

# Customer Service Plan

## 2024-25



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A52 Nottingham Junction community project



Customer Journey at Drigg Beach



Severn Beach cycle path



A40 Gloucester

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# Foreword



Every day, over four million National Highways customers use the strategic road network – the 4,500 miles of motorways and A-roads that we maintain, operate and manage. We care about every person's journey, and about those who work and live on or near, our roads. It's vital that we deliver great customer experiences every day.

We receive funding from the Department for Transport in five-year cycles, called road periods. We're now in the last year of the second road period (2020-2025). We're committed to delivering our plans to enhance our customers' experience while laying the foundation for success in the third road period (2025-2030).

Everyone at National Highways and across our supply chain has a responsibility to consider how we make a difference to our customers and to factor this into our decision making. Across our business and supply chain we're empowering our teams to connect their purpose to our customers' needs, enabling them to continually improve the service we provide to customers.

We set out our customer service plan each year. In this, our plan for 2024-25, we're showcasing some exciting initiatives. These have been developed from our customers' insights and what they tell us is important to them now and in the longer term.

Our customers are diverse, with differing needs. They include people who use the network in a car, bike, van or HGV. They include walkers, cyclists, horse riders and the communities who live alongside our network. And they also include businesses such as hauliers and delivery organisations, and bus and coach companies.

Our network is a vital part of everyday life, and crucial to supporting the UK economy to thrive and grow.

We must ensure that what we do considers everyone.

Our vision for our customers remains unchanged. We want our customers to have increasing satisfaction with their journeys on our network. They will know we care about their experience and consider us to be a responsible and trusted organisation.

Our close working with independent watchdog, Transport Focus, is key. They're helping us to better understand and use the data from the annual Strategic Roads User Survey, our official measure of customer satisfaction, to keep abreast of our customers' needs.

We have also created a customer experience tracker which measures our customers' feelings about their journey to supplement our insight on what they need.

Customers tell us that they want to feel in control of their journeys. In fact, the predictability of their journey times can have a direct impact on their journey satisfaction. To that end, we're working with the Department for Transport to reduce the 'charge anxiety' electric vehicle owners can feel on their journeys by supporting motorway service area providers and electricity providers to deliver a high-powered electric vehicle charging infrastructure.



We're also working with tech giants like Google and Apple to enhance the data available through wayfinding apps like Google Maps, Apple Maps and Waze. We're working on sharing our data so that customers can access the very latest information on roadworks and incidents on their smartphones or vehicle satnavs, and make appropriate route choices.

Most of our customers' journeys don't start and end on our network but, incorporate other transport options. We continue to work with local councils and other transport network operators to align planning and share best practice so we can provide customers with better integrated, safe and reliable travel choices.

Our customers increasingly expect more sustainable transport options too for all or part of their journeys. We're partnering with Active Travel England to enhance opportunities for active travel – walking, cycling, scooting – alongside our network.

At National Highways, we're committed to providing the service that our customers expect now and in the future. That means delivering better journey experiences, supporting the economy and connecting the country so we can make a difference for all our customers.

**Elliot Shaw**

Chief Customer and Strategy Officer



# Introduction

This customer service plan marks the fourth annual plan published since the launch of our *Customer Service Strategy: Making a difference for our customers* in May 2021. Our annual plans set out and deliver our vision against our performance goals for the second road period (2020-25).

We continue to use the six themes from our original strategy to shape how we will deliver a better experience for our customers. This year, as always, we've set ourselves ambitious targets. These range from improving how quickly and safely we clear incidents alongside recovery companies, to using innovative technology to improve customers' and workers' experiences in roadworks. We also continue to drive forward our accessibility and inclusion approach so we can bring our *Customer service strategy* to life for our disabled customers.

We are committed to enhancing our customers' satisfaction.

Our annual customer service plan is based on customer insight, as making a difference to our customers means focusing on what is important to them. Using insight enables us to drive decision making and identify opportunities to improve the products and services we provide. We use a wide range of data, including the Strategic Roads User Survey (our official measure for customers' experiences of driving on our network), our customer experience tracker, real-time feedback surveys, and research from Transport Focus and academia.

Customers are at the heart of everything we do – indeed, 'customer' is one of our three organisational imperatives, along with safety and delivery. Everyone in our organisation and our supply chain plays a part in delivering our customer imperative. We empower our people to positively challenge our processes and ways of working to ensure we're always striving to improve the services we provide to customers.

By partnering with the Institute of Customer Service and through training and support we have built the capability of our colleagues and those in our supply chain. We have also used customer journey mapping to look at the interactions customers have with us and to identify areas of improvement to provide better and more consistent service across our organisation.

Our Executive Customer Service Committee, led by Elliot Shaw, our Chief Customer and Strategy Officer, oversees the delivery of this customer service plan. Every deliverable within it is assigned to a senior colleague on this committee who takes ownership of it, ensuring there is a robust action plan for delivery.



# Improving journey times

What it will look like for our customers.

Journeys will take the time that customers expect them to. We'll improve the ways we manage roadworks, incidents and delays to enable safer, stress-free journeys and help drive the economy.

We will:

- Work with organisations that contribute to congestion (eg schools, hospitals) to give customers travel choices around when, how and where they travel.
- Complete the Roadworks Customer Innovation Trials to look for new ways to improve what we do for our customers. The trials cover: understanding the impact of road closures on customer journeys, using customer insight to understand what we can do better and using CCTV analytics to understand road user behaviour.
- Improve customer experience through roadworks. We will identify and share amongst project managers the best practice gathered from customer audits of roadworks while improving the accuracy of information about future closures.
- Analyse why customers' journeys are delayed, with the aim of reducing overall delays.
- Continue to focus on clearing incidents quickly and safely, and to monitor the performance of recovery companies, with the aim of reducing associated delays.
- Review existing research to better understand our customers' expectations around their journeys.
- Help our customers feel safe by committing to build more than 150 emergency areas by April 2025. This will give drivers more places to stop in an emergency.
- Improve the performance of the algorithms we use to set speeds to ease congestion on motorways.
- Improve our customers experience of dynamic hard shoulders to support better journey times and journey reliability.





