

## Disability

### Accessibility of the Strategic Road Network

#### Introduction

We are now able to communicate a programme of work that will make our strategic road network more accessible to disabled people. In this document we set out the actions that we have already taken together with those planned for the future. We are committed to safe and reliable services for all of our customers and to taking account of the needs of disabled customers as we improve the network.

**Derek Turner**  
**Network Operations Director**



#### Our commitment to improving accessibility for disabled people

The Highways Agency is committed to improving the accessibility of its network and services for disabled people. In December 2006 we published our Disability Action Plan, which is part of the Department for Transport's Disability Equality Scheme. Our Action Plan is a public statement of how we are working to meet the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and delivering against our duty to promote equality. It explains how we are addressing equality and diversity issues for customers and disabled staff. We continue to monitor progress against this Action Plan and we highlight what has been achieved in an annual report, which can be found on the Equality and Diversity section of our website.

[www.highways.gov.uk/aboutus](http://www.highways.gov.uk/aboutus)

One significant project within the Action Plan is addressing physical barriers on the network which prevent disabled road-users from accessing our services. We have already completed a full audit of all facilities to identify where potential constraints lie – the DDA Network Compliance Audit in 2008. Technical advisors are in place to help us take forward the vision of providing equality for disabled people in their access to and movement across the network.

## Our customer promise

We will help you make your journeys safely and reliably

We will provide value for money and invest in improved services

We will provide helpful information to enable you to make choices before and during your journey

We will clear up incidents quickly and safely

We will limit any delays when carrying out roadworks and improvements

We will play our part in protecting the environment

We will ask you for your views and act on feedback

We will deal with you promptly, courteously and helpfully

## Who are we and what do we do?

The Highways Agency (Agency) is an executive agency of the Department for Transport. We are responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the strategic road network in England. We are involved in a diverse range of activities, including providing traffic officers to patrol the network and facilities for pedestrians such as bus stops, footpaths, bridges and subways.

### We have three key aims:

- To ensure the safety of our roads for all those who use and work on them.
- To enable reliable journeys on a road network that is sustainable, strikes the best environmental balance and provides best value.
- To provide reliable, accurate information to our customers so that they can be informed traveller and can better plan their journeys

## Responding to legislation our programme and progress

We are a public service provider and understand our legal obligations under the DDA (1995 and 2005). The Agency embraces the ethos behind the DDA and recognises the importance of meeting the requirements of disabled people who need and want to use the network. We are also raising awareness of disability issues and working with public transport operators and local authorities to ensure that there is an integrated approach to network improvement.

## Intended outcomes from our DDA programme

- Improved road safety
- Improved relations with stakeholders
- Clear communication of our intended improvements
- Improved customer satisfaction and trust

# Our progress to date

Following introduction of the DDA in 1995 the Agency reviewed and updated its design standards. Since then it has incorporated DDA requirements in the design features of its road improvement schemes, such as providing tactile paving, dropped kerbs and raising footways at bus stops to facilitate access to buses. We have also made considerable progress towards the targets set out in our Disability Equality Plan. Our achievements include:

- A national audit of the trunk roads to identify where changes could be made that would give improved accessibility.
- A consultation with groups representing disabled people which led to better awareness of Traffic Officers in assisting disabled people on the network. This resulted in a training DVD for Traffic Officers and a revision of procedures to ensure delivery of an appropriate service for disabled customers.
- The Agency's website has been reviewed by a consultancy which specialises in disability and information technology and adjustments have been made. For example, users can specify font sizes, styles and background colours and 'access keys' have been introduced for people who are unable to use a mouse.
- We have taken active steps to improve our recruitment and selection policy to ensure that it is fair, accessible and transparent to all disabled applicants. We hope that these changes will lead to a more diverse workforce, which better reflects our customer base.

- Over 2,000 new Emergency Roadside Telephones (ERTs) have been introduced. This is part of a programme (which will run to 2010) to replace approximately 6,500 ERTs on the English motorway and core trunk road network with facilities that can be used by people with varying disabilities.
- An assessment of our contractor and supplier policy has been undertaken to ensure that companies we commission are aware of the diversity agenda. We have produced a Disability Equality Requirement Checklist to help build equality considerations into procurement schedules.
- We have recently launched a magazine, 'My Way', safety card and sign language film, for our disabled customers to assist them in using the network.

However, because much of our network was constructed many years ago at a time when there was little accessibility guidance, we know we still have a lot to do. As such, we are now implementing a programme to bring existing facilities in line with current design standards. All of our area offices around the country have identified facilities that require accessibility enhancements and we are now tackling these.

