

M1 J31 to J32 Variable Mandatory Speed Limits

Pinch Point Scheme



Summary of the Consultation

Topic of this consultation:	The implementation of variable mandatory speed limits (VMSL) between junctions 31 to 32 of the M1 motorway.
Scope of this consultation:	<p>We are keen to have your comments on the implementation of variable mandatory speed limits (VMSL) for the M1 variable mandatory speed limits pinch point scheme between junctions 31 and 32; specifically on how the proposal could affect your organisation or those you represent.</p> <p>It is important to note that this is not consultation on the actual policy of using variable mandatory speed limits. Use of this traffic management feature is already settled Government policy. We are therefore seeking views on the proposal set out below.</p>
Geographical scope:	The proposed VMSL scheme will enable proactive management of the M1 carriageway, including slip roads and motorway to motorway intersections between junctions 31 (the junction with the A57) and 32 (the interchange with the M18 motorway) on this major section of motorway.

General Information

To:	The consultation is aimed at affected stakeholder groups or individuals.
Body/bodies responsible for the consultation:	The Highways Agency.
Duration:	The consultation will last for a period of 6 weeks commencing on 28 October 2013. The consultation will close on 9 December 2013. Please ensure responses arrive no later than that date.
Enquiries:	Andy Kirk Senior Project Manager Highways Agency The Cube 199 Wharfside Street Birmingham

	B1 1RN M1J31-32Pinchpoint@highways.gsi.gov.uk
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How to respond:	<p>Please send your consultation response using the Consultation response form in Appendix A to:</p> <p>Andy Kirk Senior Project Manager Highways Agency The Cube 199 Wharfside Street Birmingham B1 1RN</p> <p>Or alternatively you can respond to the consultation by emailing:</p> <p>M1J31-32Pinchpoint@highways.gsi.gov.uk</p> <p>When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of a larger organisation please make it clear who the organisation represents, and where applicable, how the views of members were gathered.</p>
Additional ways to become involved:	<p>The Highways Agency website will include a copy of this consultation pack at the following website address:</p> <p>http://www.highways.gov.uk/consultations</p>
After the consultation:	<p>All responses received within the consultation period will be considered and responded to as necessary. Following the end of the consultation period a summary report will be made available on the Highways Agency website. The summary report will provide an analysis of responses received and the Highways Agency response.</p> <p>Subject to the results of the consultation, we envisage that the scheme will have the capability to operate VMSL by March 2015.</p>

Compliance with the Government's Consultation Principles:	This consultation complies with the Government's Consultation Principles.
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Background

Getting to this stage:	<p>The M1 J31 to J32 variable mandatory speed limit scheme was included in the pinch point programme, which forms part of the UK Government's growth initiative, outlined during the Chancellor's Autumn Statement in November 2011. The Highways Agency was initially allocated over £200m for the pinch point programme to deliver focused improvements to the Strategic Road Network, during the period 2012/13 – 2014/15. Following the Autumn Statement 2012 the Highways Agency received an additional £100m to invest in the pinch point programme.</p> <p>The pinch point programme is being designed by the Highways Agency to deliver smaller scale improvements to the strategic road network that will help to stimulate growth in the local economy and relieve congestion and/or improve safety.</p> <p>This scheme continues the deployment of technology interventions onto the strategic road network to support an operational approach that maximises benefits and is part of an interconnecting network of capacity improvements to the M1 corridor.</p>
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Executive summary

This consultation provides an opportunity for interested parties to comment on the proposal to introduce variable mandatory speed limits on the M1 motorway between junctions 31 and 32.

The scheme, if approved, will set variable mandatory speed limits in response to the prevailing traffic conditions and will be clearly displayed on advanced motorway indicator signs above each lane of the main carriageway, mounted on overhead gantries, on verge mounted variable message signs and on post mounted advanced motorway indicators (where provided). Once in force, the relevant Regulations will restrict driving at a speed exceeding that displayed on the signs. When no speed is displayed on the signs then the national speed limit will be in force.

We would welcome comments specifically on how the proposal could affect your organisation or those you represent.

Benefits of variable mandatory speed limits

The Highways Agency is committed to building upon the success of the existing managed motorways schemes which have been implemented on a number of busy motorway sections across the country. It is expected that the scheme will:

- Smooth traffic flows;
- Provide more reliable journey times;
- Increase and improve the quality of information for the driver;
- Provide driver information in a consistent manner to information displayed as part of the adjacent M1 J28 to 31 and M1 J32 to 35a managed motorways schemes.

