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By email

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Dear Duncan

Signs on the National Highways network

Thank you for your letter dated 17 February 2022 regarding the above. I am grateful to you and your team for National Highways' engagement with us since you wrote and the commitment to addressing these issues. We welcome the concept of "Inspections – A Customer View" as particularly important, and not just in relation to signs.

Regarding signs, however, there are two road user 'pain points' where we feel more focus is required.

First, reducing the number of instances in which signs should be in place that are not. We continue to find examples where important signs, both from a safety and customer journey experience perspective, have disappeared and are still missing years later. Your welcome commitment to better understand the outliers in 'time to fix' data will be part of the solution. But will it pick up missing signs that – for whatever reason – were never recorded as defects or have somehow fallen off the radar?

To illustrate the generic problem, we recently became aware of two long-term missing signs on the A11 at Thetford, Mundford Road roundabout – see Page 2.

The array of signs below disappeared, according to Google Street View, between August 2016 and September 2018 and is still missing.



And the sign below disappeared between June 2019 and July 2021 and is still missing.



We would therefore like you to consider how National Highways assures itself that the signs drivers need to make safe, stress-free decisions are actually in place.

Would it be helpful to conduct a comprehensive, road by road audit of whether the correct sequence of signs approaching each junction, each lay-by etc. is actually in place? Such an exercise would produce a comprehensive list of what has gone missing over the years, reveal what has never been there but ought to have been, identify what is in place but needs to be renewed and what should be considered for removal as unnecessary.

Second, ensuring that road users' safety and journey experience is not compromised because signs are dirty. In my August 2021 letter I mentioned that National Highways documents set out the frequency with which the face of signs should be cleaned, although it is not clear to us if it should be every two years or every three (GM701 and CM125 appear to say different things).

Given the reports we have seen through SortMySign, and our own observations, it is difficult to believe that National Highways is consistently delivering either frequency. We would therefore like you to investigate whether all Regions are achieving the required frequency across the whole of their signs estate. And, if there turns out to be a problem, consider how performance can be monitored more effectively in future.

As ever, very happy to discuss.

Yours sincerely



Guy Dangerfield
Head of Strategy