

# Scheme launched to help ex-offenders in Scotland get better employment support

Speaking on a visit to HM Prison Cornton Vale, Scotland's only all-female prison, Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd said:

The transition from life in prison to life back in work should be as seamless as possible. Getting ex-offenders back into work benefits the person, the economy and our wider society. And the earlier we get people speaking to jobcentre staff and supporting themselves back into work, the better.

Many people leaving prison don't have a job lined up or a strong support system around them, and this can push them to reoffend. The UK government is determined to deliver for Scotland and this commitment to Scottish ex-offenders does just that.

Amber Rudd also announced that working with the Scottish Prison Service the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will investigate how to best verify prisoner's identity and sign them up to start a new claim for Universal Credit so they are able to access finance once they leave prison.

Currently prisoners are unable to start a Universal Credit claim until they are released, and this can lead to delays in receiving support if they do not have proper identification documents, or are unable to get to the jobcentre to verify their identity.

Through the pilot, dedicated work coaches based in HMP Cornton Vale and HMP Perth will help prisoners fill in their benefit claims through restricted and supervised access to computers, and set them up with a jobcentre interview on the day they are released where they will be able to arrange a payment.

Work coaches will also help prisoners tackle other barriers to employment, supporting them to obtain IDs, prepare CVs and identify training, work experience and other employment support.

DWP and Scottish Prison Service are also exploring the use of prison documentation to verify people's identities, which is often a factor in the delay in receiving a Universal Credit payment.

Many prisoners face difficulties on release, and some of the biggest drivers of reoffending are failure to find work and stable housing. Latest statistics show that in Scotland one in 4 ex-offenders were reconvicted within 12 months of being released.

More than 186,000 people in Scotland are receiving Universal Credit, which

includes tailored employment support. It is helping record numbers of people into work, with on average 1,000 more people in the UK going into work every day since 2010.

Since 2010 the employment rate in Scotland has risen by 6.2 percentage points to 75.9%.

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## [£53 million line upgrade to help make midlands railways fit for the future](#)

- Rail Minister Andrew Jones sees £53.3 million of Market Harborough station improvements including longer platforms, creating more seats and improved journey times
- investment forms part of the government's £1.5 billion Midland Main Line upgrade – the biggest upgrade of the line since it was completed in 1870
- Rail Minister also meets Midlands Connect to receive Business Case for Midlands Rail Hub, targeted at boosting economy and delivering better journeys

Rail Minister Andrew Jones today (27 June 2019) celebrated significant progress towards delivering better journeys for rail passengers across the Midlands, as he visited upgrades worth more than £53 million at Market Harborough Station.

Passengers are already benefitting from improved accessibility thanks to the instillation of a new footbridge and new lifts. The station also now boasts 300 new car parking spaces, set to be extended to 500 by the end of the year.

The minister also saw progress being made on two extended platforms, enabling new, longer trains to run through the station and provide passengers with more seats. This follows the replacement and straightening of 4km of curved tracks, improving speeds and journey times.

The Rail Minister also met with Midlands Connect, the sub-national transport body for the region, to receive their strategic outline business case for the Midlands Rail Hub. Supported by £5 million of funding from the Department for Transport, the proposal aims to enable more East-West train services across the region, creating space for 6 million more journeys a year and supporting an extra £649 million of growth.

Rail Minister Andrew Jones, said:

The transformative upgrade of the Midland Line is coming to life, focused on delivering significantly better journeys for rail passengers right across the region.

Through key upgrades at stations like Market Harborough, the arrival of a new fleet with more seats, and trials of innovative hydrogen-fuelled trains, we are creating a railway that is fit for the future.

The Midlands Rail Hub also has huge potential to future proof the region's railway by significantly increasing capacity on the network. I am delighted to receive these proposals, which we will now consider closely.

