

Comment

Team work smoothes traffic flow

Widening Europe's busiest motorway from four to six lanes, while keeping four lanes of traffic running in both directions and building a new link road into Heathrow Airport is quite a tall order. But that is the challenge which Balfour Beatty (BB) is currently tackling on the M25 Junction 12 to 15 Widening & M25 Spur Stage 2 contract. Traffic management is a key part of the scheme and keeping the traffic moving is a team effort.

Traffic management for the widening has been split into 10 phases – some of which have sub phases – over a period of two years. This means that every three or four months there is a major traffic switch as the project moves from one phase to the next. Each stage is being carefully planned by specialist subcontractor Associated Asphalt (AA) and then presented to a traffic

management 'clinic' of traffic management specialists from BB, AA, the Highways Agency (HA), the client's representative Atkins and the police for comment before it is implemented.

More than 100 CCTV cameras feed live pictures of traffic travelling through the 11.5km long site to a 30 screen central control centre which is manned 24 hours a day by Charter Securities. The CCTV control centre reports any incidents and has direct links to Surrey Police Motorway Control Centre, which covers the M25 south of J14, and the Metropolitan Police, who cover north of J14.

Most traffic incidents are breakdowns and these are rapidly dealt with by Saunders Garage from its nearby recovery bases. The average recovery time between incident identification to the carriageway being

cleared is currently 23 minutes. This is particularly quick when it is considered that most HGVs take up to an hour and a half to remove.

A great effort has been made to keep the project teams' work within the HA's ethos of: "Safe Roads, Reliable journeys, Informed travellers"; and every member of the clinic is playing their part to do this. More than 200,000 vehicles use the road every day and in this context complaints from the travelling public have been low, but all have been carefully considered, evaluated and responded to. Lack of criticism 10 months into such a high profile scheme is a tribute to all the hard work put in by everyone involved. Even the HA's Director for Major National Projects David Ward has been quoted as saying: "Traffic management has been exemplary".



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