

Press release: EU Expert Panel meets in Cardiff

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Alun Cairns will gather representatives from the business, local authorities, agriculture and third sectors in Wales at Caspian Point to discuss their priorities for Brexit and to update them on negotiations following the completion of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act's passage through Parliament.

The meeting comes in the week that the UK Government introduced its Fisheries Bill which, when combined with our withdrawal from the London Fisheries Convention, will allow us to control access to UK waters and the allocation of fishing opportunities. This will help provide prosperity for a new generation of fishermen in Wales, as well as preserve and increase the fish stocks in UK waters.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

It is vital that we have open and honest conversations about what Wales – and the UK as a whole – should look like after our exit from the European Union. This includes discussing the challenges that we may face along the way, and the opportunities that await us at the finish line.

Since the Expert Panel last convened, we have seen the EU Withdrawal Act complete its Parliamentary journey, paving the way to ensuring the UK exits the EU with certainty, continuity and control. We have also hosted the first joint EU Exit meeting with the Welsh Government where representatives of the fishing, farming and business industry gathered to examine issues including how returning powers should be exercised in future.

As we move through the various stages of negotiations, we will go on hearing from these important partners, to ensure that our discussions are informed by the views of every region of the UK, and each sector of our economy.

The Secretary of State for Wales established the Expert Panel to work with him to deliver a smooth and orderly exit from the EU in Wales. The meeting today builds on the constructive conversations they have already had, helping to contribute to the UK's negotiating position.

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[Press release: 100 miles of extra lanes coming to North West motorways](#)

Four new smart motorway schemes, worth around £500 million, are due to start construction work within the next 18 months.

Contractors for Highways England will begin work on the first one later this summer – on a 9 mile stretch of the M62 which links the M6 near Warrington to the M60 near Eccles.

Drivers have already been able to use over 10 miles of extra lanes on the M62 near Rochdale since December last year, and a stretch of smart motorway has also been completed on the M60 near the Trafford Centre.

The final temporary narrow lanes were removed earlier this week on the Manchester smart motorway scheme, and more than 200 electronic signs are due to be switched on later this month on a 9 mile stretch of the M60 between Trafford Park and the M62/M66 interchange at Simister Island.

Mike Bull, Highways England's smart motorways programme manager for the North, said:

Smart motorways have been proven to be effective at tackling congestion, with the smart motorway on the M62 in West Yorkshire saving commuters an average of 30 minutes each week.

We'll be starting work on four new smart motorways in the North West over the next 18 months and will do everything we can to keep disruption to a minimum, including only closing parts of the motorway overnight when traffic levels are much lower.

The North West's new smart motorway routes will provide over 100 miles of extra lanes benefiting the hundreds of thousands of drivers who use our motorways every day for commuting, business and leisure.

Drivers can find out more about the work being carried out to complete the Manchester smart motorway upgrade in a new video:

[Manchester smart motorway nears completion](#)

Smart motorways use the latest technology to monitor traffic levels so that variable speed limits can be automatically set on overhead electronic signs to keep traffic moving at a steady speed.

The hard shoulders on each new smart motorway route will be converted into

permanent extra lanes and new emergency areas will be created for drivers to use if they break down.

New CCTV cameras will also provide 100% coverage of the routes and Highways England will be able to display red Xs on overhead signs to close any lane, allowing its traffic officers and the emergency services to get through.

Construction work will begin on a 3-mile stretch of the M62 near junction 12 this summer. Temporary narrow lanes will be introduced to allow contractors to work at the side of the motorway, and a 50mph speed limit will be needed for the safety of drivers and workers.

The roadworks will be gradually extended to junction 10 by the autumn and the smart motorway scheme is due to be completed by spring 2020.

Variable speed limits will also be introduced between junctions 10 and 18 on the M60 later this summer when the remaining section of the North West's first smart motorway goes live. The speed limit will remain at 50mph until then while the new technology is being fine-tuned.

Overnight resurfacing work will continue into the autumn on parts of the M60 once the smart motorway is operational. This work will take place at night so that the route can remain fully open with no impact on drivers during the day.

