

# Policy paper: Communiqués from the Inter Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

A note of the meetings held by the Inter Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in 2019.

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## Government takes the first steps in a bus revolution

New low-fare, high-frequency 'Superbus' networks, Britain's first all-electric bus town, better information for passengers, and contactless payment on every city bus are announced today (30 September 2019) by the Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, in a major package of new measures to boost buses.

The package, worth £220 million in the first year, will see many cuts to services reversed. It will create 'express lanes' for buses in the West Midlands and elsewhere. It will invest in new ways of providing more frequent public transport in the countryside and other places where conventional buses have dwindled or disappeared. And new apps will also be developed that draw together information on bus routes, fares, and timetables from different bus operators across England into one place.

The government will also commit to the UK's first-ever long-term bus strategy and funding settlement, including support for local authorities who want to create London-style franchised services in their areas.

Superbus networks will have low fares and there will be more bus priority measures to speed up journeys and make them more reliable.

The first Superbus network will be introduced across the county of Cornwall. The fares pilot is part of a project which is improving the quality, frequency and capacity of rail and bus services to create an integrated public transport system for Cornwall.

Buses are disproportionately used by people on lower incomes and Cornwall has been chosen as a county with significant deprivation and social exclusion. For many people, the cost and difficulty of travel is a major barrier to getting work. The Superbus service will connect them with jobs, education and evenings out.

Other Superbus networks will be rolled out next year, with the focus on

places that suffer similar problems and where better public transport could significantly improve people's lives, and will consider improvements in frequency and bus prioritisation.

The package also includes over £20 million for new bus express lanes in the West Midlands to make their buses, which carry over one million people per day, faster and more reliable.

A further £30 million will be paid directly to local authorities in 2020 to 2021, to help them improve current bus services or restore those that have been lost.

Britain's first all-electric bus town will see an entire place's city buses changed over to wireless electric vehicles. Country buses will be hybrids, using electric power within the built-up area and diesel outside. Pollution and operating costs will be dramatically reduced. The location is still being discussed with local authorities and operators and will be announced later.

The long-term funding package will be announced as part of the 2020 spending review. It will set out our plans to support local authorities which want to pursue London-style bus systems in their areas. The area where such proposals are most advanced, is Greater Manchester, which is shortly due to consult on adopting a proposed franchised model in 2020. The package will also support other areas which would prefer to pursue other forms of co-ordination, such as voluntary or statutory partnerships with operators.

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## **News story: UK fisheries agreement signed with Norway**

UK and Norway have signed continuity agreement which enables UK vessels to continue fishing in Norwegian waters after 31 October.

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## **UK fisheries agreement signed with Norway**

UK and Norwegian governments have today (30 September 2019) signed an agreement to ensure UK fishermen can continue to access and catch fish in Norwegian waters after the UK leaves the EU on 31 October.

Currently the UK fleet fishes in Norwegian waters under an agreement between

the EU and Norway. When the UK leaves the EU and becomes an independent coastal state this current agreement will cease, however the agreement signed today ensures that the existing arrangements between the two countries will remain in place until the end of 2019.

Both the UK and Norway are committed to continuing to work together, providing certainty for their respective industries and managing shared fish stocks sustainably.

These arrangements will:

- honour the existing access arrangements agreed, in as far as they concern the UK and Norway
- ensure that appropriate licencing, control and enforcement provisions are in place, following the model agreed by the EU and Norway, to enable fishing opportunities to continue to be enjoyed by both the UK and Norway for the remainder of 2019
- honour the management decisions that were made with Norway for 2019 for North Sea stocks that are jointly managed
- honour the existing quota exchanges for 2019, and existing access arrangements between the two countries.

In further preparation for exit day, a new licensing authority – the Single Issuing Authority (SIA) – has also been set up jointly by the England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland administrations. This will ensure fishermen have the correct licences to fish legally after leaving the EU.

The SIA is calling on vessel owners in the over 12-metre fleet to ensure their vessel has an IMO number, which will be needed to fish outside UK waters when we leave the EU.

Owners of vessels are urged to [register now for an IMO number](#) from the International Maritime Organisation to enable the timely processing of the subsequent licensing documentation.

- The newly-signed arrangement will ensure continuity until end of 2019. Arrangements for 2020 onwards are currently being negotiated.
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