

Press release: M25 Wisley improvements set out

Under the plans, the interchange between the M25 and the A3 will be redesigned to create four dedicated link roads for all drivers making left turns at the junction while drivers turning right will use a new enlarged junction roundabout.

The A3 will also be widened from three lanes to four between Ockham and Painshill in both directions with two lanes remaining over the M25. The improvements will create extra capacity at the junction and, on opening, will shave up to seven minutes off journeys made at the junction during the morning peak.

Two options were put to the public for views between December 2016 and February 2017, and today's announcement considers feedback made during the consultation and ongoing discussions with key stakeholders and residents.

The plans also include improved routes for pedestrians and cyclists, a green bridge linking Wisley and Ockham Commons, and better, safer access to RHS Garden Wisley via a new bridge and link road to the east of the A3. The proposals minimise the impact on trees within RHS Garden Wisley and ancient woodland near Ockham.

Highways England Regional Delivery Director for the South East Chris Welby-Everard said:

This busy junction is used by more than 96,000 drivers every day, and the M25 and the A3 which run through it have a further 173,000 and 57,000 journeys respectively every day. The plans we are putting forward today will make a real difference to all those journeys while respecting the protected environments nearby. I would like to thank everyone who took part in our consultation and helped shape these proposals.

We will continue to work with stakeholders and residents in working up the details of our design and there will be a further opportunity for people to have their say in another consultation next year.

The M25/A3 interchange is a key congestion pinch point on the strategic road network and has one of the highest recorded collision rates across the Highways England network. The proposed plans will help to reduce delays, make journeys more reliable, ease congestion and improve safety.

The plans being taken forward include:

- an elongated roundabout to add more road capacity and improve safety with provision of dedicated free-flow left turns for all traffic leaving and joining the M25. The existing roundabout will be retained for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- widening of the A3 between Ockham and junction 10, and Painshill and junction 10, in both directions. The proposals were referred to as Option 14 during the consultation. The other proposal, known as Option 9, was a four-level flyover with dedicated free-flow slip roads for traffic accessing the M25 from the A3 and was rejected due to strong concerns about the negative impact on the surrounding environment.

Anyone interested in the scheme can sign up to receive updates [via the project page](#) on the Highways England website, where they can also download the consultation report, announcement flyer and see visualisations outlining the preferred option.

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: Largest rise in National Minimum Wage rates for young people in a decade](#)

Today the Low Pay Commission (LPC), the body that recommends the rates of the National Minimum Wages (NMW), including the National Living Wage (NLW), launches its detailed annual assessment of the labour market and explains the rationale for its recommendations.

The Government has accepted all of the LPC's recommendations, including for the largest increases in a decade for the rates that apply to 18-20 and 21-24 year olds.

On 1 April next year (2018) these rates will increase by 4.7 per cent and 5.4 per cent respectively. These are greater percentage increases than both that of the National Living Wage, which will increase by 4.4 per cent, and

forecast average earnings growth of between 2.5 and 3 per cent. (See table below for full details of the current and future rates).

The new rates will boost the earnings of between 260,000 and 360,000 young workers directly, and many more young workers will benefit. This is for two reasons: firstly, these increases lead to 'spillover' effects further up the pay distribution; secondly, even though they are not entitled to it, some young workers benefit from increases in the National Living Wage. We estimate that up to 45 per cent of 18-24 year old workers – or 1.3 million young people – could receive a higher pay increase than they would have done in the absence of the NLW.

In the years following the recession the LPC recommended lower increases in the NMW for young people to protect their employment position. This is because young people are more at risk of unemployment than older workers in the event of an economic downturn. Periods out of work can cause 'scarring' effects for young people, whereby their earnings and employment chances are still affected years later.

When making those recommendations, the LPC also made commitments to restore any lost 'relativities' once economic conditions improved. The LPC judged that there was sufficiently strong evidence to justify being more ambitious for the youth rates:

- Employment in the UK continues to grow more strongly than forecast and is at record levels.
- Unemployment has fallen to its lowest rate since 1975.
- There have been ongoing improvements in the employment and unemployment rates of 18-24 year olds, despite two increases in their NMW rates in quick succession in the last year.
- Wage growth for those aged 18-24 has been higher than for those aged 25 and over for the last three years. As a result, the bite, which is the NMW as a percentage of median earnings and a key measure of pressure, has fallen for workers of these ages.
- Both employers and unions raised the importance of fairness and employee relations between age groups in the workforce.

The LPC recommended slightly lower increases for 16-17 year olds at 3.7 per cent, or 15 pence, from £4.05 to £4.20. The reason for this is that earnings and employment chances have not improved as fast as for the other age groups. But, while this increase is lower than for the other rates, it is still the highest in 10 years for this age group.