1. HOW ARE WE CONDUCTING THE CONSULTATION

1.1 WHAT IS THIS CONSULTATION ABOUT?

We are consulting on the proposed implementation of variable mandatory speed limits within the M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme.

1.2 WHY DO WE NEED THE VARIABLE MANDATORY SPEED LIMITS?

The M1 motorway is a strategic route for local, regional and international traffic and plays a major role as;

- (i) a national artery providing a direct motorway route between the North and the South of England; and
- (ii) a major inter-urban regional route connecting two major conurbations and providing access to important international gateways. This section of the M1 carries in excess of 95,000 vehicles per day.

The M1 J31 to J32 scheme is part of the Highways Agency's programme to add capacity to the existing strategic road network in order to support economic growth and maintain mobility. It is expected that the VMSL scheme will:

- Smooth traffic flows;
- Provide more reliable journey times;
- Increase and improve the quality of information for the driver;
- Provide driver information in a consistent manner to information displayed as part of the adjacent M1 J28 to 31 and M1 J32 to 35a managed motorways schemes.

The use of variable mandatory speed limits is an essential to achieving the objectives above. Through the introduction of technology, we aim to make best use of the existing road space.

1.3 COMMENTS ON THE INTRODUCTION OF VARIABLE MANDATORY SPEED LIMITS

We would like to encourage any organisations, businesses or individuals affected by these proposals to make contact with us and communicate their views.

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, it would be helpful if you could note this in your reply. Please also indicate the nature of the organisation, how many individuals' views are included in the response and ways in which these views were gathered.

A response form has been included in Appendix A and a list of the consultees is contained in Appendix B.

1.4 SENDING YOUR CONSULTATION RESPONSE

All responses should be sent in writing (email or by post) to the address below. Please let us have your comments by the 9 December 2013.

Andy Kirk
Senior Project Manager
Highways Agency
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham
B1 1RN

Email: M1J31-32Pinchpoint@highways.gsi.gov.uk

1.5 HOW WE WILL ACT ON YOUR RESPONSES

After the consultation period, we will publish a 'Response to Consultation Report', which will be published on the Highways Agency website.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you would like the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals amongst other things with obligations of confidence.

In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Highways Agency.

The Highways Agency will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

1.6 FURTHER INFORMATION

To receive further information on the M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme you can contact the project team in writing at:

Andy Kirk
Senior Project Manager
Highways Agency
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham
B1 1RN

M1J31-32Pinchpoint@highways.gsi.gov.uk

Alternatively visit the Highways Agency website at:

<http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/road-projects/m1-junction-31-to-junction-32/>

1.7 GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PRINCIPLES

We are conducting this consultation in accordance with the Government's Consultation Principles. The consultation criteria are listed below.

1) Subjects of Consultation – The objectives of any consultation should be clear and will depend to a great extent on the type of issue and the stage in the policy-making process – from gathering new ideas to testing options.

2) Timing of Consultation – Engagement should begin early in policy development when the policy is still under consideration and views can genuinely be taken into account.

3) Making information useful and accessible – Policy makers should think carefully about who needs to be consulted and ensure the consultation captures the full range of stakeholders affected. Information should be disseminated and presented in a way likely to be accessible and useful to the stakeholders with a substantial interest in the subject matter.

4) Transparency and Feedback – The objectives of the consultation process should be clear. To avoid creating unrealistic expectations, any aspects of the proposal that have clearly been finalised and will not be subject to change should be clearly stated.

5) Practical Considerations - Consultation exercises should not generally be launched during local or national election periods.

If you have reason to believe this consultation document does not comply with these Consultation Principles, please write to our consultation co-ordinator at the address below, setting out the areas where you believe this Paper does not meet the criteria:

Ian Sweeting
Highways Agency,
The Cube,
199 Wharfside Street,
Birmingham, B1 1RN

Or alternatively ian.sweeting@highways.gsi.gov.uk

Further information about the Consultation Principles can be located on the Inside Government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

2. LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

2.1 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VARIABLE MANDATORY SPEED LIMITS

Subject to the outcome of the consultation, Regulations will need to be made under section 17(2) and (3) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 ('the 1984 Act') for the implementation of variable mandatory speed limits for the M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme and to enable amendments to be made to the Motorways Traffic (England and Wales) Regulations 1982 (S.I. 1982/1163) ('the 1982 Regulations') which govern the use of motorways. The proposed Regulations will restrict drivers from driving within the area of the VMSL scheme at a speed exceeding that displayed on the speed limit signs, or the national speed limit where no other speed limit sign is displayed.

