

## Work starts soon on project to ease congestion and boost regeneration on the Island

Work on a major scheme to reduce traffic congestion and improve access for pedestrians and cyclists at one of the Island's busiest junctions is to begin at the end of September.

Construction of the Isle of Wight Council scheme will transform the approaches to — and access across — St Mary's roundabout in Newport.

The scheme, which is part of the wider Newport Strategic Junction Improvements, is designed to reduce congestion now as well as 'future-proofing' the junction — given expected growth in traffic movement associated with regeneration projects in the Newport area.

It is the largest of a package of schemes designed to improve traffic flows through Newport, which have been financed largely by a government grant of £9.6 million, supplementing development contributions.

Other schemes within the overall Newport Strategic Junction Improvements, such as the new arrangements at St George's Way and Shide, have already been implemented, while others which will follow in the next three to five years — including the link between Coppins Bridge and the Matalan roundabout, which has also been given the go ahead — are still being planned.

Collectively these schemes, once completed, will transform the flow of traffic in and around Newport and accommodate the projected volumes of traffic expected in the emerging local plan.

The St Mary's junction scheme includes benefits for vehicular, pedestrian, cyclist

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and local bus traffic with new widened shared-use cycle/pedestrian facilities and the removal of the current roundabout which will be replaced with two linked traffic light-controlled junctions to improve traffic flow.

There will also be an additional lane introduced at the B&Q roundabout to ease congestion on the approach to and from the new junction.

It will also include widening of the northbound carriageway of Medina Way to accommodate two right-hand turn lanes to facilitate traffic turning onto the industrial estate. The road from Cowes into Newport will also be widened on the southbound side to ease congestion on the approach to the junction.

Works will also be implemented on Forest Road at the same time as SSE carry out planned high voltage cable upgrade works to help minimise future disruption for residents and the travelling public on this route.

The council is however advising road users that the work will cause disruption during some phases, particularly until motorists become accustomed to temporary traffic arrangements during construction.

Plans for the scheme have evolved over time with a significant number of changes being incorporated following feedback from the public consultation.

The signal-controlled junction is one such major change together with improvements to the B&Q roundabout and enhanced cycle and pedestrian links.

Since then the proposed scheme has undergone a further independent, external review to be absolutely certain that the scheme presents the best possible approach to the improvement of that key junction.

The project is the largest of its kind on the Island for many years, so the council is keen to give advance warning to motorists ahead of construction which is planned to begin on 30 September and be completed in December 2020.

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Construction will pause over the Christmas and New Year holiday and during the Isle of Wight Festival period next June. Work will take place during the day and at night when appropriate.

To support local businesses, the council will be offering free, weekend afternoon parking in its Newport town centre car parks in the run up to Christmas.

Meanwhile, Cowes floating bridge Saver Cards — which usually cost £2 — will also be available for free during the works, offering discounted travel on the crossing.

Further details of both schemes will be announced in due course.

Councillor Ian Ward, Cabinet member responsible for infrastructure and transport, said he was pleased the authority had secured government funding over and above the millions already secured to improve the network through the Highways Improvement Programme.

He said: “The St Mary’s junction scheme, the largest of the package of schemes under the Newport Strategic Junction Improvements, has been a complex scheme to put together as we have had to acquire some land in order to include features such as the shared use footway.

“We have also made significant changes to the scheme in response to suggestions made during the public consultation.

“We have been assured that a traffic-light controlled junction will have more capacity for vehicle movements than a roundabout.

“But we are now set to begin this major scheme to improve traffic flows both now and in the future at what is a notoriously busy junction. The project will also leave us better placed to unlock other regeneration schemes in this area.

“I am particularly pleased that the work will also bring about enhanced features

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not just for cars but also for local bus traffic, pedestrians and cyclists.”

David Evans, strategic manager for highways and transport added: “During construction there will be various temporary traffic arrangements so work can be undertaken as quickly and safely as possible.

“Traffic lanes will be reduced temporarily, and contraflows introduced as well as short-term speed reductions. Road users will inevitably experience delays and should allow additional time for their journeys.”

Recognising the impact on adjacent areas, double yellow lines will also be introduced to Manners View and Riverway for at least the duration of the scheme, to enable better access to the industrial estate.

Residents living near the works and stakeholders have received letters about the scheme and its implications and will continue to receive updates at each of the key phases during the works.

Discussions have also been held with emergency services and with St Mary’s Hospital and access to the hospital site will be maintained at all times. Special provision for emergency vehicles has also been included during the works.

A webpage on the homepage of [www.islandroads.com](http://www.islandroads.com) has also been created to give regular scheme updates and real-time information for motorists. Information will also be relayed via on-site information boards and via Twitter.

The work to improve the junction will be carried out by Island Roads.

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