# Involving stakeholders

Of primary importance to us is making sure that our accessibility programme represents the interests of disabled people. We know that disabled people should be involved in helping to prioritise accessibility investment, rather than having those priorities decided for them. Instead of second-guessing what type of schemes will be of most benefit to disabled people, we wanted to listen directly to their views.

As such, over the past few months, we have contacted and consulted national and strategic organisations representing a diverse range of disabilities. These stakeholder groups have detailed knowledge about the barriers faced by their respective members and have given us feedback on a wide range of user requirements. Based on their comments, it is clear that there are several network issues that are common across the country.

## Organisations we have contacted:

- Access Association
- Advocacy Matters
- Age Concern
- Assist UK
- British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD)
- Choices and Rights Disability Coalition
- Disability Alliance
- Disability Awareness in Action
- Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
- Equality South West
- Mencap
- Mobilise
- Motability
- Muscular Dystrophy
- SCOPE
- The Disability Partnership
- Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)
- Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)
- SENSE
- South East Disability Council
- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) / JMU Access Partnership
- United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council
- Wheelchair Users' Group
- Guide Dogs for the Blind

# What have you told us?

From our preliminary consultations, it has reinforced our belief that making improvements to the transport network as a whole could significantly enhance quality of life for disabled people. You have told us that, on the highways network, the three most important facilities to make more accessible are:

- Footways / footpaths – including pedestrian crossings
- Bus stops
- Emergency roadside telephones

We understand that by making these services more accessible, we can help to increase the confidence and ability of disabled people to travel safely and independently. It is also recognised that we need to continue to consult with disabled people, so that when schemes are rolled out they are tailored to meet specific local needs. As such, over the next few months, we will prepare guidance for our regional offices on consulting local disability groups as they take forward schemes in their area. We would very much welcome the continued participation and support of disability groups as the local consultation process gets underway.

## Our action plan

In our consultations with organisations representing disabled people we were clear that our accessibility programme is a long-term plan. Stakeholders have recognised the scale of the task ahead, accepting that wholesale upgrading cannot happen overnight. Network maintenance is dependent on government funding levels and we also have a responsibility to maintain a safe and reliable network at all times. Both of these issues limit the amount of road maintenance and improvement works that can be done at any one time.

However, within these capacity limitations, we have plenty of actions planned to enhance accessibility:

- **Consulting You:**  
We will continue to consult with disabled people and ensure that local people are involved, and their views listened to, in any major schemes affecting their community.
- **Improving Communications:**  
You told us that disabled people are not always aware of the services we offer. Therefore, we will improve our communication with representative organisations to tell you what we have done and encourage use of our facilities.
- **Acting on Your Priorities:**  
We have already identified a range of existing facilities nationwide where we will improve accessibility for disabled people and we are putting your priorities first. Footways / footpaths (including pedestrian crossings), bus stops and emergency telephones are top of the list for DDA investment. Our plans include providing dropped kerbs for crossings and raised kerbs at bus stops; more guard rails to improve safety; colour contrasting our facilities where appropriate; introducing more tactile paving surfaces; and providing more emergency telephones in lay-bys.
- **Putting Funding in Place:**  
Funding has been made available this year for improving the accessibility of our network. Over the coming years, and subject to the availability of funding, we will reserve more annual funding so that enhancements can continue.
- **Considering Your Needs:**  
We have already integrated stakeholder priorities into our decision-making processes. In future, if a scheme improves access for disabled customers this will be given weight when it is being considered for investment. This means that access for disabled people can be considered systematically as funding is being allocated.
- **Maximising equality of impacts:**  
We are conducting an Equality Impact Assessment of the Programme. This will help to ensure that our upgrades maximise benefits, not only for people with disabilities, but also for all traditionally under-represented groups.



If you need help using this or any other Highways Agency information, please call **08457 50 40 30** and we will assist you.

For real time traffic information:

**08700 660 115**

[www.highways.gov.uk/trafficinfo](http://www.highways.gov.uk/trafficinfo)

24 hours a day, 365 days a year

For general Highways Agency information:

**08457 50 40 30**

email: [ha\\_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk)

24 hours a day, 365 days a year

\*Calls from BT landlines to 0845 numbers will cost no more than 4p per minute and to 0870 numbers no more than 8p per minute, mobile calls usually cost more.

## Safety at roadworks



**The Highways Agency is working with the industry and road users to reduce the risks of working on the roads.**

For the safety of roadworkers and all road users, when you are approaching roadworks:

- Keep within 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 roadworks.
- Keep a safe distance – there could be queues in front.
- Observe all signs – they are there to help you.