The relevant legislative power in the 1984 Act permits the making of Regulations that regulate the manner in which, and the conditions subject to which, motorways may be used by traffic authorised to use such motorways.

Within the M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme it will be an offence to use the motorway in contravention of Regulations applying to the scheme made under section 17(2) of the 1984 Act.

Drivers of vehicles that pass a speed limit sign indicating that a speed limit other than the national speed limit applies, should obey that sign until the vehicle passes another sign indicating either that a new speed limit or the national speed limit applies.

Where a speed limit changes less than ten seconds before a vehicle passes the sign, the Regulations allow a driver to proceed at a speed up to the maximum applicable before the change, and to continue to do so until the driver leaves the specified road, the national speed limit applies or until the next speed limit sign. The intention behind this 'ten second' rule is to protect the driver from being prosecuted if, on the approach to a speed limit sign; it changes to a lower speed. For example should a driver approach a speed limit sign and it changes from 60mph to 50mph and he/she is within ten seconds of passing that sign then the driver can legally continue beyond that sign at 60mph until a subsequent speed limit applies or until he/she leaves the specified road. If there was no ten second rule, the issue of safety arises, as the driver would be required to brake sharply in order to comply with the new lower speed limit.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation, the proposed Regulations when made will apply in relation to the M1 between junctions 31 and 32 and to the on-slip and off-slip roads between junctions 31 and 32. The roads governed by the Regulations will be set out in the Regulations.

The proposed draft Regulations will not apply nationally – they will apply only to those parts of the motorway as specified in the Regulations (namely, the area between and including Junctions 31 to 32 of the M1 motorway). As drafted, these Regulations would put in place the legislative framework required to operate the M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme.

3. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE M1 J31 TO J32 VMSL SCHEME

3.1 PROPOSED EXTENT OF THE M1 J31-32 SCHEME VARIABLE MANDATORY SPEED LIMITS

A map showing the M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme is shown in Figure 3A, including the proposed coverage of the scheme. The precise configuration of the extent of the roads that are included within the scheme may be subject to variation. The M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme will include the motorway and slip roads between junctions 31 and 32 of the M1.

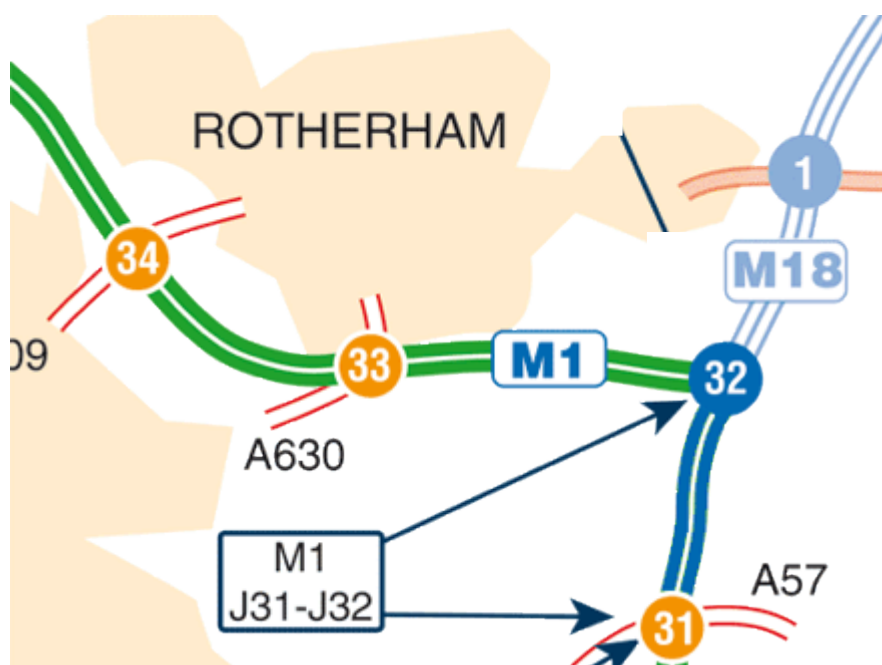


Figure 3A: M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme - variable mandatory speed limits Map

3.2 KEY FEATURES

Evaluation of the existing managed motorways and VMSL schemes demonstrated that managed motorways and VMSL schemes are able to deliver clear benefits by providing:

- Improved journey time reliability through reduced congestion;
- A scheme at lower cost and with less environmental impact than conventional widening programmes.