Commenting on the analysis, LPC Chair Bryan Sanderson said:

The LPC is pleased that the Government has accepted our recommendations to increase the NMW rates for young people. Many thousands will benefit directly and thousands more will benefit from the increases to the NLW.

If economic conditions, particularly the labour market for younger

workers, remain positive or improve then there will be grounds for further increases in NMW rates for younger workers in the future.

The Government also accepted the LPC's recommendation for the National Living Wage to increase it to £7.83 in April 2018. The LPC's approach is different for the National Living Wage and the other National Minimum Wage rates. On the former, the Government has given the LPC a target to reach 60 per cent of median earnings by 2020, subject to sustained economic growth. On the latter, the LPC is asked to make recommendations that lift rates as high as possible without damaging employment. It was the LPC's judgement that the evidence was consistent with the NLW remaining on its path to 60 per cent of median earnings with the April 2018 uplift.

The April 2017 uprating of the National Living Wage again delivered a substantial increase in earnings for workers. It increased by 4.2 per cent, double the average wage growth for all workers aged 25 and over of 2.1 per cent. Despite the April 2017 uprating being lower than the previous year, when the NLW was first introduced, (30p and 4.2 per cent compared with 50p and 10.8 per cent) its 'spillover' effects are greater. We estimate that the NLW indirectly raised the earnings of up to 7 million workers as employers sought to maintain a pay differential with the NLW.

These differential effects occur when employers try to maintain a pay gap with the NLW for other staff, for example the manager or team leader of a group of minimum wage workers. Employers tell us this is a major challenge because of the cost. Their concern is that the squeezing of these differentials is causing problems around motivation and progression – when differentials are low employer struggle to encourage staff to apply for managerial or supervisory roles.

Notes:

1. The Low Pay Commission is an independent body made up of employers, trade unions and experts whose role is to advise the Government on the minimum wage. The National Living Wage is the legally binding pay floor for workers aged 25 and over. The other minimum wage rates comprise: the 21-24 Year Old Rate, the 18-20 Year Old Rate, the 16-17 Year Old Rate and the Apprentice Rate.
2. The LPC's remit prescribes different requirements in relation to the NLW than for the four other bands of the minimum wage. For the NLW we are asked to make recommendations on the pace of increase towards a target: an 'ambition...that it should continue to increase to reach 60 per cent of median earnings by 2020, subject to sustained economic growth'. For the other rates we are asked to 'help as many low-paid workers as possible without damaging their employment prospects'.
3. Our full recommendations for April 2018 and underpinning analysis were published in our [19th report](#). The rationale for our recommendations is

also included in a [letter from the LPC Chair](#) to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

4. We said in our [report in March 2016](#) that, in the absence of economic shocks or other strong evidence, we thought that the default for the NLW would be a straight line rolling path to the 60 per cent target – evenly spreading our (annually updated) estimate of the increase in relative value needed to hit the target over the remaining years to 2020. Our recommendation for the NLW reflects this approach, and the cash level is in line with the indicative figure we set out last October – £7.85.
5. The new NLW rate will increase pay for typical minimum wage workers (working 30 hours per week) by just over £500 per year. An increase of 4.4 per cent is, after the introduction of the National Living Wage in April 2016, the largest increase in the main rate of the minimum wage since 2006.
6. We estimate that the £7.83 rate will raise coverage – the number of workers paid at or below the NLW – by up to 530,000, from 1.6 million jobs (6.4 per cent of the cohort) in April 2017 to 2.1 million (8.6 per cent) in April 2018. Looking at progress towards the 60 per cent target, we estimate that the £7.83 rate will represent an increase in the relative value of the NLW for workers aged 25 and over of 1.1 percentage points, up from 56.9 per cent of the value of typical earnings (October 2017) to 58 per cent (October 2018).
7. Rates for workers aged under 25, and apprentices, are lower than the NLW in reflection of lower average earnings and higher unemployment rates. International evidence also suggests that younger workers are more exposed to employment risks arising from the pay floor than older workers. Unlike the NLW (where some consequences for employment have been accepted by the Government), the LPC's remit requires us to set the other rates as high as possible without causing damage to jobs and hours.
8. Employment and unemployment rates for 18-24 year olds not in full-time education have seen quarter-on-quarter improvement for the last two years or longer. As a consequence, in June 2017, the employment rate for 21-24 year olds was 8 percentage points higher – and the unemployment rate 7.5 percentage points lower – than in June 2013. The employment rate for 18-20 year olds was 2.0 percentage points higher – and the unemployment rate 4.3 percentage points lower – than in June 2015. These continuous improvements were maintained despite the relatively large increases in the NMW in October 2016.
9. We have also provided an indicative rate for the National Living Wage from April 2019. This is inevitably uncertain because pay forecasts are

likely to change, but using those available in October we project that the on-course rate will be £8.20. Using OBR forecasts published last week, the projected figure is £8.18. For 2020, the LPC's projected rate for 60 per cent of median earnings is £8.61, within a range of £8.55 to £8.66. Using its forecasts published last week, the OBR wage growth projections give a slightly lower estimated figure for 2020, of £8.57.

