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## Smart motorway safety plan published - RAC statement

In response to the publication of the [smart motorway safety evidence stocktake and action plan](#), RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said:

“Two-thirds of drivers tell us that they believe permanently removing the hard shoulder compromises safety in the event of a breakdown. While it is welcome that the Government has listened to their concerns and undertaken this review, it remains to be seen whether these measures go far enough to protect drivers who are unfortunate enough to break down in live lanes.

“We don’t believe the main issue at hand here is the safety of smart motorways with ‘dynamic’ hard shoulders, given this type of motorway has not been built for many years and represents a tiny fraction of the overall motorway network. This is a red herring and in reality, there were never enough of these schemes built for drivers to get used to them before the switch was made, without any consultation, to building smart motorways that have the hard shoulder permanently removed. Only time will tell whether all lane running schemes really are an improvement over either controlled or dynamic hard shoulder motorways.

“The safe running of any smart motorway heavily depends on drivers being able to see, and react to red X signage indicating where lanes are closed. We are disappointed that the review has not looked at the spacing of red X gantry signage as we believe in too many instances signs are spaced too far apart, increasing the possibility of drivers not seeing them. The difference between a driver seeing and reacting to a red X sign, or missing it, could literally be life or death.

“On the basis all lane running smart motorways remain the default, the

commitment to install stopped vehicle detection technology on the whole network is a positive step, but a three-year timeframe will feel like an eternity considering the concerns many drivers have about all lane running schemes. This is somewhat compensated by the promise of more Highways England patrol officers on certain stretches of smart motorway, but the key challenge must be to get live lanes closed as soon as possible when vehicles become stranded, so a priority should also be to have more cameras and more staff in control centres to monitor the network.

“Additional emergency refuge areas on the M25 is welcome, but we believe that the spacing standard must be applied across the board where practical. The Government says it is considering a national programme for installing more refuge areas on the smart motorway network – we say that they should consider no longer and make it an absolute priority going forward. It is vital that drivers have confidence in the infrastructure they are using and we continue to urge the Government to take into account those with mobility issues for whom the advice of leaving the vehicle and getting over the barrier is not always practical.

“We welcome the Government’s commitment to allow roadside patrols and recovery workers to use red flashing lights – a step that we hope will improve the safety of roadside patrol and operators.”

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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



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