

[Press release: Minister for Europe meets Belarus counterpart](#)

It is the first visit to the UK by a Belarus Foreign Minister since 1993.

The UK and Belarus have been developing our bilateral relationship since the lifting of EU restrictive measures in February 2016.

The ministers used the visit as an opportunity to discuss increasing trade between the UK and Belarus, share perspectives on regional political and security issues, and Sir Alan encouraged Belarus to undertake further political and economic reform, with an emphasis on human rights and democracy.

Minister for Europe Sir Alan Duncan said:

I was the first British Foreign Office Minister to visit Belarus since Belarus became an independent, sovereign state when I travelled to Minsk in September. Now Foreign Minister Makei has come to London for another historic visit – the first of a Foreign Minister of Belarus for nearly 25 years.

His visit provides a valuable opportunity to make progress on a range of issues from trade to reform to regional security. I am pleased to have discussed a number of issues with FM Makei, and I encouraged Belarus to take further steps to improve political freedoms, including human rights, and economic reform. Some progress has been made in these areas but I believe it is in Belarus' long term interest to go further.

I also explained to FM Makei the UK's grave concerns over the Salisbury incident and reminded him that Russia's actions are of concern to all nations, including their friends and neighbours.

Further information

[Press release: Flood scheme boost with £36m of funding](#)

From Hull to Bath and Wolverhampton to the Wirral, communities up and down England are set to benefit from a government cash boost that will protect

thousands of homes from flooding, enhance the environment and bolster economic growth and tourism.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey has today (Tuesday, 27 March) announced that 25 new schemes will receive a share of £36 million announced in the Autumn Statement to improve flood protection.

One of the biggest beneficiaries is Hull, where £12 million will improve the defences along the River Hull to protect homes, businesses, infrastructure and areas of cultural importance within the city. The funding will support the second phase of the project which started in 2016 and has so far seen 39 sections of defence improved over a 7.5km stretch of river.

The main pier at Seahouses, Berwick-upon-Tweed, protecting 140 properties and the town's picturesque harbour, will be regenerated thanks to an extra £2.9 million.

Rivers will be restored and habitat improved in Gloucester, where £1.2 million will go to projects to protect 370 properties along the Sud Brook and River Twyer.

In Derby, more than £300,000 will help create new wetlands and flood reservoirs to not only protect 110 homes from flooding but also enhance biodiversity in residential areas.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This funding will benefit projects across the country from Hull to Gloucester, from Wolverhampton to the Wirral, that need an extra boost for flood defences to help our communities continue to prosper and grow in the future.

Not only will this investment make places more resilient against flooding, but it will help the local economy, enhance the natural environment and protect important areas of culture – whether it is the homes, businesses and cultural sites in Hull to the pier in Seahouses or the natural environment in Gloucester.

The government has worked with the Environment Agency to prioritise the areas that would get the most benefit – the schemes will not only protect an additional 3,000 properties from flooding but will contribute to wider benefits for the community.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

In the face of challenges like a changing climate, rising sea levels and more severe weather, the Environment Agency is working hard to protect people, homes and businesses from flooding.

As with every project we undertake, we're also striving to improve our environment and this additional funding will not only help us build flood defences, but restore vital habitat and bring nature back to some of our urban communities.

The additional £36 million funding was initially set aside for new projects in the Autumn Budget. The £33.8 million funding allocated today will go towards 25 flood schemes over the next three years, in addition to the £2.2 million given to 13 projects in Cumbria and Devon at the end of last year.

In the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor announced £76 million to be spent on flood and coastal defences – £36 million for new schemes and £40 million to boost local regeneration in deprived communities at high flood risk.

This brings the total investment in flood defence to £2.6 billion by 2021, when more than 1,500 flood defences will have been built to protect 300,000 homes up and down the country.

Over the past two years, the Environment Agency has completed more than 350 new flood schemes to protect 100,000 homes. In addition to building hard defences, it has improved its response by investing in new technology and equipment like temporary flood barriers, pumps and 6,500 trained staff across the country.

The Environment Agency's free flood warning system also reaches more than 1.2 million people to give them vital warning when flooding is expected. You can check your risk and sign up to receive warnings on [GOV.UK here](https://www.gov.uk) or by calling 0345 988 1188.

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[News story: Community interest companies \(CIC\) needed to test online filing](#)

We're developing an online filing service for community interest companies (CICs), so you can file your annual report and accounts online.

If you're a CIC, or agent who files on their behalf, you can help us by [answering a quick survey](#) about online filing.

We also need your help to take part in user-testing at our Cardiff office. User-testing during development will help us make our new service fit for your needs.

The testing will only take around an hour, and we'd be grateful for your help.

What CICs are for

If you're thinking of starting a business, but want to provide a benefit to the local community, then a CIC might be for you.

A CIC is a company for people wishing to set-up a business as a 'social enterprise'. This means the business will trade with a social purpose, or

carry out other activities for the benefit of the community.

Many social enterprises and community organisations are already incorporated as companies. They're usually limited by guarantee, without shares. Others, such as co-operatives, are registered societies. Many are less formal, with assets held on their behalf by trustees.

A CIC is suitable if you want the freedom of a limited company, without either the private profit motive or charity status. They're more flexible than some other legal forms, and there's a variety of capital options to meet your needs. CICs aren't strictly 'not for profit', but returns to investors must be balanced and reasonable, to make sure community benefit is always its purpose.

How to form or incorporate a CIC

The basic legal structure for CICs is the limited liability company. They can either be incorporated as a new company or converted from an existing company.

Creating a CIC has significant legal implications, such as the 'asset lock'. This means the assets of the CIC (including any profits or other surpluses it makes) are used for the benefit of the community. This is a permanent step, which cannot be reversed.

To register as a CIC, a company must adopt articles that comply with [The 'CAICE' Act](#) and [CIC Regulations 2005](#). Existing companies must make changes to their articles and a change of name. A CIC's name must end in either, 'CIC' or 'community interest company', and not 'limited' or 'ltd'.

The CIC Regulator

Another feature of a CIC is that they report to the [Office of the CIC Regulator](#). The regulator's job is to make sure the CIC is genuinely a social enterprise, and isn't abusing the trust the public expects to put in a CIC.

By making the CIC report to the regulator, the directors can clearly show that the company is a genuine social enterprise venture, and not for private profit.

If you need further help, the regulator has produced [a list of do's and don'ts](#) when completing an application to incorporate a CIC.

Deciding to form a CIC is a major step and professional legal advice is recommended.

News story: Information for parents: 2018 key stage 1 and 2 assessments

We have published an [information leaflet](#) today for parents of children in years 2 and 6 about national curriculum assessments (commonly called SATs).

The leaflet is to help parents understand more about the end of key stage assessments that will take place in primary schools throughout May.

For pupils at the end of key stage 1, typically aged 7, teachers will judge the standards at which they are working. To help teachers inform those judgements, pupils will take tests at any time throughout May in:

- mathematics
- English reading
- English grammar, punctuation and spelling (optional test)

Pupils at the end of key stage 2, typically aged 11, will take tests on set days in the week beginning 14 May in:

- English grammar, punctuation and spelling
- English reading
- mathematics

Videos about SATs at key stages 1 and 2

We have also published 2 [videos](#) for parents, providing more detail at each key stage about:

- the purpose and format of the tests
- when tests will take place
- how parents can best support their child
- how results will be reported

The leaflet and videos may be useful resources for schools to share with parents, or to use during conversations with parents about primary assessments. We have provided a text only version of the leaflet for ease of printing.