



Engaging Stakeholders Reduces Impact

M27 Romsey Bridge



“I’m delighted that the roads could open ahead of schedule and I think it was down to the good work of all involved that they have managed to do this.”

Southampton City Councillor Jacqui Rayment

PROJECT Romsey Bridge Replacement

CUSTOMER Highways England

FRAMEWORK Collaborative Delivery Framework

VALUE £15m

Issue

Keeping traffic flowing on our strategic road network is critical to the economy and to road users. Where motorway closures are necessary, the diversion routes must be safe, well communicated and enable road users to plan their journeys.

On the M27 near Southampton, 3 weekend motorway closures were needed to replace an over bridge. With a 60 mile diversion route we had to keep people moving safely.

Solution

Joined up clear messaging was critical and Highways England, Southampton City Council and the delivery team worked as one. Early meetings established the approach and prioritised stakeholder groups.

The Local Resilience Forum (LRF), which combined decision makers from local

councils, emergency services, ports and emergency planners, were invaluable. Their knowledge informed the diversion route planning and provided access to Resilience Direct (a secure IT system) for efficient information sharing.

Ahead of the first closure

Over 550 local people attended Public Information Events. 3D virtual 'walk through' technology improved scheme understanding of the benefits, phasing and traffic management. 16,000 targeted letters and leaflets reinforced messages.

Variable Message Signs (VMS) on motorways and the 60 mile diversion route forewarned the public and facilitated safe journey planning. This was supported by media messaging on local and regional TV and Radio stations.

During the closure

To reduce local impacts, a free taxi service enabled access to local amenities divided by the bridge. Those living within a 100m radius took up the offer of alternative accommodation/ meals for the weekend.

Keeping traffic moving along the diversion routes was critical. The LRF worked with RAYNET UK, (a national volunteer communications group) to monitor real-time traffic data and provide 30 minute updates on traffic conditions across the county. This enabled prioritised traffic signal phasing across Southampton and was supported with free vehicle recovery to keep the route clear.

Using Resilience Direct, key stakeholders received hourly updates. The Highways England Press office issued social media posts for re-tweeting by the local authorities and emergency services.

Outcome

Severe disruption to the road networks did not materialise. The outcome was safe predicable execution of the works for the benefit of the travelling public and residents with the motorway re-opened 16 hours early.

Structured feedback will inform the second closure to keep traffic flowing safely across the network.