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RAC reacts to Government's response to MP's all lane running inquiry

RAC chief engineer David Bizley said: “The flat refusal of the Government to listen to genuine voices of concern from those who work on motorways every day and the considered conclusion of the Transport Select Committee is very worrying. The safety case for all lane running is not yet proven and as a result we fear that it won't be long before there is a major tragedy that will make the Government think again.

“We also believe the Government is misguided to compare the removal of the hard shoulder to that of an A-road. Motorways are the safest roads on the network, and the hard shoulder and emergency refuge play an important part in this.

“We desperately need increased capacity on our busiest sections of motorway to ease congestion and improve journey times for all, but safety must not be comprised in the process. Smart motorways are clearly part of the solution, but we have always said dynamic hard shoulder schemes, where hard shoulder is only used as a running lane at busy times, provide the best compromise between increased capacity and keeping drivers, their passengers and roadside workers safe.

“The all lane running configuration is, however, being rolled out by the Government as the scheme of choice and we therefore need to focus on making that as safe as possible by increasing the frequency of emergency refuge areas (ERAs). It is therefore very disappointing that the average spacing of these on the recently approved M4 scheme has been set at 1.85km which is well beyond line of sight for any motorist in the event of a breakdown.

“The Government’s response to the Transport Select Committee says that Highways England will review ERA spacing as part of a broader approach to reduce the frequency and risk associated with live-lane stops. We hope this will be applied to the M4 scheme in the interests of safety and cost efficiency as it would of course be far more expensive and more disruptive to have to put in more ERAs after the scheme is built.

“An average ERA spacing of 1.85km apart substantially reduces motorists’ chances of being able to reach one should they break down or be involved in an accident. We believe ERAs should ideally be 800m apart and certainly no more than 1km apart. There must also be a concerted effort to stamp out ERA misuse and increase compliance with Red X ‘lane closed’ signs.

“An RAC survey of members who had broken down on all lane running sections of motorway found awareness of emergency refuge areas was poor with only 28% saying they could see one when breaking down and one in four not realising they even existed. The same survey also found that motorists breaking down on smart motorways felt more at risk on all lane running sections than did on dynamic hard shoulder ones.”

The press office email address is press.office@rac.co.uk and media centre is at 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.

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