Smart idea to keep fans on course for big golf date

TRAFFIC planners are taking an intelligent approach to ensure golf fans heading to the Ryder Cup don’t find themselves bunkered by congestion.

Thousands of spectators will flock to Gleneagles in Scotland later this month as Europe bid to retain the coveted trophy against the USA.

And organisers will use full matrix LED signs supplied by Mobile Traffic Solutions (MTS) to ensure the logistical operation runs smoothly.

Some of the traffic management around the Perthshire venue, as well as the routes to and from park and ride sites in Perth, Kinross and Stirling, are being handled by the AA.

They have followed a growing trend of using variable message units to provide information as well as controlling and directing traffic at major events.

A total of 17 portable Variable Message Signs (pVMS) will be used at strategic locations to keep congestion to a minimum – providing key directions and advanced information that can be changed at short notice.

Andrew Leigh, Area Sales Manager for MTS, says the portable Variable Message Signs produce a smart solution that’s both flexible and cost-effective for traffic managers.

He said: “The main concern at big events like the Ryder Cup is to keep the large volume of traffic that inevitably descends on the same place at the same time flowing freely while minimising the disruption caused to other road users going about their daily business.

“Highly visible LED signs provide strong directional information to road users.

“And the fact they can be changed at the flick of a switch means they can be used to provide advance warning of problems to prevent delays.

“They can also save money because, rather than deploying a dozen marshals to direct the public, event managers can now use one or two variable message signs to do the job.”

Each sign is fully compliant for use on highways or urban roads but compact enough to deploy in many different locations.

They are pre-programmed with up to 200 Highways Agency approved messages and pictograms, but creating bespoke messages with drop-down menus is simple.

And because they are capable of displaying the highest legibility in messages and graphics, they are particularly versatile.

MTS signs have played key a role at many major events, including the recent Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the London Olympics in 2012, along with football matches, concerts and conferences.

And Mr Leigh says more and more contractors are seeing intelligent traffic management as the way forward around sports stadia and other venues.

He added: “Our units have been shown to reduce congestion through their ability to react to conditions.
“By displaying specific information which can be easily updated, advance warnings can be provided for road users heading to and from events and delays can be minimised.

“Operators can input up-to-the-minute instructions, so the signs can play a pivotal role in making sure traffic is kept flowing as smoothly as possible just when demand is at its peak.

“The units are low maintenance and incredibly easy to operate. And because many use solar technology, they also deliver low running costs and are highly sustainable.”

Robert Trevethick, Event Traffic Solutions Manager for the AA, said: “The LED signs provided by MTS are a valuable tool that suit the requirements of this event perfectly.

“They complement signage provided by the AA, directing spectators and those connected with the event to specific venues along routes that have been selected to cause the minimum of congestion and disruption.

“The use of pVMS enables traffic managers to instantly and remotely change messages and will give us the ability to react to changing circumstances by providing information as well as direction as required.

“We’ve seen how well they worked on other big sporting events in the past and want to make sure spectators travelling to the Ryder Cup, as well as those who are going about their normal business, have a similarly congestion-free experience.”

Including practice days and the opening ceremony, the signs will be in situ from Tuesday, September 23 to the climax of the event on Sunday, September 28.

Europe, led by Paul McGinley, are hoping to retain the Cup following victories at Medinah in Illinois, USA in 2012 and Celtic Manor in Wales two years previously.

But they’ll have to overcome Tom Watson’s USA likely to feature big names such as Phil Mickelson and Masters champion Bubba Watson.