

Over to Highnam Road Renewal and Bus Lane

A40

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In partnership
with  **Gloucestershire**
COUNTY COUNCIL

On schedule at half time

Construction on the A40 is now virtually at the half way point. Work on the eastbound carriageway is due to complete by the end of August, when the contraflow will be reconfigured to allow working on the westbound side. Highways Agency project manager David Stock confirms that work is on schedule: "We have an average of 140 staff working on site, six days a week and have made considerable progress, despite poor ground conditions." The essential maintenance work includes a complete carriageway reconstruction, extensive drainage excavation, total replacement of street lighting and new barriers and road signage. A new bus lane is also being incorporated on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council, ahead of a planned Park and Ride site. Councillor Stan Waddington believes that the early inclusion of the bus lane is a sensible decision: "Putting in the bus lane now as part of the Highways Agency project will save council taxpayers money, and reduce the length of roadworks in the long run - digging up the same stretch of road again in a couple of years makes no sense at all. Once we have the extra lane in place, buses will have a better run giving passengers a quicker and more reliable journey into Gloucester."

Why no 24 hour working?

This is a common question, and the full answer involves a variety of factors.

The project employs a high number of staff, over 600 personnel have worked on site to date and there is a limit to the number of suitably qualified and experienced workforce available. The average weekly working hours

for operatives on site is already 60 hours per week. Health and safety of the public and workforce is paramount, and excessive hours can lead to fatigue resulting in accidents.

All operations should follow environmental health guidelines which ensure that noise, smoke and dust is kept to a minimum after certain hours of the day. The reprocessing plant is subject to planning conditions limiting its hours of operation to 7am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday, which severely restricts the amount of progress which could be achieved at night. Where appropriate some work is being undertaken at night, however continuous 24 hour operation is not feasible.

Traffic Management: Cones & Zones

The traffic management required by the project has generated a high number of comments from the public, however the Highways Agency was aware at a very early stage in the planning process that the work would cause congestion as options within such a confined working area are limited. Extensive carriageway excavations are required, with mandatory safety zones between the working area and live traffic in order to protect the travelling public and the workforce. Various traffic management options were considered, but the current arrangement was determined to be the only safe option:

"We recognise that this is a difficult time for commuters to and from the Forest of Dean and Gloucester," says project sponsor David Stock. "However we are monitoring traffic flows and taking action where appropriate, such as the installation of temporary traffic controls on Over roundabout. Gloucestershire County Council has also been putting considerable effort into working with public transport providers to ensure that commuters have alternative options."