10. The National Living Wage is different from the UK Living Wage and the London Living Wage. Differences include that: the UK Living Wage and the London Living Wage are voluntary pay benchmarks that employers can sign up to if they wish, not legally binding requirements; the hourly rate of the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage is based on an attempt to measure need, whereas the National Living Wage is based on a target relationship between its level and average pay; the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage apply to workers aged 18 and over, the National Living Wage to workers aged 25 and over. The Low Pay Commission has no role in the UK Living Wage or the London Living Wage.

11. The members of the Low Pay Commission comprise:

- Bryan Sanderson, Chair
- Sarah Brown, Professor of Economics at the University of Sheffield
- Kay Carberry, TUC
- Neil Carberry, Managing Director, People and Infrastructure, CBI
- Clare Chapman, Non-Executive Director & Remuneration Committee Chair at Kingfisher PLC
- Richard Dickens, Professor of Economics, Sussex University
- Peter Donaldson, formerly Managing Director, D5 Consulting Ltd
- John Hannett, General Secretary, Usdaw
- Brian Strutton, General Secretary, BALPA

Our recommendations comprised:

	Current rate	Future rate (from April 2018)	Increase
NLW	£7.50	£7.83	4.4%
21-24 rate	£7.05	£7.38	4.7%
18-20 rate	£5.60	£5.90	5.4%
16-17 rate	£4.05	£4.20	3.7%
Apprentice rate	£3.50	£3.70	5.7%
Accommodation offset	£6.40	£7.00	9.4%

[News story: Civil news: HPCDS tender](#)

[deadline reminder](#)

Deadline for responses to the 2018 Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme invitation to tender (ITT) is 5pm on Monday 4 December.

Providers are reminded that 5pm on Monday 4 December is the deadline for responses to the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme ITT. You must submit a response to the:

This needed to be done by 5pm on 10 November 2017.

Answering your questions

Meanwhile we have been working through the questions submitted about the 2018 civil tender.

You can find answers to your questions in the form of 'frequently asked questions' (FAQ) documents which have been published on GOV.UK on the 'civil tender 2018' page.

This includes one specifically for HPCDS which was updated on 27 November.

Further information

[e-Tendering system](#) – for submitting bids and using the message boards

[Legal aid civil tender 2018](#) – information for potential applicants

Email help@bravosolution.co.uk or telephone 0800 0698630 for technical questions about using the e-Tendering system

[2018 contract deadlines now approaching](#) – GOV.UK news story on 2 November 2017

[Tender process for 2018 contracts opens](#) – GOV.UK news story on 19 September 2017

[Help with how to submit a civil tender](#) – GOV.UK news story on 20 October 2017

[Policy paper: Shoreham Adur tidal walls scheme: construction](#)

Updated: Update to data 15 December 2017.

Issues that may arise during construction of the Shoreham Adur tidal walls scheme.

Press release: Free helplines for Universal Credit claimants

All DWP Universal Credit phone lines are now free and nobody will be charged when they need to call to get help with their Universal Credit claim.

In October, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions David Gauke committed to [making all DWP helplines Freephone numbers by the end of the year](#).

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions David Gauke said:

We're building a welfare system that is fit for the modern world where people increasingly manage their affairs online.

The vast majority of people apply for Universal Credit online, setting up an account that they can access 24 hours a day to manage their claim.

Work coaches are also there to support people with their online account but we know this is a big change for many, and we want to make sure people can get the extra help they need, without worrying about paying for a phone call. That's exactly why we've set up the new Freephone numbers, which are available from today.

The key Universal Credit Freephone numbers include:

Anyone calling the old numbers will hear a message informing them of the change and the new number to call.

Freephone numbers for other DWP benefits and services are set to follow, with all numbers switched over by the end of 2017.

99% of applications to Universal Credit are made online.

Universal Credit claimants can update any changes in circumstances, check on their payments and rearrange appointments 24 hours a day through their online journal.

Previously, calls were charged at local rates set by providers and were free for many people as part of their call package. If someone had been concerned about the cost, they could request a free call back.

Anyone calling the old numbers will hear a repeated message informing them of the change and the new number to call. They won't be charged for listening to this pre-recorded message as long as they hang up before the call is terminated. The message will be clear about the need for the caller to end the call before they are cut off.

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