

# Speech: Melanie Hopkins' Remarks at the launch of the Fiji Electrification Trust Fund

I am delighted to be here today to launch Phase 1 of the Fiji Rural Electrification Trust Fund. This is an important week for the country as you host the Annual General Meeting of the ADB, bringing countries from right across Asia to see the front-line climate challenges faced by Pacific countries. During such a high level week, it is all the more important to take time out to visit a smaller island to understand first-hand the challenges faced at community level.

The United Kingdom is serious about the need to tackle climate change and is one of the world's largest funders of international climate finance. The UK has committed over £5.8bn from 2016-2020 on international climate finance.

Fiji also takes a leading role on climate change. When HRH Prince Harry Duke of Sussex visited Fiji last year, he said "We look to Fiji to provide leadership on environmental issues which affect all of us, and that have been affecting you as an island nation for many, many years.

Fiji took on the role of COP23 Presidency in 2017. This was a major area of international leadership at a critical moment. Fiji took on this highly challenging role on behalf of the international community and I'd like to commend the Government for this leadership. The British Government was keen to support Fiji in this and provided over FJD 4.5 million. This not only met the very immediate support needed to assist the COP23 Presidency but enabled more schoolchildren and rural communities to become more involved in the climate debate. As an official COP23 legacy initiative, we were also very pleased to respond to the Government's request to support the FREF and look forward to seeing this very sustainable programme grow. The UK has offered to host COP26 in 2020, which will be a pivotal moment to take stock of global ambition and prepare the world for further action.

The real debate on how to grow sustainably and how we use the planet's resource must begin at home. In the UK, we are proud of our Climate Change Act, which has just celebrated its 10th birthday. Since 1990, we have reduced our emissions by 42% whilst growing our economy by 72%. I commend the increased focus that the Government has placed on climate and oceans, including leading the Ocean and Climate Change Action Group of the Commonwealth Blue Charter, and working towards a plastics free Fiji. It is inspiring to see that today's solution has been based on solar technology, enabling Fiji to move towards a clean, green future.

If we want to achieve real change in tackling climate, innovative partnerships and grass-roots collaboration will be key. We are proud to work with a variety of actors, including academics, businesses, students and civil society, on our Talanoa Dialogue. I was delighted to learn of the involvement

of Viti Renewables, community NGOs and support from the Leonardo di Caprio Foundation in this project. I hope very much that this model of grass-roots involvement can be further developed in the future.

In closing, I would like to express my very best wishes to the community of Vio Island and hope that this helps improve the standard of living for this generation and generations to come.

Vinaka Vakalevu

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## **Press release: Highways England unveils self-driving trucks set to speed up roadworks**

Self-driving trucks which could help speed up roadworks are being tested for the first time in England on the UK's biggest road upgrade.

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## **News story: Cash here to stay as government commits to protecting access**

The future of cash will be protected under plans set out today (Friday 3 May), which will ensure the British public continues to have choice over how they spend their money.

The Chancellor, Philip Hammond, will announce plans to help safeguard access to cash by establishing a new group chaired by the Treasury. Bringing together regulators and the Bank of England, the group will set strategy, coordinate work to support nationwide access and help safeguard cash for those who need it.

The announcement will be made during the Verdict of the Pyx ceremony in London, part of a longstanding coin-checking custom dating back to the 12th Century. During his speech the Chancellor will also reiterate that there will be no changes to current coins and notes, with all denominations – from the penny to the £50 note – staying in circulation.

This will complement work to support digital payment methods – including on

broadband coverage and open banking – which continue to revolutionise and expand the ways people manage their money.

The Chancellor, Philip Hammond, said:

Technology has transformed banking for millions of people, making it easier and quicker to carry out financial transactions and pay for services.

But it's also clear that many people still rely on cash and I want the public to have choice over how they spend their money.

I'm also setting up a group which brings together the Treasury, Bank of England and the regulators to safeguard the future of cash and ensure its availability for years to come.

