

# Press release: Investment Minister opens new Steel & Alloy factory

Steel & Alloy's new £27 million Popes Lane manufacturing site in Oldbury has been opened by the UK's Minister for Investment Graham Stuart.

The new site provides another boost to the area with an initial 60 jobs being created, a number that could double based on further development at the site.

Popes Lane is situated at the heart of the Midlands' motor industry, with products rolling off the assembly line destined for the likes of JLR, Honda and Nissan, and is seen by ministers as a strong vote of confidence in the region as the UK departs the European Union.

The new factory offers further good news for the Midlands, which attracted 225 FDI projects last year, creating more than 8,300 new jobs.

Minister for Investment, Graham Stuart, said:

A thriving Midlands Engine is essential to our national economic success and it is fantastic to see foreign investment boosting a long-standing UK company here in the Black Country.

The Midlands sits at the heart of the UK with key transport links as the M1, M6 and West Coast Mainline running through it. The Department for International Trade was set up by Theresa May to boost export, promote investment and reduce barriers to trade.

As an international economic department, we will continue to use our sector specialists, regional exporters and staff in 108 countries to attract investment to the Midlands and support higher growth and better paying jobs.

Steel and Alloy Managing Director, Mark Cooper, said:

The significant investment in Popes Lane, a state of the art steel processing centre, is an investment in the future of the automotive Industry in the Midlands. This will allow Steel & Alloy to meet the ever-changing needs of our customers and the industry as a whole for years to come.

Sandwell Council leader Councillor Steve Eling said it was an important day for Sandwell when Steel & Alloy acquired the site for such a significant development.

He said:

It is encouraging to see such an important development in Oldbury and we welcome the investment and new jobs the highly-successful company brings to the borough.

It is further confirmation that Sandwell and the Black Country remains at the heart of quality UK manufacturing.

Sandwell welcomes businesses wishing to expand and grow and we offer whatever assistance we can to assist them to invest in our borough.

We were able to support Steel & Alloy through the Growth and Spatial Planning Team and we are delighted that they have been able to construct a new modern factory in our area.

Popes Lane is the latest in a series of 40 global sites developed by Gonvarri Steel Services, the group which Steel and Alloy is a part of, that are strategically located close to the automotive industry which relies on the group's products.

The government sees the [Midlands Engine](#) as a key driver of the UK economy, with the more than 775,000 businesses accounting for 21.6% of all England's exports in 2016.

In the 2015 Autumn Statement £5 million was set aside over 4 years for trade and investment promotion in the Midlands Engine.

## **Activities**

- The Midlands Engine investment hub in Birmingham was launched in March 2017 and runs until 31 March 2019. Its priority is developing an FDI offer for the region, focusing on capital investment opportunities and particular sectors.
- Local partners have been supported to create sector-based investment offers and attend events to promote the most significant sectors in the Midlands: automotive, rail, life sciences, cyber security, advanced materials, and tech.
- Local partners have also been supported to exhibit at the MIPIM property show in Cannes on a pan-Midlands basis. In March 2018, the Midlands Pavilion was used to launch DIT's updated [Midlands Engine investment portfolio](#) showcasing 24 projects worth over £11 billion.
- Trade missions for Midlands businesses in key sectors have taken place to China (2), USA (2), Germany, UAE and Ireland. Further Midlands trade missions are being planned to USA (Boston & Maryland), Japan, Germany, China, UAE (Dubai) and India.
- A specific Midlands Engine China engagement strategy (covering both Trade and Investment) has been created.
- A network of Export Champions has been created – Midlands business leaders who have a track record of export success.

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# Press release: £5 billion investment by water companies to benefit the natural environment

The Environment Secretary Michael Gove has challenged water companies to increase investment and improve environmental outcomes by 2025.

The ambitious measures set out by the Environment Agency in the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) will see up to £5 billion of investment by water companies in the natural environment through 2020 to 2025.

This will help tackle some of the biggest challenges facing the water environment, from the spread of invasive species and low flows to the effects of chemical and nutrient pollution.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

I want water companies to invest in the long term future of our environment. It is right that the Environment Agency is challenging water companies to go further.

This significant investment will help tackle some of the biggest challenges facing the natural environment. It will help to improve our waterways, increase biodiversity and combat non-native invasive species. This will support our goal to leave the environment in a better state for future generations.

Water companies have a duty to protect and enhance the natural water environment. The government expects water companies to meet the obligations set out in the Environment Programme (WINEP) by 2025.

The investment will:

- Protect and improve at least 6000km of our waters
- Protect and improve 24 Bathing Waters and 10 Shellfish sites
- Protect and improve 1800 hectares of protected nature conservation sites
- Enhance nearly 900km of river and 4276 hectares through wider biodiversity improvements

The measures in WINEP represent the basic measures required by water companies to meet their environmental outcomes. However this also presents an opportunity for the industry to develop innovative approaches which will benefit customers, communities, the environment and natural capital.

Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd said:

A clean water environment keeps us healthy, sustains wildlife, and is essential to the success of the economy. Water quality has improved in recent decades but water companies are still responsible for at least one serious pollution incident every week.

We put together a programme of work for water companies over the next five years which will produce significant environmental improvements: protecting and improving over 6,000km of rivers, 24 bathing waters, 10 shellfish waters and 18000 hectares of protected nature conversation sites.

Water companies have until later this year to submit more detailed plans to Ofwat. I'm looking forward to seeing more innovation and less pollution.

Certain aspects of the WINEP, on an exceptional basis, will be considered for extension of the 2020-2025 timeframe if they facilitate long term sustainable outcomes and maximise environmental benefits.

Water companies have until 30 June to submit their case for extension to the Environment Agency and Ofwat.

This ambitious programme marks a real step forward in delivering the environmental outcomes set out in our [25 Year Environment Plan](#).

Notes:

- Environment Secretary, Michael Gove's speech to the water sector can be found [here](#).
- Environment Agency report on State of the Environment water quality can be found [here](#).

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## [Press release: Traffic officers help to get four legged friends home safely](#)

Newly released footage shows how two New Forest ponies had gone the wrong way and ended up horsing around on the A31 eastbound in Hampshire at around 9.15am. Traffic officers worked with Hampshire Police as the two equines headed down the main road, before they turned onto the M27. A rolling road block was put out on the M27 by police and Highways England closed the A36 slip road before an agister helped to get the ponies through the road at 10.40am.

By then the ponies had travelled a furlong way down the three roads, and despite being saddled with the task of getting them off the road, it was a canter for Highways England traffic officer Michael Maidment who has been trained for situations like this.

Usually we're dealing with crashes or cars that have broken down, so it is different to be called out to deal with this type of horseplay.

When my partner and I got there we worked with our partners in the police to shoe them off the motorway, as the only studs we want on our roads are the ones between lanes.

There was quite a bit to do with closing the different roads and directing the ponies to safety, so our voices were a bit hoarse afterwards but fortunately the ponies were unhurt and were still stable to get home after we'd reined them in.

### [New Forest ponies on the M27](#)

A spokesperson for Hampshire Police said:

We would like to thank the agister, Highways England's traffic officers and the members of the public for their assistance in dealing with this incident.

Highways England provides up-to-date traffic information via its [website](#), local and national radio travel bulletins, electronic road signs and mobile

platforms.

## **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.