



Motorways of the Midlands



Can you imagine the responsibility of managing 830 miles of motorways and A roads in the West Midlands? Can you visualise the knock-on effect of making a mistake? Can you consider the barrage of complaints if anyone perceives that there is a problem?

Stephen and Philip Price came to give a talk about their work at the Highways Agency to

the Society on Friday 9th March.

Since 2015 Highways England has been the government-owned company charged with operating, maintaining and improving England's motorways and major A roads. It operates information services through the provision of on-road signage and its Traffic England website, provides traffic officers to deal with incidents on its network, and manages the delivery of improvement schemes to the network. Before 2015, it was called the Highways Agency.

There are seven regional control centres covering England and Philip and Stephen work at Longbridge near Warwick from which the West Midlands road network is managed. Minute by minute information is provided by over one thousand CCTV cameras, 18 mobile crews, automatic road detection monitors, radar and information from the public.

The mobile patrols who attend serious incidents replace most of the work previously done by Motorway Police although close liaison with the police and emergency services ensure a co-ordinated response where appropriate. HE patrols do not have powers of arrest, for example, and need to work with the police.

There are some six thousand incidents every month in the West Midlands which cover a wide range of problems including recovery operations, medical emergencies, animals on the road, weather, hard shoulder problems, distressed motorists and oncoming vehicles.

On each incident the flow of traffic has to be managed to prevent injury and ensure that there is a minimal effect on throughput. There are sophisticated hi-tec procedures in place to provide maximum advance notice to motorists and set up diversions if required.

Philip and Stephen said that a large number of incidents relate to lack of fuel - which are preventable. A considerable number of motorists do not have any accident and/or recovery insurance.



Many motorists do not take note of bad weather conditions and/or the fact that they might be stuck in a traffic jam for several hours. The moral of the talk was that, with some foresight and simple precautions, incidents could be minimised to the benefit of the individual and other road users.

Prior to the talk, Chairman Clive Hooper paid tribute to Dudley Brook who died on Saturday 3rd March. Over a fifty year life in Malvern, Dudley was involved in many aspects of the community, not least as Executive member, Chairman, President and, latterly, President Emeritus of the Society. His particular interest and expertise was in trees and he was the author of several books on trees in Priory Park and the Hills. Living in Abbey Road, he was a well known sight in the town and had a large circle of friends and contacts.

The meeting was well attended, and many members stayed behind afterwards to share a cup of coffee and biscuits.

The next meeting is on Friday 13th April starting at 7.30pm in the Eden Centre when there is a talk entitled 'Fine Cell Work'.

The Fine Cell Work team train offenders to do high-quality, creative needlework in their cells. The aim is that the work helps foster hope, discipline and employability. Those at the social enterprise want to help people to finish their sentences with skills, money earned and saved, and the self-belief that will help them avoid re-offending, as well as guiding them towards training and support on release.