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Dear Guy

For Highways England, safety of our roads is our number one imperative. We therefore acknowledge the important role roadside facilities play in the overall experience of road users, especially the potential to improve safety - through providing the opportunity for customers to take regular breaks.

We very much value the ongoing insight provided by Transport Focus which helps to inform our work. In terms of roadside facilities, we appreciate your research such as:

- *'Take a Break- road users view about roadside facilities'* (2016)
- *'Motorway Services User Survey'* (2017, 2018)
- *'A Road Services: what users think of the A3 and A34 think'* (2018)
- *'An accessible road network? Disabled user experience on England's motorways and major A roads'* (2018)
- *'Road information: the user perspective'* (2019)

It has helped to inform our ongoing activity in this area including:

- Continuing to develop strong relationships with the operators.
- Close involvement with the *'A' Roads Services: what users think of the A3 and A34'* research.
- Undertaking complementary research to understand the location, signage and planning situation of 'A' road services in 4 areas.
- Proactively working with the Department for Transport (DfT), delivery partners and operators to develop and take forward the installation of increased provision of Changing Places.
- Supporting electric vehicle charging points at services and developing a pilot to increase electrical capacity to provide increased number of charging points in Roads Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2).
- Working to encourage new entrants into the market.

Transport Focus recommended that Highways England develop a strategy that would see us playing an active role in facilitating high quality services on our roads, and a strategy to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for lorries to park in the right place with the right facilities for drivers.

We have considered these recommendations carefully. We believe roadside facilities play a key role in the overall experience of our customers and is captured through our ambition in our 'Customer Service Strategic Plan', with improvement activity delivered through our annual customer service plans.

In terms of our wider planning role considering capacity and facilities for lorry drivers, as a statutory planning consultee we respond to planning applications for lorry parking and other roadside facilities. We are part of the development planning process where future land uses are considered and ultimately agreed. Our approach to planning encourages developers / local authorities to engage early with us to support planning ambitions that might have an impact on the safe operation of the network, and are keen to promote the "importance of providing adequate overnight lorry parking facilities, taking into account any local shortages", in line with recent additions made to the National Planning Policy Framework.¹ We feel that separate strategies are not required, however we will set out our approach in this area once RIS2 and our Strategic Business Plan are finalised. As you are aware, the users and communities designated fund described in the draft RIS published by DfT considers roadside facilities.

Having covered our general position, I also wanted to take the opportunity to respond specifically to your research - '**A' Road Services: what users think of the A3 and A34 think**', which provided some welcome insights into the role roadside facilities play on trunk roads for our customers.

The services on trunk roads are not subject to the same mandatory requirements as motorway service areas, however they are subject to the same planning regime through engagement with local planning authorities. However, for services to be signed they must meet the DfT policy requirements and are subject to the same legal agreements with Highways England as motorway service operators.

The satisfaction with the services on the A3 and A34 is high at 96% and we acknowledge that the role they play differs from that of motorway service areas and as the report states, is largely functional. Whilst people are broadly satisfied, you've quite rightly identified improvement opportunities, which are detailed below with our thoughts:

Earlier warning of services, with a series of signs starting at least a mile back before the services.

Advance planning signs to show the distance to the next few services and what is available at each one.

Clearer icons and information to help road users make an informed choice.

- We understand the basis of these recommendations. We think they are best considered as part of a review of DfT policy to ensure signing

¹ MHCLG *The National Planning Policy Framework* (February 2019), paragraph 107.

requirements support safety, choice and customer experience. We will work with DfT to carry out such a review.

- Based on the outcome of the review, we will explore the opportunities to identify improvements on a particular route.

Highways England considers setting a maximum distance between services on its 'A' roads.

- We will consider this as part of our wider work.
- As part of our work to improve roadside facilities for customers we will engage with DfT and continue to work with local authorities to encourage planning of such facilities where appropriate.

Those who operate 'A' road services focus on improvements for lorry drivers.

- This recommendation falls under the control of the operators of the facilities. However, Highways England will continue to seek to influence operators to provide improved services for lorry drivers where feasible.

Those who operate the 'A' road services do more to make their customers feel that their overall experience is worth the money they are spending.

- This recommendation falls under the control of the operators of the facilities. Highways England will continue to engage and influence where appropriate to support improvements in this area.

Next steps

We look forward to the release of *'Motorway Services User Survey' 2019* and as we discussed with you recently, will be using this insight along with our own research to further develop our thinking in this area. We will continue to engage with you, DfT and operators, and as part of our customer service plan 2019/20 develop an action plan for identifying improvement opportunities for signage to services on trunk roads.

We look forward to continuing to work with you, providing us with valuable insight to inform our work seeking to improve the road user experience on the strategic road network.

Yours sincerely



Pete Martin
Customer Service Standards Director