The design features of the M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme include:

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- Variable mandatory speed limits with an associated enforcement/compliance system;
 - Upgrading two existing gantries to show mandatory rather than advisory speed limits;
 - Replacing two existing cantilever signs of an older design with new signs capable of displaying mandatory rather than advisory speed limits as well as additional driver information, including lane availability;
 - Installing two new cantilever signs capable of displaying mandatory rather than advisory speed limits as well as additional driver information, including lane availability;
 - These signs and signals will be capable of displaying appropriate combinations of mandatory speed limits, lane availability, red X's, pictograms and text legends (see figures 4A to 4G below);
 - Retaining the existing queue protection system and adding a congestion management system.

The M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme will interface with the M1 J28 to J31 managed motorway scheme to the south and the M1 J32 to J35a managed motorway scheme to the north.

3.3 ENFORCEMENT

Obtaining an acceptable level of compliance with the variable mandatory speed limits (displayed on overhead gantries, verge mounted cantilever variable message signs and on post mounted advanced motorway indicators (where provided)) is key to the successful and safe operation of the M1 J31 to J32 scheme. No new offences or sanctions will be introduced as a result of the proposed changes to legislation.

Enforcement of variable mandatory speed limits is planned to be carried out using a combination of gantry-mounted and verge mounted speed enforcement equipment, and traditional enforcement by the Police.

4. M1 J31 TO J32 VARIABLE MANDATORY SPEED LIMITS SCHEME

To signify that the speed limit is mandatory and enforceable, the speed shown will have a red circle around it, as is the case with all other mandatory speed limit signs. The operational regimes to be implemented within the M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme are:

- **Normal operation (no advanced motorway indicators or variable message signs on);**
- **Variable mandatory speed limits;** and
- **Incident Management**

An overview of these operational regimes is provided in Sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

4.1 NORMAL OPERATION

During normal motorway operation the advanced motorway indicators and variable message signs will remain blank in respect of speed limits and the motorway will operate as shown in Figures 4A and 4B below. When there are no speed limits being displayed the national speed limit will apply.

