

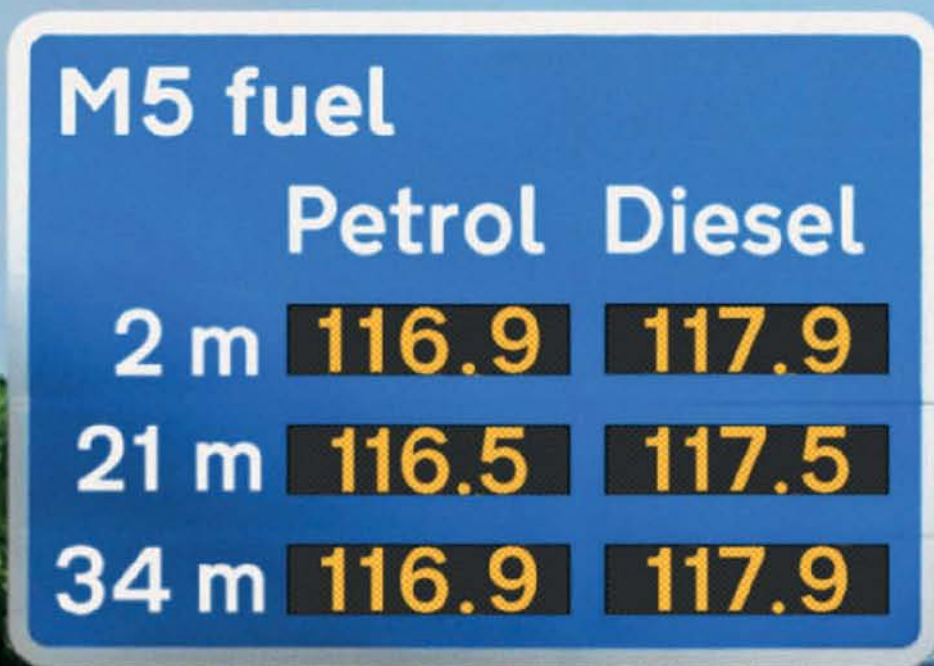
Fuel prices to be displayed on M5

Highways Magazine talks to Antony Atkins, Highways England's project manager for the fuel price indicator initiative



"Running out of fuel on motorways can be very hazardous"

Antony Atkins



Artist's impression of a fuel price trial sign

Why is Highways England planning to display fuel prices at the roadside?

We are committed to providing the best customer service we can to motorists who use our network. To improve the customer experience we are collaborating with companies that operate at motorway service areas to trial signing that will provide motorists with more information about fuel prices. The more information we can provide the more drivers can take control of their journeys.

Including motorway service station fuel prices on roadside signs is also really just an extension of changes made in 2011 that allowed companies to add their logos to signs displaying upcoming service areas. Just as you know of the branded catering and retail offers at your next stop you will now know how much it will cost you to re-fuel, making it easier to plan breaks in your journey. The collective priority of all organisations involved in the trial is to help drivers to be more informed so that they are more likely to take breaks frequently and reduce the likelihood of fatigue-related accidents.

How has the trial been developed?

We've assembled a tight working group involving Highways England and the participating organisations. Together, we've considered how to implement the technology needed to make the trial happen. We've also used the results of some initial research with road users to guide how the trial is promoted. Importantly, we don't want to pre-empt any results of the trial, so making the process as methodologically robust as possible is at the forefront of our minds.

As with any project, safety is paramount to us. That's why we'll continue to remind motorists to properly plan their journeys and ensure they have sufficient fuel. Running out of fuel on motorways can be very hazardous and we certainly wouldn't encourage anyone to keep driving if they were at risk of doing that. The idea is to provide improved roadside information that can assist drivers on their journey and increase the safety of all motorists on the network.

Motorway service area providers Moto, Shell and Welcome Break are participating in the trial. A spokesperson, on behalf of the companies involved, said:

"We're pleased to be working in partnership with Highways England. We have a mutual interest to improve the journey experience for our customers."

"The technology to link our fuel prices to the signage will be installed in our premises shortly and we are looking forward to supporting the evaluation of the trial and measuring its impact. This will include sharing important information with Highways England, including fuel sales data, which reflects our commitment to the trial."

"The working group has been very constructive and its been reassuring to see such good collaboration between the public and private sectors. This is enabling what is a fairly complex trial to move forward at a good pace."

When will the motorway fuel price signs be in operation?

From spring 2016 electronic message signs will show the price of standard unleaded and diesel fuel at Gordano, Sedgemoor, Bridgwater, Taunton Deane and Exeter motorway services areas along the southbound carriageway of the M5 on the stretch between Bristol and Exeter. We are really pleased the companies that operate these vital stop off points are on board, working closely with us in improving the customer experience and continuing to provide a range of high-quality, good-value services for road users.

Will the fuel price signs be installed on other motorways?

The trial will run to the end of 2017 and it aims to provide us with a better understanding of whether providing fuel price information at motorway service areas has an impact on driver behaviour, including the number of stops made at service areas, the number of fatigue and fuel related incidents and upon fuel prices. We're seeing how well it works for motorists using the M5 before considering rolling out the service across other parts of the motorway network. ➔