

## Communications toolkit

### National Highways partnership with Hidden Disabilities Sunflower

At National Highways, we're committed to ensuring our disabled customers can travel safely on our roads.

For many disabled people our roads already provide the best travel option for them; enabling them to travel to work, go on holiday, or visit family and friends. However sometimes it isn't the obvious barriers that prevent people from travelling independently, it can be the hidden or unknown ones that cause the most difficulties. For some, the anxiety associated with breaking down on a high-speed road can be a barrier to them travelling alone or even making a journey at all.

That's why we've partnered with Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, helping people with non-visible disabilities feel more confident that they'll have the support they need if they break down or need assistance on our roads.

Through this partnership, we've created a Hidden Disabilities Sunflower that can be displayed on the rear of a vehicle. The Sunflower discreetly indicates that someone in the vehicle has an impairment which may not be visible. National Highways traffic officers routinely patrol all motorways and some sections of major A-roads in England and are often first on scene in an emergency. If a traffic officer sees the Sunflower on a vehicle, they'll ask about what support is needed to help keep the vehicle occupants safe.

This toolkit contains information about the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower for vehicles that you can use to engage with your customers, members and stakeholders about what it is and how to use it.

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### Key messages

- National Highways is committed to ensuring disabled people can travel safely on their roads
- The government-owned company, responsible for managing England's motorways and major A-roads, is helping people feel more confident that they'll have the help they need if they get into trouble on the road
- Not all disabilities are visible. The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower discreetly indicates that you have a non-visible disability and may need additional support, help or just a little more time
- National Highways has partnered with Hidden Disabilities Sunflower to create a free Sunflower which can be displayed on the rear of a vehicle

- Displaying the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower on your vehicle indicates that you, or someone you're travelling with, has a disability which may not be visible
- National Highways traffic officers routinely patrol all motorways and some sections of major A-roads in England and are often first on scene in an emergency
- If you break down or need assistance on a motorway or major A-road in England, a Hidden Disabilities Sunflower on your vehicle will signify to National Highways traffic officers that you may need additional support to help keep you safe
- Order a free Sunflower for your vehicle from the [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower store](#)

[This short video](#) explains how the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower for vehicles works. It can be downloaded from Vimeo to share on your channels.

## Press release

# On the road with Hidden Disabilities Sunflower and National Highways

The success of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard scheme is being rolled out to vehicles too, thanks to funding from National Highways that will help alert roadside and emergency services when additional support may be needed on England's roads.

The [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower](#) is widely recognised for helping people with non-visible disabilities get the support they need in the public domain. In a new partnership with National Highways, the iconic Sunflower can now be displayed on vehicles, enabling drivers and their passengers to let others know that they may need additional support, help or a little more time.

Paul Pengelly, a Sunflower wearer, commented on the new partnership:

"I have fibromyalgia along with anxiety and a personality disorder, which affects my general mobility. If a vehicle I'm travelling in is broken down or in an accident, exiting the vehicle quickly and safely would be difficult for me.

"My anxiety in such a situation would already be heightened, and without support I could become more distressed or agitated. Identifying my additional needs would be crucial to keeping everyone safe and preventing unnecessary distress or harm."

National Highways traffic officers routinely patrol all motorways and some sections of major A-roads in England and are often first on the scene in an emergency. Their priorities are to keep people safe and fully reopen the road as soon as possible. The Sunflower for vehicles discreetly indicates to traffic officers that someone in the vehicle has an impairment which may not be visible.

Paul explained: "Having the Sunflower on the back of my car informs National Highways traffic officers that they should ask me what extra support I might need so that they can do their job safely while making sure that no harm comes to me, the other occupants and passing traffic."



*Hidden Disabilities Sunflower wearer, Paul Pengelly can now also display the Sunflower on his vehicle thanks to new partnership with National Highways*

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower for vehicles is free to road users in England and can be ordered from the [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower store](#).



*The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower can be placed on the rear of a vehicle to indicate that a driver or passenger has a non-visible disability and may need additional support*

National Highways Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, Julian Horsler said:

“We want all road users to feel confident that they’ll get the help they need if they break down or need assistance on our roads.

“For many disabled people our roads already provide the best travel option for them; enabling them to travel to work, go on holiday and visit family and friends. However sometimes it isn’t the obvious barriers that prevent people from travelling independently, it can be the hidden or unknown ones that cause the most difficulties.

“To ensure our disabled customers can travel safely on our roads, we’ll continue to introduce new services, like the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower for vehicles, which break down barriers and help people feel in control of their journeys.”

Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Chief Executive Officer Paul White said:

“I’m thrilled that National Highways are supporting the Sunflower and people with non-visible disabilities on motorways and major A-roads in England.

“Our goal is for Sunflower wearers to be supported wherever they visit and however they choose to travel, and this partnership is another step closer to this goal.”