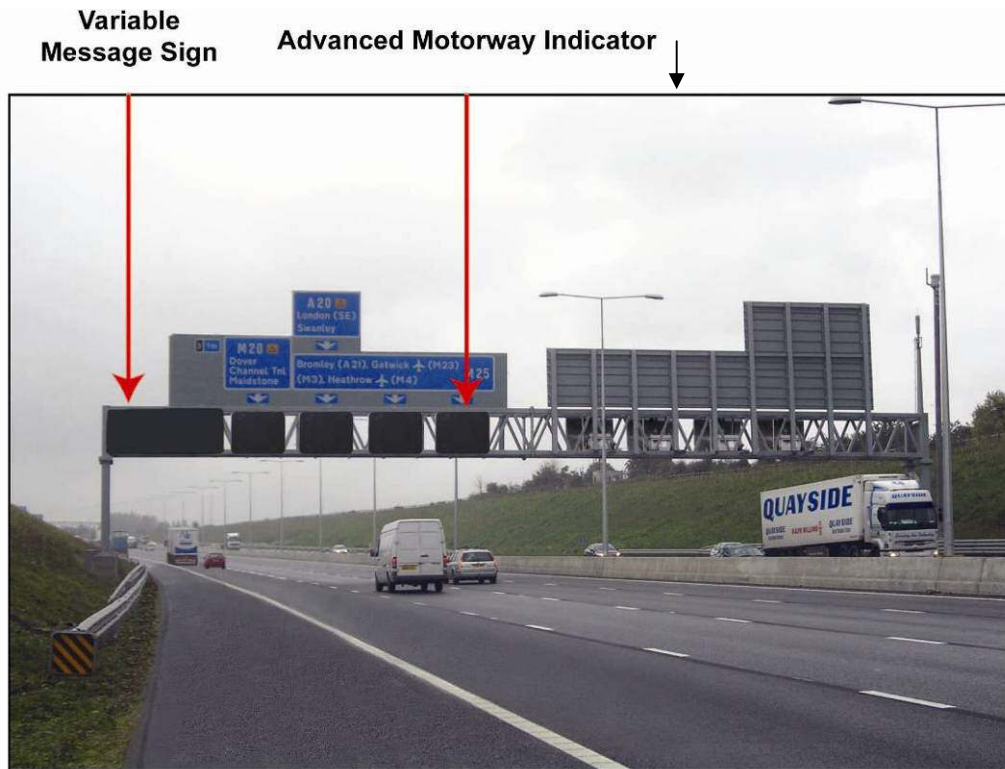


Figure 4A: Illustrative VMSL scheme section operating in normal motorway conditions with blank advanced motorway indicators and blank gantry mounted variable message sign

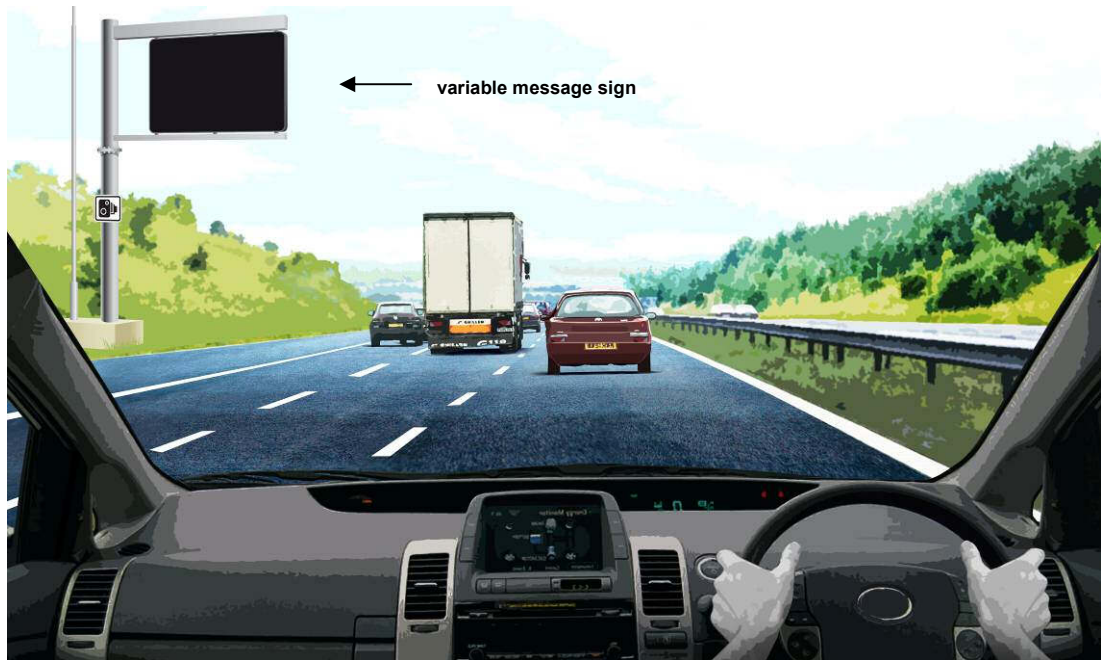


Figure 4B: Illustrative VMSL scheme section operating in normal motorway conditions with a blank verge mounted variable message sign

4.2 VARIABLE MANDATORY SPEED LIMITS

When variable mandatory speed limits are operational, clear instructions will be given to drivers via speed limit signs. These will be displayed on post mounted advanced motorway indicator signals (where provided), via speed limit signs displayed on the advanced motorway indicator signals above the main carriageway and on the verge mounted variable message signs. This is illustrated in Figure 4C and 4D below. The speed limit displayed will take account of prevailing traffic conditions and will be automatically calculated from sensors buried in the road surface or alternatively set by the regional control centre. The variable message signs located on gantries or on the verge will provide further information for drivers.

