances where we worked to protect wildlife from the effects of our network were:

- **A11 Fiveways – Thetford**

This is an example of excellent partnership working between English Nature and the Agency that resulted in a successful mitigation strategy to reduce the impact of the proposed new road on three internationally important bird species: the stone curlew, woodlark and nightjar.

- **A66 Stainburn to Great Clifton**

This scheme provided a bat bridge which has subsequently been adapted for use by red squirrels.

## **Minimising waste and reducing energy consumption**

We are committed to managing our resources sensibly by seeking to minimise waste and reduce energy consumption in our offices. We collect information on energy usage, waste, water and travel to monitor our performance against the targets set in the 'Sustainable Development in the Government' framework. We promoted sustainable

development within the offices and during 2004-05 ran a recycling campaign 'Reduce your Waste'. We have been working towards reducing carbon consumption in our offices through a series of measures from power down of equipment and using energy from renewable sources where possible, to promoting video conferencing and car sharing.

We use recycled paper and recycle many items including paper, CD's, batteries, and even hard hats, which are turned into traffic cones. We have added a gifting and recycling clause to our contract with the Disposal Services Agency and have used this to ensure a 'second life' for unwanted furniture and equipment. We also recycle obsolete personal computers and printers to minimise the scrap element sent to landfill sites.



A34, Hampshire



Warning sign

### **Case Study** **Deer and Road Traffic Accidents:** **Research in partnership with the Deer Initiative**

Together with funding from the Scottish Executive, Woodland Trust, Deer Study and Resource Centre and the National Forest, we have been looking at ways in which we can have a sustainable, well-managed wild deer population that are not a danger to road users. Through the project, we have built a national database of road traffic collisions involving deer in Britain and are now able to identify accident hot spots and assess the factors contributing to the accidents. There are up to 42,000 deer related road traffic accidents in Britain each year resulting in a number of fatalities and serious injuries to road users.

As a result of this work, we can now investigate what measures can be taken to reduce future incidents including trialling of innovative deer deterrent devices as well as associated estate management techniques.

# 8 | Supporting our delivery

The Agency's achievements and innovation in the last year are entirely due to its professional and dedicated workforce and their delivery partners. As part of continuous improvements in the service we offer to our customers, we work closely with a wide range of partners including the police, local authorities and our managing agents and contractors.



Nature conservation

## **Our people**

We employ an efficient and professional workforce, which comprised some 2,300 staff in 2004-05. Around 19% of our staff has a degree or higher academic or professional qualification. We continue to retain our 'Investors in People Accreditation', which reflects the importance we place on further developing our staff.

One member of our staff, Tony Sangwine, was recognised in the New Year's Honours List with an OBE for his services to horticulture and nature conservation in highways. The award reflects the influence of the environmental specialists in the Agency and their contribution to the success of their engineering colleagues in delivering a trunk road network that is integrated with the surrounding landscape and has significant biodiversity value.

## Case Study Staff Interchange between Britain and France

In May 2004 Phil Rowley, a member of the Highways Agency staff, began an 18 month secondment in the Direction de la Sécurité et de la Circulation Routières (Road Safety and Traffic Management Directorate) as part of an exchange programme between the Highways Agency and French Ministry of Transport. He is currently involved in the coordination of a French programme to improve safety and incident management, reduce the problems linked to traffic congestion and deploy services for the road user on a European scale.

There are benefits to be achieved for all sides: Phil is able to improve his understanding of the European Commission's role and processes, and view the Agency's work in relation to other European countries, as well as to developing his personal skills. The Highways Agency and French Ministry of Transport will benefit from having the opportunity to share best practice and ideas.



M6 Thelwall viaduct under major repair

## Working with our managing agents and contractors

In 2004-05 we retained our Chartered Client Status, operated by the Confederation of Construction Clients as a basis for measuring performance. We also introduced a capability assessment tool which uses a framework of indicators to measure the approach and potential effectiveness of future suppliers. It has brought about a more robust tendering process.

In July 2004 we launched our new model contract document for Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) which enables us to speed up delivery by creating a working team at the earliest opportunity. This allows more scope for innovation, improved risk management and better forward planning. ECI will be used to deliver most of the schemes in the targeted programme of improvements.

## **Back the bid**

**Our staff advised the Olympic Bid Team on the transport implications of the various sites they were considering for events.**

## **Maintaining links with the regions**

We maintained close links with regional planning authorities and environmental bodies to make decisions which help balance local, regional and national needs and which identify less environmentally damaging options. One example was the A27 at Chichester in Sussex where the Agency's relations with such bodies resulted in the public being consulted on a package of improvements measures for the road.

The Agency has adopted an approach of proactive engagement throughout the spatial planning process. We seek to work in partnership with regional and local planning authorities to deliver sustainable economic development, whilst safeguarding the integrity of the strategic road network. For example, the Agency is working closely with the regional planning bodies and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on the delivery of the South East Growth Areas.

We also liaise closely with colleagues in the devolved Scottish and Welsh Assemblies and worked with the Department for Transport and airports in producing surface access strategies. We have continued to work closely with the British Airports Authority as they developed the surface access strategy for the proposed expansion at Stansted Airport.

### **Improving our efficiency**

The Agency has commenced work to ensure that all our processes are sensible, understood and fully documented. Our Procurement Directorate is the first part of the business to have all its processes recorded.

We responded to Sir Peter Gershon's review of civil procurement in Central Government by producing the Agency's Non-Roads Action Plan and collaborated with the Department for Transport in the delivery of the Government's efficiency targets. The action plan contains activities in relation to enhanced monitoring and reporting arrangements, improved management of key supply markets and the pursuit of value for money in the procurement of external consultants.

### **Managing our land and property portfolio**

We are responsible for a portfolio currently made up of some 500 residential properties, 260 commercial properties and 530 agricultural properties. These properties largely result from acquisitions to enable us to deliver our major schemes of network improvements. We also are responsible for paying compensation resulting from our activities as a developer.

During the year we made substantial improvements to the forecasts of scheme development costs by getting professional surveyors involved earlier in the process and ensuring that these estimates are revisited every six months. Our staff attended public exhibitions to respond to questions on land and compensation matters and to enhance the information available to the public.



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