# A better end-to-end experience

What it will look like for our customers.

Customers will trust that we care about their journeys as they travel seamlessly across our network, using varying modes of transport and linking to local networks.

We will:

- Improve the experience of walkers, cyclists and horse-riders by addressing themes agreed with Transport Focus and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), including working more closely with Active Travel England.
- Implement the Transport Focus Logistics and Coach Manager's survey as a performance indicator and develop a plan to address the results.
- Deliver the National Highways Bus and Coach Plan to enhance customer experience eg delivery of bus stop improvements.
- Deliver a programme of improvements at truck stop facilities by issuing match-funded grants to truck stop operators. This will focus on welfare facilities, driver and site security, and HGV parking capacity.
- Complete the A428 improved diversion route trial and publish an updated *Diversion routes: A customer view*. This will guide project teams on how to improve customers' experience when driving on diversions.
- Facilitate a Rapid Charging Fund grant pilot to upgrade power grid connections on our road network so more high-powered EV chargers will be available to customers.
- Implement our new Access and Inclusion approach, improving how all our customers access our services and the information provided by us as well as third parties.
- Improve the diversion routes used to manage unplanned incidents with a focus on the information we give customers along these routes.



A64 Whitwell



# Better information

What it will look like for our customers.

Customers will be better informed and have trust in the information they access, ensuring they feel safe and in control of their journeys.

We will:

- Optimise the number of variable signs and signals set on approach to incidents across the network to improve customer trust in our information.
- Improve the information provided to our customers via third party way finding information services and apps.
- Improve our ability to inform customers of traffic conditions through the new National Traffic Information Service. We will identify and publish incidents more quickly and provide more accurate timings on when the road will be clear, so customers can better plan their journeys.
- Aim to publish information about completed routine litter picks, in response to regular customer questions.
- Improve the consistency of signs for roadside facilities on trunk roads. This will enable customers to better plan where they stop. Signs will include EV charging symbols, where relevant.





# Well maintained and safe network

What it will look like for our customers.

We'll proactively maintain, operate and enhance our network to reduce disruption and help our customers feel safe.

We will:

- Aim to achieve Asset Management ISO 55001 certification to ensure greater efficiency and consistency in areas critical to our customers, including the safety and reliability of our network. This efficiency will support the service we provide, such as prompt fixing of defects or a reduction in unplanned closures, leading to improved journeys.
- Use digital data and technology to trial litter enforcement on a motorway. We will evaluate and plan next steps with the aim of reducing litter on our roads.
- Run more of our recent campaigns to encourage behaviour change, such as the '*Little changes – considerate driving*' campaign and our '*Lend a paw – Bin your litter*' campaign. This is an integrated communications approach for a reduction in littering on our roads and improved driving etiquette.
- Continue working towards our 2027 target to make 70% of our network lighting LED. As well as being more environmentally friendly and energy efficient, this will reduce our maintenance costs and mean less disruption for our customers.
- Commit to planting at least an additional 3 million trees and maintain the initial batch of up to 300,000 saplings. This will help to remove thousands of tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere each year as well as providing a haven for wildlife.
- Work to drive a more customer focused approach to planning, implementing and delivery of routine maintenance work through our relationship with our supply chain partners.
- Complete research to develop a new laser technique that will enable us to measure the smoothness of new road surfaces. This will mean smoother and longer-lasting road surfaces - improving customer journeys and reducing the need for maintenance work.



Litter Picking M56



# Developing better relationships

What it will look like for our customers.

Our customers, communities and stakeholders will know who we are and what we do. We will listen to them and understand what they want and need.

We will:

- Implement a consistent service offer for our stakeholders and communities across all major enhancements to increase advocacy for road building and understand the overall customer impact we have during the design and construction process.
- Improve how we communicate with our customers on social media by running engaging campaigns, responding to customer queries, and continuously monitoring and improving our performance.
- Enhance services to our customers who want to contact us. For example, improved self-serve tools (chat bot) and easier ways of contacting us (web forms).
- Use our Customer Experience Tracker to better understand how we're delivering for customers in specific areas, such as routine maintenance.
- Use our Customer Voice tool to better understand our customers' issues so we can make changes to improve their experience.
- Continue developing our plan to move our key customer contact teams to a single platform that will enable us to better support our customers and stakeholders.



*our engagement van used at schemes*



# Empowering our people

What it will look like for our customers.

Everyone in our organisation and supply chain will understand how they can improve customer experience and be empowered to do so.

We will:

- Continue to develop our people's skills in customer experience while recruiting high calibre people into key roles where they can have the most positive impact.
- Use the insights of our frontline traffic officers to improve the safety of our customers and teams on the network, as well as the experience of our customers when driving through roadworks.
- Adopt a new approach so we can better measure our performance in relation to our customer satisfaction goal (Strategic Roads User Survey KPI).
- Offer more training to our supply chain partners to help them better understand and support our customers.
- Ensure that 80% of our suppliers who are part of our Supply Chain Customer Experience Programme achieve a consistent level of understanding and delivering good customer experience. We will measure them through existing assessment processes.
- Complete our set of customer journey maps, which capture our customers' feelings about their experiences of National Highways' services and products. This will enable us to improve our customer service.



Traffic Officers Tingley



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