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Transport committee to launch fresh inquiry into smart motorways - RAC reaction

Reacting to the news that the transport committee is to launch an inquiry into smart motorways - after the last one in 2016 - RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said:

“There is an increasing level of concern around the safety of smart motorways from the driving public through to Westminster. While a major review has identified a number of key actions to improve safety and some progress has been made, there is still a great deal of work to do which will take several years to complete.

“But even when all these issues are addressed, we wonder whether they will go far enough to overcome people’s fears about the permanent removal of the hard shoulder on these schemes. If the Government is going to persist with all lane running, it must make sure all schemes – both new and existing – are built and operate to the highest possible safety standards. Crucially, SOS areas need to be more frequent so drivers have a better chance of reaching one in an emergency.

“One key point we feel has been overlooked is the distance between signs, as it remains the case that the safety of any driver who comes to a stop in a live smart motorway lane depends both on the lane being closed quickly by Highways England and other drivers then abiding by red X closed lane signs. At the moment there is around 1km between these signs so many vehicles simply won’t see the red X when it is switched on if they have already passed it, meaning they may suddenly encounter a stationary vehicle directly in front of them with no warning.

“Whatever happens, it will remain the case that the safety of any driver who comes to a stop in a live smart motorway lane depends both on the lane being closed quickly by Highways England and other drivers then abiding by red X closed lane signs.”

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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](#).

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