Midlands Connect Chair Sir John Peace, said:

The Midlands Rail Hub is a cost-effective, evidence-led plan to upgrade our infrastructure to meet the demands of the future. These proposals capture the enormous economic potential of the Midlands, with 320,000 new jobs estimated by 2030, mainly in professional services firms who depend on good rail connectivity to attract skilled workers.

This investment must happen alongside delivering HS2 in its entirety, from the West Midlands to the East Midlands and on to the north of England, and I look forward to working with the government as they consider our proposals.

Gavin Crook, Principal Programme Sponsor for Network Rail, said:

The work at Market Harborough is a vital stage of the Midland Main Line Upgrade, which will improve journeys for all passengers using the route.

The project has seen the line through the station straightened, which will enable trains to travel at higher speeds. Work has also taken place to install a new accessible footbridge, which will open up travel opportunities for more passengers. We are also lengthening platforms at the station which will allow longer trains with more seats to call there.

We continue to work at Market Harborough station on the creation of 200 additional car parking spaces and to complete the platform lengthening work, which will bring further benefits.

The upgrades at Market Harborough form part of a £1.5 billion investment into the Midland Main Line, targeted at creating more seats and reducing environmental impacts between Sheffield, Nottingham and London – opening new

opportunities for businesses, jobs, education and housing.

The improvements to Market Harborough station follow a recent £200 million upgrade to Derby station in 2018 to improve signalling and infrastructure, and a brand new accessible station delivered in Ikeston. Two further stations – Retford and Alfreton Parkway in the East Midlands – are also set to receive station improvements in the next 5 years.

The government also recently announced that Abellio will operate the next East Midlands Railway franchise, entirely replacing the existing intercity fleet with more reliable and comfortable trains.

Passengers will see an 80% increase in the number of peak morning seats into Nottingham, Lincoln and St Pancras, improved delay repay compensation and trials of hydrogen fuel cell trains.

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## Government plan to make private level crossings safer

Improved signage to protect motorists and pedestrians using private level crossings could be introduced under plans announced today (27 July 2019).

Private level crossings are intersections where a railway crosses a road or footpath on private land. The gates often need to be operated manually with some crossings requiring users to telephone a signaller to check that it is safe to cross.

To improve safety at these crossings, the Department for Transport has worked closely with Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and Network Rail to revise and make improvements to the signage used.

New designs have been tested at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire since August 2018. The government now intends to introduce legislation to the Private Crossings (Signs and Barriers) Regulations 1996 which would see these new designs brought onto the network next year.

Rail Minister, Andrew Jones, said:

The safety of everyone using our rail network is always our priority.

Private level crossings represent a particular area of risk on our network, so it is vital that we update decade-old signs to ensure they are simple and safe for users.

We will continue to work with the industry to test these new signs

and ensure our rail network remains one of the safest in the world.

There are around 2,500 private crossings in the UK, representing more than a third of all level crossings on the network.

In August 2018, the RAIB published a report on its investigation into a fatal collision involving a high-speed train and a delivery van at a private crossing at a farm in Teynham, Kent, in October 2017. This report recommended that the government should review and revise signs at private crossings so that they clearly and unambiguously convey information and instructions on how to use the crossings correctly.

Many of these crossings were created with the rapid growth of the railways in the Victorian era to maintain access for private landowners, such as farmers. In recent years the profile of users has diversified significantly, and now includes couriers, delivery drivers and members of the public, many of whom are unfamiliar with how to use these types of level crossing safely.

The technology available to the rail industry to manage level crossings and enhance protection has also developed in recent years, such as through technical advances in miniature stop lights. The signage at crossings has not developed at the same rate, presenting a safety risk to members of the public, with more trains running than ever before.

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## Gove appoints Dimbleby to pioneer 'farm to fork' revolution

[Henry Dimbleby](#) – co-founder of restaurant chain Leon and of the Sustainable Restaurant Association – has been appointed by Environment Secretary Michael Gove to lead the first major review of the UK food system in nearly 75 years.