Damon Jowett, Head of Service Delivery at Green Flag, comments:

“We’re hugely supportive of this initiative. By displaying the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower on vehicles, it will mean our recovery network are made aware that there is potential additional needs and support required for the drivers and passengers we attend to. This initiative really helps us to ensure we provide the best level of service and can meet the requirements of all our Green Flag customers.”

The introduction of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower for vehicles is one of many new resources being rolled out by National Highways to make it easier for disabled people to travel confidently on England’s motorways and major A-roads.

Last year the government company launched a service to help Deaf people communicate with the organisation using British Sign Language through the video relay service, SignLive. And earlier this year the company published detailed access guides for all 114 motorways services in England to help disabled road users plan where to take a break at facilities that best meet their access needs.

**Ends**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

For further information about the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme visit the [website](#).

### **Any interview requests or further information contact:**

Media Relations Manager James Glover via [pressoffice@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:pressoffice@highwaysengland.co.uk).

For more information about the motorway service access guides see our [press release](#).

National Highways is the wholly government-owned company responsible for modernising, maintaining and operating England’s motorways and major A roads.

**Real-time traffic information for England’s** motorways and major A roads is available via its website ([www.trafficengland.com](http://www.trafficengland.com)), local and national radio travel bulletins, electronic road signs and mobile apps. Local Twitter services are also available at <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/highways-england-about-us/>.

## Social media

### Tagging:

Please tag National Highways when posting about the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower for vehicles on your social media channels:

Twitter: @NationalHways

Facebook: @NationalHways

Instagram: @nationalhighways

LinkedIn: @highways-england

### Hashtags:

Please include the following hashtags when posting about the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower for vehicles:

#BehindMyWheel

#OnTheRoad

## How to get involved

**We'd be delighted for you to help spread the word about the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower for vehicles. Please support us through your channels.**

To promote the Sunflower, you could:

- Tell your customers or members about it using your owned channels eg social media, website, newsletters. Share our content or create your own using the information provided in this toolkit
- Use your internal communication channels such as intranet or email to tell your colleagues about it
- Have a conversation with your customers, encouraging them to use the Sunflower if they feel they may need additional support if they breakdown on a motorway or major A-road in England

[This short video](#) explains how the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower for vehicles works. It can be downloaded from Vimeo to share on your channels.

## Q&A

### **Q: Who can display a Sunflower on their vehicle?**

A: Anyone with an impairment, hidden or visible, who may need additional support if they break down or need assistance on a motorway or major A-road in England can display the Sunflower on their vehicle.

### **Q: How do you order a Sunflower for your vehicle?**

A: The Sunflower can be ordered from the [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower store](#).

**Q: How much do they cost?**

A: Your first Sunflower is free when you order it from the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower store. If you need to order additional stickers or magnets, there is a small cost involved.

**Q: What if I have more than one vehicle?**

A: Another member of your household will need to open an account with the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower store to order a free Sunflower for the vehicle.

**Q: Where should I display the Sunflower on my vehicle?**

A: Display the Sunflower on the rear of your vehicle where it can be easily seen, in a position where it won't obscure your view.

The **Sunflower sticker** is designed to last at least three years when applied to your vehicle's rear window. It can be removed by applying a 70% alcohol solution (such as hand sanitiser). If applied to your vehicle's bodywork, it may cause discolouration.

The **Sunflower magnet** attaches to your vehicle's bodywork. You can choose to place the magnet on your vehicle when you set off and remove it for safekeeping at the end of your journey.

**Q: Does the Sunflower have to be displayed on someone's vehicle if they have a non-visible disability?**

A: No, it's up to the individual user whether they want to display the Sunflower on their vehicle. Having it displayed on their vehicle will prompt traffic officers to ask you about your needs if you get into trouble on a motorway or major A-road in England.

National Highways traffic officers also recognise the use of Sunflower seatbelt covers, as well as Sunflower lanyards and pin badges. These can be purchased from the [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower store](#).

**Q: Do you have to show evidence of an impairment to qualify for a Sunflower?**

A: There are no requirements to show evidence of impairment or any other qualifying criteria for the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower.

**Q: Will traffic officers tell anyone else about my Sunflower?**

A: With your consent, National Highways traffic officers will make sure that others on scene are also aware of any additional support you may need. This could include emergency services and breakdown providers.

**Q: Will the Sunflower be recognised on other roads not operated by National Highways?**

A: National Highways traffic officers have received training on what the Sunflower is for, what it signifies about the vehicle's occupants, and how to respond. While other road operators may be aware of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, they may not have received this training yet.

**Q: If I have a Sunflower on my vehicle, can I park in a disabled parking bay?**

A: Only Blue Badge holders can park in disabled parking bays. More information about the Blue Badge Scheme can be found [online](#).