



# Department for Transport

From the Secretary of State  
**Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP**

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Our Ref: MC/00030463

Claire Mercer

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~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~  
Rotherham

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~  
South Yorkshire

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10 January 2025

Dear Mrs Mercer,

Thank you for your letter of 21 December about the safety of smart motorways.

I would like to start by expressing my sincere condolences for the loss of your husband and appreciate how difficult it must be to share some very personal details of the collision. Whilst I understand your focus is around the reinstatement of the hard shoulder, it seems clear that your determined and passionate campaigning has played a significant part in bringing attention to and supporting action to make smart motorways as safe as they can be. Our Government has been clear that we will not build any new smart motorways.

As you know, the Department has been corresponding with Irwin Mitchell Solicitors, who represent your niece, regarding the request for a new policy decision on smart motorways (including the immediate reinstatement of the hard shoulder). Please be assured that I take these representations with the utmost seriousness and as soon as I have considered all the issues I will respond at the earliest opportunity.

I appreciate that you will be aware of the latest safety data published by National Highways which showed that overall, in terms of serious or fatal casualties, smart motorways remain the safest roads on the Strategic Road Network. Whilst this data has been analysed over a number of years, it remains important that we continue to assess the latest safety data in the coming years. It is also important that we continue to collect data and information on the impact of the safety measures put in place to date, such as new technology and additional emergency areas. The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) as the independent monitor of the Strategic Road Network has a central role in this. The ORR is currently preparing its next annual assessment of safety on the Strategic Road Network, which includes an assessment of the performance of technology on smart motorways, which is due in Spring 2025.

We are also determined to improve the safety of all our roads and as part of this, my Department is developing a new road safety strategy. We will set out more details on this in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Heidi Alexander', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**