

Better journeys, better conversations

Customers rely on our road network for business and for personal travel. Even people who are not travelling themselves depend every day on goods and essential services which do.

We are delivering a major programme of improvements to help traffic to keep moving as demand for road travel continues to grow. Customers also expect to see operations delivered to a consistent standard. Maintenance, advance planning of essential roadworks, our response to incidents and information about traffic conditions are all basic requirements.

We also want to change our relationship with the people who use our roads or are affected by them. We want to better understand their priorities and act on them so that over time we can reach a place where customers really feel that we are on their side.

Jim O'Sullivan – Chief Executive

Highways England values all of its many customers and stakeholders.

We have an important role to play in the economy and people's lives by helping the movement of goods and people around the country, with the minimum of impact to the communities we serve. To fulfil this role, we acknowledge that we must

improve the service we provide, so that, ultimately, customers know we're on their side.

To achieve this, it's not just about changing what we do, it's also about changing the way we do it. This strategy sets out our approach.

Our customers' experience using the network is about more than just the quality of roads we build and maintain. It's about how people feel – for example, our customers want to feel safe, they want to have control of their journeys and they want their journeys to be as stress-free as possible [see Figure 1].

We understand of course that we have a diverse range of customers, often with very different needs – whether they be a leisure driver, a motorcyclist, a haulier, someone who lives next to one of our roads, or simply someone who relies on our network for the delivery of goods and services. We must understand customers' needs better, respond to them and be thoughtful when these needs conflict.

Highways England's roads are some of the safest in Europe and we are committed to continually improving our customers' safety as well as their journey experience. However, we recognise there is much more we must do if we are to ensure our customers have better journeys and better conversations with us.

To achieve this [see Figure 2], we first need to consistently deliver the basics across the whole of

our network – this includes keeping the network in good condition, doing roadworks right, providing accurate information and dealing with incidents. We must also constantly improve the network and the services we offer – so working with a wide range of partners and stakeholders will be crucial. And finally, the area where we have most progress to make is in the development of our relationship with customers – we need to be better listeners and better at helping our customers to drive responsibly and make the best choices.