He will investigate the entire food system, from field to fork, and consider what changes are needed to ensure that it:

- Delivers safe, healthy, affordable food, regardless of where people live or how much they earn;
- Is robust in the face of future shocks;
- Restores and enhances the natural environment for the next generation;
- Is built upon a resilient and sustainable agriculture sector;
- Is a thriving contributor to our urban and rural economies, delivering well paid jobs and supporting innovative producers and manufacturers;
- Does all of this in an efficient and cost-effective way.
- His recommendations will result in a trailblazing new National Food Strategy, set to be published in 2020.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Leaving the EU is a great opportunity for British farmers and food producers. But with an expanding population, the urgent threat of climate change and rising levels of diet-related disease, we face many challenges too.

That is why the time is right for us to look afresh at our food system to ensure everyone has access to high-quality British food and our environment is protected for future generations.

I am delighted that Henry Dimbleby will be leading this once-in-a-generation opportunity to cultivate a stronger food system for the future.

Henry Dimbleby said:

No part of our economy matters more than food. It is vital to life and shapes our sense of identity.

But there are urgent challenges with which we must grapple. Populations are growing, diet-related conditions are harming the lives of millions, and climate change is altering what our land will yield.

From farmers in the field to chefs in the kitchen, over the next year I'll be speaking with people from across the food chain to address these challenges and ensure everyone has a say in shaping the future.

NFU President Minette Batters said:

I am very pleased to see that the Government is taking food production seriously and putting plans in place for a national food strategy – this review is long overdue.

It is crucial that this strategy delivers for everyone – from food producers to families across the country, regardless of their income. Safe, traceable, affordable food that is produced to high standards of animal welfare and environmental protection is a right for all and British farmers should be the number one supplier of this.

The NFU has done some early work with Henry Dimbleby on what a food strategy can look like and I am delighted that he has included much of this in his framework. We are looking forward to working with his review to deliver a food system that is fair for all.

Chief Executive of the Food and Drink Federation, Ian Wright CBE, said:

Over the last 70 years we have begun to take for granted that there will be food on our table, yet in truth our food and drink industry is a strategic national asset to be protected. It is central to the economic success and cultural fabric of our country and the UK's largest manufacturing sector. Its contribution to our future growth, prosperity and sustainability is vital.

So we applaud Michael Gove's bold commitment to create a national Food Strategy for England, and embed a holistic approach to policymaking across food and drink. We look forward to working with Henry Dimbleby and his team across the UK Government on these important themes, building on the proposals put forward in our recent Plan for Success.

Director General of the British Nutrition Foundation, Professor Judy Buttriss, said:

This important initiative provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to look at food, nutrition and the environment in the round, through multiple lenses.

Good nutrition is as much about eating more of some things as it is about cutting back on others. The integrated message of variety, balance and nutrient density – making every calorie count – needs to be reflected in food production right through to what we teach children in school.

Chief Executive of the Sustain food and farming alliance, and advisor to the Sustainable Food Cities network, Kath Dalmeny, said:

A National Food Strategy could play a pivotal role in delivering sustainably produced and healthy food for everyone, as well as better livelihoods in food production. It could also support the transition to environmentally friendly farming and fishing that are now imperative.

We are excited about the ideas, collaboration and optimism that the Food Strategy has already started to generate and look forward to taking part.

Industry Co-Chair of the Food and Drink Sector Council, Iain Ferguson, said:

The future success of the UK food and farming industry is vital for the economy and the health of the nation. I welcome this review by Henry Dimbleby, and as a Sector Council we look forward to working

with Henry and the DEFRA team and playing our part in ensuring the UK has a sustainable, innovative and resilient food system for generations to come.

A formal call for evidence will be held shortly to seek views from all those who have a vested interest in the future of our food.

The National Food Strategy will build on the Government's flagship [Agriculture Bill](#) and [Fisheries Bill](#) currently before Parliament, alongside the Industrial Strategy, the Childhood Obesity Strategy and the upcoming [Environment Bill](#) which will address the greatest environmental challenges of our age.

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