Other schemes taking place in the North West include a 20-mile-stretch of smart motorway on the M6 in Cheshire where construction work is due to be completed by spring 2019, providing 40 miles of extra lanes for drivers.

Work will start in spring 2019 on a 4-mile smart motorway on the M56 near Manchester Airport, and on a 10-mile stretch of smart motorway on the part of the M6 which links the M62 near Warrington to the M58 near Skelmersdale.

Finally, a new 19-mile smart motorway will be created over the Pennines on the M62 between Rochdale and Brighouse. The route will link up with other schemes on the M62 to create almost 60 miles of smart motorway between the North West and Yorkshire, with construction work due to start in autumn 2019.

Find out more details about [driving on a smart motorway](#).

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.

Press release: 'Bytes and Mortar' construction revolution to build 50% quicker

- new joint government-industry Sector Deal worth £420 million to transform construction through innovative technologies to increase productivity and build new homes quicker with less disruption
- 'bytes and mortar' revolution to use digital design and offsite manufacturing to transform building construction
- landmark deal will boost the delivery of government's ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes by 2022
- deal will support Clean Growth Grand Challenge mission to halve the energy use of new builds by 2030, helping families reduce their utility bills

An ambitious new partnership between the government and the construction industry, will be announced today (Thursday 5 July 2018) by the Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark, in a speech to the Northern Powerhouse Summit in Newcastle.

With almost half of the economy reliant on the built environment and the services it enables, the government is bringing together the construction, manufacturing, energy and digital sectors to deliver innovative approaches that improve productivity in construction and accelerate a shift to building safer, healthier and more affordable places to live and learn that use less energy.

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark said:

The construction industry is fundamental to growing our economy as we build to invest in our future. Major infrastructure projects like HS2 and the commitment to deliver 1.5 million homes by 2022 mean that we need a construction sector that can drive innovation, delivering homes and infrastructure quicker.

As buildings account for around 30% of total emissions, we also want to ensure that we are at the global forefront in designing and building smart, energy efficient and affordable homes and buildings through the Clean Growth Grand Challenge, saving families money on their bills.

This Sector Deal is supported by the biggest government investment in construction for at least a decade and will drive economic growth and create well-paid highly-skilled jobs in every part of the UK.

Andrew Wolstenholme, Co-Chair of the Construction Leadership Council said:

Securing this deal sends out a statement about the vital contribution our sector makes to the country. Our industry builds the schools to educate the young, the hospitals to care for the sick, the police stations to keep us safe, the roads and railways that get us to work, the power stations that keep us warm and the homes we return to each day.

We are an industry that must be at the forefront of the UK's drive for future growth and prosperity – and I'm confident that this deal will help to achieve that.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

British firms are at the forefront of innovation in the construction and infrastructure sector and the government's new Sector Deal will ensure that even more of our businesses have the confidence to do business in overseas countries.

With the global infrastructure market estimated to be worth \$57 trillion by 2030, the opportunities are clearly there for our companies. That is why DIT, through our network of HM Trade Commissioners, Officials and GREAT.gov.uk, will work to identify these opportunities and provide advice to overseas businesses who may want to invest in the UK.

The Construction Sector Deal will deliver:

- £420 million investment in 'bytes and mortar smart construction' – investment will transform construction through use of digital building design, new manufacturing technologies and offsite manufacturing helping cut the time taken to deliver new build by 50%
- cheaper energy bills for families and businesses – support Industrial Strategy mission to halve the energy use of new builds by 2030
- 25,000 construction apprenticeship starts and 1,000 Construction T Level placements by 2020 to help give young people the skills that industry needs – with £34m to scale up innovative training models across the country
- \$2.5 trillion of global exports – a globally-competitive sector targeting the growing international infrastructure market that is set to grow by 70% in the years ahead

Smart construction

The £420 million joint investment aims to transform construction productivity by driving the development of new innovative construction materials and techniques which will speed up building time, reduce disruption and ensure the homes, workplaces and public buildings of the future are more energy efficient. The deal will support the development of affordable, easy to construct homes, schools and other buildings which can be quickly and

sustainably manufactured offsite, then assembled where and when needed.