How our customers want to feel



Figure 1

Better service and better dialogue, so that customers know we're on their side

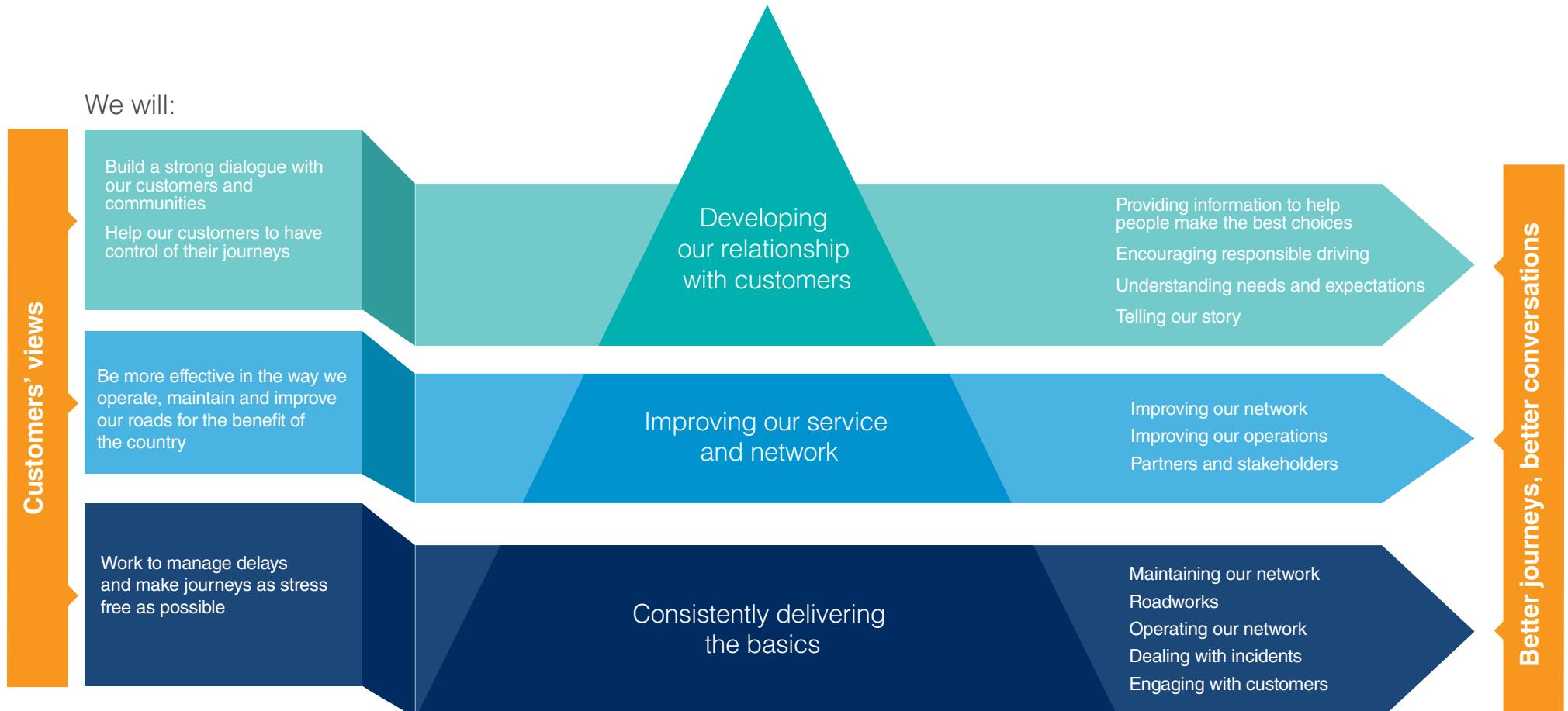


Figure 2

Consistently delivering the basics

We operate and maintain 4,300 miles of network, with 85 billion miles of journeys made per year, dealing with 437,000 incidents annually. So getting the basics right consistently, across the whole network, all of the time is vital.

In terms of **maintaining our network** we will consistently maintain the road surface in a good condition, keep it tidy and make sure the drainage is clear. We'll encourage customers to feed back their thoughts when it doesn't meet this standard.

With 4 million people using the network daily, when deciding how to design **roadworks** we will seek the least disruptive option. We will package our work to minimise the impact on our customers and local communities and will aim to work day and night to complete works as fast as we can.

When we're **operating the network** customers have told us they want us to provide clear, reliable and accurate information at all times. This includes having signs and signals working properly and set appropriately to the conditions. When **dealing with incidents**, we will work even more closely with partner organisations and our suppliers to ensure that incidents are cleared quickly and the network returned to normal.

As an organisation we need to consider how we are **engaging with customers** so that we are easy to contact, professional, respectful and importantly, listening and responding.

Improving our service and network

With demand forecast to grow by over 40% by 2040 and with the network already regularly congested in some places, we will be **improving our network** by delivering 300 miles of additional capacity through projects across England, as set out in our Delivery Plan. This should result in reduced levels of congestion and more predictable journey times. We will also undertake smaller scale schemes such as junction improvements and cycling improvement schemes and will work in partnership with local highways authorities to deliver specific local improvements. These schemes have been prioritised taking into consideration stakeholder input, with a clearly published timetable of what we will do and when.

We need to improve how we manage traffic flow by **improving our operations**, providing a more consistent experience for customers across the network, including on our new smart motorway sections and expressways. We will focus on how we can provide better quality information, products and services that our customers want.

To achieve this we need to work more closely with **partners and stakeholders** to develop stronger relationships to champion our customers' needs.

To continuously improve our service and network we are also developing a customer-focused research and development programme which will enable us to consider the future needs of customers and communities.

Developing our relationships with customers

We will provide **better information to help people make the best choices**. We must treat customers with respect and provide them with clear factual information to help inform their decisions. This will enable customers to take action before and during journeys.

A small minority of drivers create stress and make it unsafe for others on our roads. We accept that the majority of drivers are honest and law abiding but we are serious about **encouraging responsible driving**. We may need to take action that is unpopular but will be focused on improving the experience for the majority of users.

It is important that we **understand needs and expectations** to help change our own behaviours and those of our customers – working with Transport Focus will help us to achieve this. We will use new ways of collecting and using customer and community insight to allow us to better understand their needs and to inform our business decisions.

As an organisation we play an important role in keeping our nation moving, supporting the economy, and helping people connect so we need to **tell people our story**; what we do and how we do it. We will build our reputation as our service improves, celebrating our successes, showcasing our ambition and being transparent. Our customers tell us that we sometimes patronise them, so we'll ensure we're clear and open with them when we explain our decisions.

The face of Highways England

We have traffic officers operating across the motorway network and some of our trunk roads 24 hours a day, every day of the year, to clear up incidents and keep traffic moving. In addition, we have a large number of people working on behalf of Highways England to maintain and improve our network, and assist with clearing up incidents, including gritter drivers and maintenance crews. Our customer contact centre is also available around the clock providing customers with factual information to help them with their journey.

Service expectations

During the period from 2015 to 2020 we intend to: achieve 90% customer satisfaction, achieve 97% network availability and clear 85% of motorway incidents within one hour.

We also intend to further develop service levels and measures, having fully considered what this means for different types of customers in different circumstances and locations.

Why this is so important

Our way of life in this country is built around the freedom of movement that our roads allow us. Highways England recognises the part we have to play in this, and therefore the responsibility we carry to get things right. This strategy is just the start of our plans for our customers to have better journeys and better conversations with us. These plans are under development and will continue to be based on customers' views.

To find out more or talk to someone contact
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