



Department  
for Transport

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From the Secretary of State  
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15 April 2021

Dear John

## **Quality Assurance for All Lane Running Motorways**

I am writing to confirm the advice I am seeking from ORR, on the evidence base for the relative safety of All Lane Running (ALR) motorways following my statement to the House on this matter.

As you know, since becoming Secretary of State for Transport, I have heard concerns expressed by the public and key stakeholders about the safety of ALR motorways. One of my first actions as Secretary of State was to commission an evidence stocktake. This concluded that “Overall, what the evidence shows is that in most ways, smart motorways are as safe as, or safer than, the conventional ones. But not in every way.”

I believe it is critical that the public, stakeholders, and the media are confident about the data and evidence we have about the safety of our roads. I am also conscious that making comparisons about the relative safety of different road types using different types of data and evidence is a complex area. That is why I have decided to ask for some quality assurance of the information we have and the conclusions we are drawing from it. In my statement to the House on 24 March I said: “I have commissioned the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to independently review the data to provide further analytical assurance and ensure that the conclusions arrived at are robust”

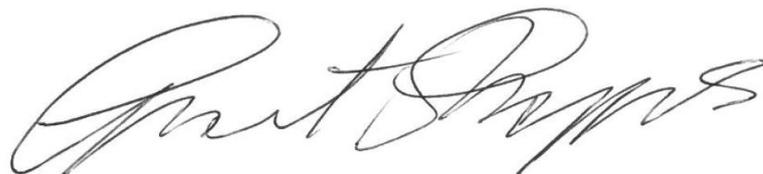
I would like ORR to carry out quality assurance of the data and evidence presented in the stocktake last March and the one year on progress report Highways England has provided. That quality assurance should address the following questions (this is also given as a specification in Annex A for you to publish on your website):

- 1) Are the data and evidence used in the stocktake and the progress report reliable and robust and in line with established/best practice?
- 2) Have comparisons been made in an appropriate way about the relative safety of ALR motorways, with reference to conventional motorways and other roads?
- 3) Are there any other data that could be used to enhance our understanding of the relative safety of ALR motorways, or to support the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures we are putting in place to improve safety and perceptions of safety?
- 4) Are there data and evidence available which can compare the international experience of operating similar types of road?

I would be grateful for your final report by 28 June.

My officials and Highways England will provide you with all the relevant data we hold regarding the safety of ALR Motorways. I am grateful for the work that you have already undertaken prior to receiving this letter and can confirm that you now have all the data held by my department together with any analysis carried out on its quality. My officials will also share the one year on progress report that Highways England has provided to me. As this has not yet been published, I would ask that you limit the circulation within ORR to those colleagues who need to see it in order to carry out this work.

In the interests of full transparency on this important issue I intend to publish the advice you give me once I have had a chance to consider it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Shapps', written in a cursive style.

**Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**

**SPECIFICATION**

**ORR – Scope of Independent review:**

**Quality Assurance of All Lane Running Motorway data and evidence**

On provision of relevant data and evidence from Highways England and the Department for Transport, the ORR is asked to address the following questions:

- 1) Are the data and evidence used in the stocktake and the progress report reliable and robust and in line with established/best practice?
- 2) Have comparisons been made in an appropriate way about the relative safety of ALR motorways, with reference to conventional motorways and other roads?
- 3) Are there any other data that could be used to enhance our understanding of the relative safety of ALR motorways, or to support the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures we are putting in place to improve safety and perceptions of safety?
- 4) Are there data and evidence available which can compare the international experience of operating similar types of road?

A full report is to be issued to the Secretary of State for Transport by 28 June