Helping families save money

As buildings account for around 30% of the UK's emissions, this Sector Deal will also help put the UK at the forefront of the global clean growth shift towards cleaner, more efficient construction. The government's Buildings Mission announced by the Prime Minister as part of the [Clean Growth Grand Challenge](#), set the objective of at least halving the energy use of new buildings by 2030, helping families to save money on their bills and making the UK a leader in the move to clean, green sustainable construction.

Future construction skills

As part of the deal, the government will work with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) to ensure a strategic focus on future skills needs and increase significantly the number of approved apprenticeships standards. With a third of the industry's 3 million workers aged over 50, the Construction Sector Deal includes £34 million for expanding innovative construction training programmes across the country to up-skill the existing workforce and a commitment to increase the number of apprenticeship starts to 25,000 by 2020. Government will work with industry to prepare for implementation of new construction T Levels by supporting the sector to offer high quality construction industry placements. There will also be a single industry portal to support construction careers based on Go Construct.

Industrial Strategy

The government's modern [Industrial Strategy](#) sets out how the government is building an economy fit for the future, and how we will help businesses create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure. Underpinning the strategy are four [Grand Challenges](#) reflecting global trends that will shape the future and represent industries where the UK has an edge: artificial intelligence and the data economy; clean growth; healthy ageing; and the future of mobility. Today's investment forms part of the Clean Growth Grand Challenge, with the Transforming Construction investment supporting low-carbon approaches to housing.

Notes to editors

The construction sector, including the supply chain and professional services, had a turnover of £370 billion in 2016 and employed around 3.1 million workers, or around 9% of the UK workforce. The sector also exported over £8 billion of products and services. Increasing construction productivity would have a significant economic impact. Industry will be contributing up to £250 million, catalysed by a £170 million injection from government through the [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#).

[Press release: Welsh Secretary honours NHS' Welsh roots on its 70th anniversary](#)

The story of the NHS is a story of British talent and British ambition with some very Welsh roots, Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said today as the service celebrates its 70th anniversary (Thursday 5 June).

Aneurin Bevan, from Tredegar became the driving force behind the establishment of the National Health Service as Health Minister in 1948. Since that moment, the principle of healthcare free at the point of delivery based on need, not wealth, has become firmly embedded into our national life.

Speaking ahead of the milestone, Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns said:

Wales has a long and proud association with the NHS and today we celebrate one of the greatest gifts that a Welshman has given our nation.

Since then, the nature of the service has evolved to tackle some of the greatest challenges to our health, making it the world-leading lifeline it is today.

The UK Government recognises the enormous importance this service has, not only to the health of our population, but also as a major employer to 78,000 people in Wales. That is why the Prime Minister recently announced an extra £20 billion a year by 2023/24 for health services in England, resulting in a £1.2 billion funding boost for the Welsh Government to spend on health services.

Today, on its 70th birthday, we salute the consultants, doctors, GPs, nurses, healthcare assistants, porters, cleaners, receptionists and managers who touch the lives of people right across the country, consistently rising to challenges and exceeding expectations of what is possible. A very happy anniversary to the great national institution.

Mr Cairns will recognise the valuable and important contribution of medical professionals from overseas at a British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO) Wales event on Saturday (14 June).

BAPIO provides a forum for a diverse group of doctors, dentists and medical and dental students of Indian heritage, with the aim of delivering

professional excellence in patient care.

In his speech the Welsh Secretary will thank medical staff from around the world for their tireless efforts to improve the health of the Welsh population.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Every minute of every day there are medical professionals from around the globe working in our hospitals to save lives and drive up standards of patient care.

These people are the unsung heroes within our health service, whose experience and knowledge has always been welcomed here with open arms.

As we celebrate this significant milestone within our health service, I would like to thank BAPIO for its crucial role in recruiting doctors over the last 20 years, saving thousands of pounds in locum costs for the NHS every year.

The event comes as the UK Government announced plans for doctors and nurses to be excluded from the cap on skilled worker visas, meaning no restrictions placed on the number of medical professionals employed through the Tier 2 visa route.

The UK Government has also announced plans for EU citizens who arrive before the end of 2020 to apply for their settled status. The scheme will be phased in later this year, and opened more widely until its full launch by March 2019.