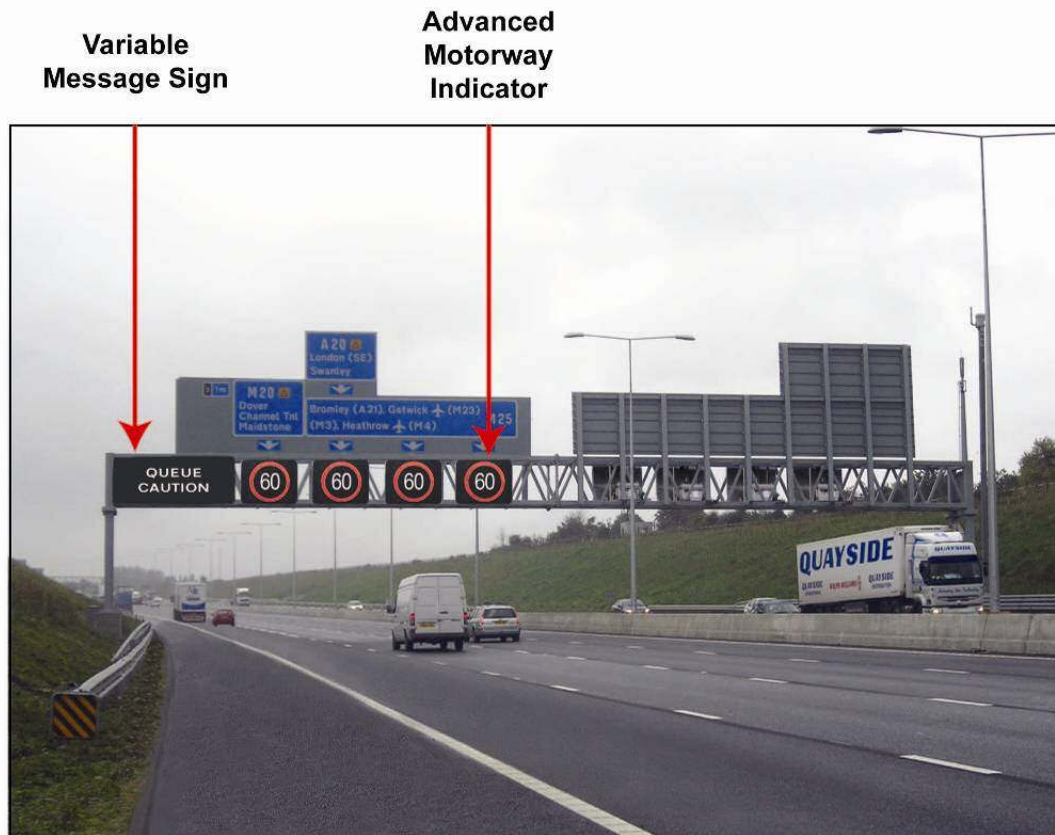


Figure 4C: Illustrative VMSL scheme section operating with variable mandatory speed limits



Figure 4D: Illustrative VMSL scheme section operating with variable mandatory speed limits and information for road users.

4.3 INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

During incident management the advanced motorway indicators and variable message signs can be set to protect the scene of an incident and assist the access of emergency services and other core responders.

On the advanced motorway indicators, speed limits and lane availability will be indicated through the use of variable mandatory speed limits and lane divert arrow signals (with flashing amber lanterns) and Red 'X' signals (with flashing red lanterns) as shown in Figure 4E below.

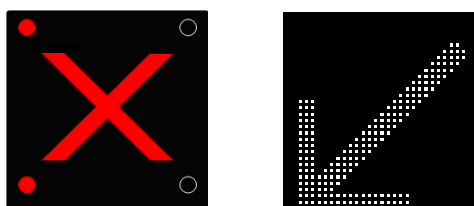


Figure 4E: Red X (STOP) aspect with flashing red lanterns and a lane divert signal shown on an advanced motorway indicator over any lane

Appropriate supporting information will be displayed on the variable message signs to further encourage compliant driver behaviour. Modifications to the signal control software will enable a single variable message sign to display three simultaneous elements: in addition to the speed restriction, (as enabled through the Regulations), and supporting text legend, the sign will also be able to display either a warning pictogram (typically a 'red triangle') or lane availability aspect, as indicated in the examples below.



Figure 4F: Variable message sign displaying queue caution information with a reduced mandatory speed limit



Figure 4G: Variable message sign warning of a closed lane ahead due to an accident

5. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

M1 J31 to J32 VMSL scheme

Please complete this pro-forma and send to the address below

Andy Kirk
 Senior Project Manager
 Highways Agency
 The Cube
 199 Wharfside Street
 Birmingham
 B1 1RN

Or alternatively you can respond to the consultation by email:

M1J31-32Pinchpoint@highways.gsi.gov.uk

PART 1 - Information about you

Completion of this section is optional but helps with our analysis of results. A note at the end of this form explains that we may be obliged to release this information if asked to do so.

Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Email	
Company Name or Organisation (if applicable)	
Please tick one box from the list below that best describes you/ your company or organisation.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small to Medium Enterprise (up to 50 employees)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Large Company
<input type="checkbox"/>	Representative Organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade Union
<input type="checkbox"/>	Interest Group

<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Government
<input type="checkbox"/>	Central Government
<input type="checkbox"/>	Police
<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of the public
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please describe):
If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or interest group, how many members do you have and how did you obtain the views of your members:	
If you would like your response or personal details to be treated confidentially please explain why:	

PART 2 - Your comments

1. Do you consider that the proposal to introduce variable mandatory speed limits on the M1 between junctions 31 and 32 will lead to an improvement in travelling conditions on this section of motorway?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Please add any comments:		
2. Are there any aspects of the proposal to introduce variable mandatory speed limits on the M1 between junctions 31 and 32 which give you concerns?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please give your comments:		

3. Are there any additional comments you would like to make about the proposal to introduce variable mandatory speed limits on the M1 between Junctions 31 and 32?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please give your comments:		

Note on disclosure of information

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want any information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Highways Agency.

The Highways Agency will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

APPENDIX B – LIST OF CONSULTEES

Government / Local Government Bodies	
Chief Executive Sheffield City Council Howden House 1 Union Street Sheffield S1 2SH	Chief Executive Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Transportation Unit Riverside House Main Street S60 1AE
Programme Director South Yorkshire Local Transport Partnership 11 Broad Street West Sheffield South Yorkshire S1 2BQ	
Core Responders / Legal	
Chairman (Traffic Committee) ACPO 7th Floor 25 Victoria St London SW1H 0EX	Director Ambulance Service Network 29 Bressenden Place London SW1E 5DD
The President Chief Fire Officers Association 9-11 Pebble Close Amington Tamworth Staffordshire B77 4RD	Chief Constable South Yorkshire Police Carbrook House Carbrook Road Sheffield S9 2DB
Chief Fire Officer South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue 197 Eyre Street Sheffield S1 3FG	South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership 11 Broad Street West Sheffield South Yorkshire S1 2BQ
Chief Executive Yorkshire Ambulance Service Springhill Brindley Way Wakefield 41 Business Park Wakefield WF2 0XQ	Chief Executive VOSA Berkeley House Croydon Street Bristol BS5 0DA

South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner 18 Regent Street Barnsley South Yorkshire S70 2HG	South Yorkshire Public Health Network Public Health Howden House 1 Union Street SHEFFIELD S1 2SH
Environmental Organisations	
Chief Executive Campaign to Protect Rural England National Office 5-11 Lavington Street London SE1 0NZ	Chief Executive English Heritage 1 Waterhouse Square 138-142 Holborn London EC1N 2ST
Customer and Engagement Team Environment Agency Phoenix House Global Avenue Leeds LS11 8PG (FAO Diana Orr)	
Chief Executive Natural England 1 East Parade Sheffield S1 2ET	The Chair Friends of the Earth 26-28 Underwood Street London N1 7JQ
Vehicle Recovery Operators	
Road Operations Director The Automobile Association Ltd Fanum House Basing view Basingstoke Hampshire RG21 4EA	Managing Director Britannia Rescue Freepost RSJA-XLCX-BLCE Folly Hall Mills St Thomas Road Huddersfield HD1 3LT
Network Operations Manger Green Flag Green Flag House Cote Lane Pudsey Leeds LS28 5GF	Operations Manager RAC Motoring Services RAC House Brockhurst Crescent Walsall WS5 4QZ

Operations Director Mondial Assistance Mondial House 102 George Street Croydon Surrey CR9 1AJ	Chief Executive Association of Vehicle Recovery Operators AVRO House 1 Bath Street Rugby CV21 3JF
The President Road Rescue Recovery Association Hubberts Bridge Rd Kirton Holme Boston Lincolnshire PE20 1TW	
Business Organisations	
Executive Director Sheffield Chamber of Commerce Albion House Savile Street Sheffield S4 7UD	Executive Director Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce 2 Genesis Business Park Sheffield Road Templeborough Rotherham S60 1DX
Centre Director Meadowhall Shopping Centre Ltd Management Suite 1 The Oasis Meadowhall Centre Sheffield S9 1EP	Chief Executive Sheffield International Venues SIV Enterprises Limited Don Valley Stadium Worksop Road Sheffield S9 3TL