Natalie Ceeney CBE, Chair of the Access to Cash review, said:

Cash use is falling rapidly, but digital payments don't yet work for everyone. We need to safeguard the use of cash for those who need it, and at the same time work hard to ensure that everyone can participate in the digital economy.

If we sleepwalk into a cashless society, millions of people will be left behind. I'm delighted to see the Government taking a leadership role on this critical issue – and look forward to seeing action as a result.

The move comes as the Treasury publishes its response to the cash and digital payments call for evidence. The findings show that while the use of cash has declined in recent years, with a rise in digital payment methods, it remains a dominant form of paying for goods for many people across the country.

It is estimated that around 2.2 million people in the UK are still reliant on cash, with the elderly, vulnerable and those in rural communities likely to be hardest hit by a decline.

To make sure cash continues to be available to those who need it, the Government will:

- establish the new Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group (JACS) – chaired by the Treasury and bringing together the regulators and Bank of England – to provide comprehensive oversight of the UK's cash system
- support the Bank of England's work to develop a new wholesale cash distribution system to ensure cash is being distributed as needed across the country

- develop a new coin checking and validation framework to remove counterfeits from circulation and stop them from ending up in people's pockets
- reiterate that there are no plans to alter the make-up of coins or notes and that current cash denominations will continue in its current form
- continue to support new digital methods of payment while safeguarding access to cash for those who need it Launched at the 2018 Spring Statement, the call for evidence response is part of ongoing work to modernise UK currency, which includes the previously introduced new £1 coin and polymer banknotes

Today's announcement builds on work to ensure cash remains accessible for those who need it. This includes investing over £2 billion since 2010 in the Post Office network to support customers in accessing banking services. Currently, 99 per cent of personal customers and 95 per cent of small business customers can carry out their everyday banking locally at one of the Post Office's 11,500 branches.

As well as this, LINK – the UK's largest cash machine network – has committed to replace closed ATMs in rural or remote areas when there is no free ATM within 1 kilometre or Post Office branch available. LINK has also recently implemented new 'super premiums' to further safeguard free-to-use ATMs in remote and deprived areas.

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## **Press release: Highways England unveils self-driving trucks set to speed up roadworks**

The dump trucks, which move huge amounts of earth, have the potential to work around the clock, so could help reduce the length of time roadworks are on the ground.

And by being autonomous they reduce the risk of road workers being involved in incidents on site.

Previously tried and tested in Australia, the concept is now being trialled on Highways England's improvement of the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon.

Deputy Project Director on behalf of Highways England for the A14 Julian Lamb said:

We're increasingly looking to technological advances to help us safely bring improvements to drivers on England's motorways and major A roads.

Road construction has changed massively over the years and the testing of trucks such as these promises to allow us to work efficiently, speeding up roadworks, giving more protection to road workers, and moving jobs to other skilled areas.

The trial we are leading with our partner CA Blackwell will enable the construction industry as a whole to be in a more informed position to make key decisions about autonomy on UK construction sites.

Dump trucks are used to transport excavated soil to fill large areas on construction sites.

One autonomous dump truck is being tested in a controlled environment on the A14 scheme. The truck is programmed remotely to follow a pre-determined route and has the capability to detect and avoid obstacles, other vehicles and the like, along the route as it drives.

Highways England has committed £150,000 from its innovation designated fund into the A14 dump truck trial.

The designated funds provide protected money that enable Highways England to provide environmental, social and economic benefits to the people, communities and business alongside the Strategic Road Network both now and in the future.

Niall Fraser, Director of earthworks services supplier CA Blackwell, said:

We are delighted to have received the backing of Highways England and their Designated Funds grant for this trial and are grateful for the support and commitment of our technology providers in making it a reality.

Once testing is complete, Highways England hopes to adopt the technology to modernise UK construction sites.

It is expected to be another two or three years before autonomous dump trucks are in full operation.

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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## **[News story: BEQ calls for bids for its Bilateral Cooperation Fund 2019-20](#)**

The British Embassy Quito (BEQ) is currently accepting proposals for innovative projects, with concrete objectives and measurable policy outcomes.