As the scheme featured on the BBC Midlands Today programme on Monday, we’d like to update you in line with what was stated.

The M5 Oldbury Viaduct Major Renewal Scheme is absolutely essential to ensure the structural integrity of the viaduct for the future. The scheme is a unique project, being delivered within a densely populated urban environment with many residents, businesses and stakeholders in close proximity.

It is the largest concrete repair project (by value) ever carried out in the UK and is currently the largest scaffolding project in Europe.
The scheme is very complex and at times causes a great deal of disruption for motorists, which we regret. Unfortunately, the southbound work has taken longer than anticipated to complete as:

- More repairs have been carried out – more than 6,000 which is 4,500 more than anticipated. Estimating the number of repairs is always difficult when the carriageways are live with 200mm+ of surfacing covering the concrete. We were only able to fully assess the condition of the southbound carriageway once the work had started and we had removed the existing surfacing and waterproofing.

- Last winter was one of the most severe in years, with the freezing temperatures and snow delaying our concrete repair operations and causing issues for workforce safety.

- The recent prolonged heatwave has disrupted the operation to lay waterproofing membrane. This sits directly under the surfacing and is required to protect the repaired deck from deterioration from water and road salt. Waterproofing membrane cannot be applied when the deck temperature exceeds over around 30°C. In recent weeks the surface temperature on the viaduct has been around 40°C, therefore the waterproofing material has had to be applied overnight instead of 24/7, considerably reducing production rates. There is no other material available that can be applied outside of this temperature range that offers the same level of protection. Hotter countries generally do not have the extremes of temperatures of the UK and tend not to waterproof their structures.

We are committed to completing the work as safely and quickly as possible. We are now surfacing the southbound carriageway and plan to switch traffic onto the northbound carriageway in early September.

Based on initial inspections, we expect the northbound carriageway to be in a better condition, which means there should be a smaller number of repairs to complete. In addition, through our experience on the southbound carriageway, we have made improvements that allow us to carry out the repairs more efficiently; this means we will now complete repairs at higher rate.

With the problems we have encountered, we are working hard to complete the carriageway repair works as soon as possible in 2019, to allow us to reopen three lanes in each direction. We will then install a new concrete central reservation barrier. We cannot currently give a final completion date in 2019 for all works until the full extent of the repairs needed on the northbound carriageway has been assessed. We’re doing all we can to keep the disruption to motorists, businesses and residents as low as possible and we thank people for their patience and for using alternative routes and methods of transport whenever possible.
In regards to the traffic management restriction in place at M5 junction 4A. This will be removed as soon as it is safe to do so.

When the full extent of the repairs required to the northbound carriageway are known, we can assess the feasibility of creating an extra northbound lane as soon as possible. Once a third northbound lane is open we will be able to remove the lane restriction at M5 junction 4A. However restructuring the works in this way would lead to a longer overall project duration.

Further to this, a recent traffic study we carried out shows that the measures introduced at M5 J4A and M6 J8 to balance the flow of traffic around the region have worked:

• There has been an increase in use of bus and train travel
• People have been using the M42 as an alternative to the M5
• Traffic on the local Sandwell road network, which initially increased, has returned to levels similar to those before we started the project.

Therefore, we are now carrying out traffic modelling to see if is safe to remove the restriction in advance of opening an additional northbound lane.

More information about the scheme can be found online at www.highways.gov.uk/oldburyviaduct

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