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## Smart motorway openings halted amid safety concerns - RAC reaction

**Reacting to the announcement that the opening of new smart motorways is to be halted pending a Government review, RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said:**

“In 2016, a cross-party group of MPs [called for a halt](#) to the roll-out of ‘all lane running’ smart motorways. This was ignored by the government at the time, although some positive superficial changes were made to schemes. The fundamental issues of SOS area spacing and stopped vehicle detection raised four years ago remain. We very much hope the current review results in some meaningful changes that give drivers confidence in all aspects of safety on smart motorways.

“The type of smart motorways that have been built in recent years differ enormously from those from those that were first introduced in England. The original schemes like those on the M42 and M4/M5, which the RAC was cautiously supportive of, featured hard shoulders that were only open to traffic during busy periods and had SOS areas and gantry signs placed much closer together. On today’s ‘all lane running’ smart motorways, hard shoulders have been permanently removed and SOS areas are spaced much further apart. The decision to make ‘all lane running’ the default type of smart motorway happened without proper consultation, despite the concerns of the breakdown industry and emergency services.

“Troublingly, in 2020 we now have a hotchpotch of different schemes designed to different standards – a complicated and ultimately unsustainable situation. Short of reintroducing the hard shoulder, the introduction of the latest radar technology to detect stationary vehicles automatically, together with many more SOS areas and a large-scale public information campaign,

should help make drivers feel more confident in the safety of the UK's motorway network.

“A rethink in the design of smart motorways is clearly needed to bring consistency, reduce risks in breakdowns, and turn around plummeting public confidence. As it stands, we are not convinced that the current ‘all lane running’ design is working and have reservations as to whether it should be the de facto standard going forward.”

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The press office email address is [press.office@rac.co.uk](mailto:press.office@rac.co.uk) and media centre is at [media.rac.co.uk](http://media.rac.co.uk). **Please note:** the press office is unable to help with individual customer enquiries - please visit the [RAC contacts page](#) to find the right contact.

## About the RAC

The RAC, an iconic UK brand, provides complete peace of mind to nearly 14 million UK private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. As well as its premium nationwide breakdown assistance service – with an expert branded patrol workforce attending more than two million breakdowns every year – it offers a wide range of market-leading products across insurance, legal services, vehicle inspections and service, maintenance and repair. Included in this is the first-of-its-kind nationwide Mobile Mechanics service which brings the garage to homes and workplaces.

At the forefront of new solutions for business fleets and consumers, the RAC's breakdown service is electric-ready with mobile EV charging technology and can be called on using [myRAC](#) – the all-in-one route planner, fuel finder and breakdown reporting app.

Visit the [RAC website](#).

## Contacts



### **RAC Press Office**

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