APPENDIX C – Q&A FOR M1 JUNCTIONS 31 to 32

Q. What is happening?

A. The M1 motorway is a strategic route for local, regional and international traffic forming part of the Trans European Road Network and plays a major role as:

- A direct motorway route between the North and the South
- A major route connecting major conurbations and providing access to two important international gateways.

The M1 between Junctions 31 to 32 is part of the primary strategic link between Nottingham and Leeds and currently the link carries traffic in excess of the original design levels, resulting in congestion and delays to drivers and is a major transport issue. The section for which variable mandatory speed limits are being consulted on is 2.6 miles long and runs between junction 31 (Aston Interchange) and junction 32 (the interchanges with the M18). It was opened in 1967 and was constructed to dual three lane motorway (D3M) standard. The carriageway was widened to dual four lane motorway (D4M) standard in 2007.

Q. Why is the Highways Agency consulting?

A. This consultation will provide an opportunity for interested parties and individuals to comment on the implementation of variable mandatory speed limits on this section of the M1.

Q. Who can respond to this?

A. This consultation is available for anyone to respond to, including organisations that would be affected by the implementation of variable mandatory speed limits. The consultation is aimed at affected stakeholder groups.

Q. Is the introduction of variable mandatory speed limits likely to be effective?

The introduction of variable mandatory speed limits on sections of the M6 and M42 around Birmingham have shown a reduction in congestion and collisions and improved traffic flows resulting in more reliable journey times. A three-year safety report into the M42 managed motorway scheme showed that traffic collisions have reduced.

Q. Why have a variable speed limit? Why not have a fixed speed limit?

A. By varying the mandatory speed limit the Highways Agency can manage the flow of traffic more effectively. The speed limits displayed on the motorway will take account of prevailing traffic conditions with the aim of ensuring the smooth flow of traffic. Variable speed limits are a key feature of managed motorways - which is about modernising the

operation of our motorways and finding the best solution for different parts of the network.

Q. How does it work?

A. The variable mandatory speed limits and messages shown on the variable message signs are automatically displayed in response to the level of congestion or traffic queues. Sensors in the road surface detect the speed, volume and flow of traffic which then calculate the optimum speed to keep traffic moving, reducing the level of 'stop-start' traffic which leads to congestion. Drivers see the current speed limit displayed on electronic signals on the overhead gantries and variable message signs located in the verge. The speed limits can also be set by control room operators if required.

Q. When are the variable speed limits likely to become mandatory?

A. We are hoping to have the capability to operate VMSL by March 2015.

Q. So what is the point of the consultation?

A. The Highways Agency is committed to effective consultation and complies with the Government's Consultation Principles. Effective consultation with affected stakeholders brings to light valuable information which we are able to use to design effective solutions and mitigate any concerns.

Following the consultation period, responses will be issued where appropriate and a summary report compiled which will provide an analysis of the responses and provide justification for the selected option.

Enforcement Q&A

Q: Are variable mandatory speed limits linked to speed enforcement cameras?

A: Yes, and as the variable mandatory speed limits change, the speed enforcement cameras will be automatically adjusted to suit the currently signalled limits.

Q: How are you going to enforce the speed limits?

A: The speed limits are enforced by the Police.

There are cameras on the gantries and variable message signs for use in enforcement. As per the Highway Code, any sign in a red circle is mandatory so the speed limits are legally enforceable.

Q: How will the speed limits be enforced during normal motorway conditions?

A: Enforcement is a matter for the police, who will continue to enforce the national speed limits, as on all roads including motorways.

Q: What happens if I travel past a signal/speed limit when it changes?

A: When the cameras are in operation there is a built in time delay from the switching of the signal/speed limit to when the cameras will actually enforce – once mandatory. When there is a change in the speed limit displayed on the speed limit sign and if the vehicle had passed that sign ten seconds earlier, then the speed limit applicable to the driver of the vehicle will be the speed limit displayed on that sign prior to it changing.