

# £226 million package to support vital bus services

- funding will maintain bus services as passengers begin to return in higher numbers in the months following lifting of restrictions
- Department for Transport also announces 35 expressions of interest for share of first tranche of £120 million to roll out zero emission buses across England
- both packages come as part of government drive to build back greener from the pandemic

Bus operators across the country will benefit from £226.5 million in government funding to help ensure they continue to run vital services as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, Roads Minister Baroness Vere has announced today (6 July 2021).

The funding will run from September 2021 to April 2022 and will support operators across England, outside of London, cementing the government's commitment to level up transport links as passenger numbers begin to return to pre-pandemic levels.

It comes as the Department for Transport also announces it has received 35 Expression of Interest applications for the [Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas \(ZEBRA\) scheme](#), which gives local transport authorities the opportunity to compete for a share of £120 million to support the rollout of zero emission buses across England.

Both schemes are part of the government's drive to build back better and greener from the pandemic, as the UK prepares to host [COP26](#) and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

Buses are the lifeblood of our communities, helping us get to work, school and to see friends and family.

The recovery funding will ensure vital services continue to run by supporting operators in those initial months, as restrictions are lifted and passengers begin to return in higher numbers.

And as we build back greener from the pandemic, the £120 million to roll out zero emission buses will have a profoundly positive effect on our towns and cities, lowering emissions, improving air quality and reducing noise pollution.

The recovery funding announced today will follow the current emergency support package, which is due to end next month after providing more than £1

billion to keep bus services running throughout the pandemic – and will be provided on a formula basis, ensuring the sector can begin to return to commerciality. The funding will be the final tranche of COVID-19-related support provided to the sector.

In addition to helping maintain services, recovery funding will support the key aims of the [National Bus Strategy](#) of encouraging local authorities and operators to work together to deliver better bus services.

The [ZEBRA fund](#) was launched in March this year with local transport authorities able to apply under either a fast track or standard process.

The following local transport authorities have been selected under the fast track process to progress to the next stage of the competition:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
- Kent County Council
- Leicester City Council
- Milton Keynes Borough Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- West Midlands Combined Authority

The 6 shortlisted authorities will now develop business cases for investment, with the government awarding the first tranche of funding from the ZEBRA scheme to authorities that produce the strongest business cases.

More local transport authorities will be announced as being selected to produce business cases under the standard process in due course.

The ZEBRA funding comes from the wider £3 billion fund announced by the government to improve bus services in our national bus strategy, published on 15 March 2021.

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## [Supporting vital bus services: recovery funding](#)

During the pandemic, the government has provided unprecedented levels of financial assistance to the bus sector through the [COVID-19 Bus Service Support Grant \(CBSSG\)](#), supporting bus operators and local transport authorities in England outside of London, with up to £1.4 billion in funding since March 2020.

With patronage falling and social distancing limiting passengers onboard, CBSSG has funded up to 100% of pre-COVID-19 service levels, ensuring key workers have continued to be able to travel easily and safely. Critically, as restrictions are lifted and passengers return, the bus sector is important in

helping the economic recovery.

I appreciate that this presents bus operators with a fundamental financial challenge. To encourage passengers back, local bus services should be as available as they were prior to the pandemic. Without support, however, it may not be possible for operators to maintain the services they have provided up until now.

I can therefore announce that a further £226.5 million in financial support in the form of recovery funding has been made available for the bus sector. Funding operators and local authorities from 1 September 2021 until the end of the current financial year, this will succeed CBSSG, which ends on 31 August.

In addition to helping maintain services, recovery funding will support the key aims of the [National Bus Strategy](#) of encouraging local authorities and operators to work together to deliver better bus services. In return for receiving funding, operators will be asked to commit to co-operating with the process for establishing Enhanced Partnerships or franchising.

With the publication of the National Bus Strategy in March 2021, the government set out bold ambitions to address the long-term challenge of providing quick, reliable, simple and affordable bus travel. Local authorities have been asked to develop ambitious [Bus Service Improvement Plans](#) by this October, outlining what will be done at a local level to make travelling by bus as attractive as possible.

The Prime Minister has announced £5 billion for buses and cycling, to deliver the strategy and provide vital investment for the sector.

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## [UN Human Rights Council 47: Interactive Dialogue with the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syrian Arab Republic](#)

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## Self-isolation to be eased for fully vaccinated adults in step 4

As part of step 4 of the Government's COVID-19 roadmap, double vaccinated people will no longer be legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case, the Health and Social Care Secretary has confirmed today (Tuesday 6 July).

The new rules will come into effect from 16 August, if the Government takes a decision to move into step 4. To ensure young people can make the most of their education as restrictions continue to ease, the Government also plans to exempt those aged under 18 from self-isolation if they are a close contact.

Introducing this exemption in August will enable even more people to have received both doses of the vaccine, significantly reducing the risk of severe illness and providing the fullest protection possible for people across the country. The NHS COVID-19 app will update in August in line with the new guidance on self-isolation for close contacts.

Young people and double vaccinated individuals identified as close contacts will continue to be advised to take a PCR test, to detect the virus and variants of concern. Anyone who tests positive following the PCR test will still be legally required to self-isolate, irrespective of their vaccination status.

## **Vaccine programme**

The phenomenal success of the UK's vaccine programme – with over 86% of adults receiving their first doses – has allowed the government to continue easing restrictions and to remove self-isolation rules for double jabbed people, and move from a rules-based system to personal responsibility. The latest data shows that 27,000 lives have already been saved by COVID-19 vaccines and over 7 million infections prevented, with vaccines reducing the chance of COVID-19 infection by almost 80% after two doses and only 35% after one.

As of 6 July, over 79 million vaccine doses have now been administered in the UK, and three in five adults have received two doses. To continue to receive the fullest possible protection against COVID-19, all adults are encouraged to get their vaccine.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid told Parliament:

Asking people with COVID-19 and their close contacts to self-isolate has played a critical role in helping us get this virus

under control, and I'm so grateful to the millions of people across the UK who have made sacrifices to keep the virus at bay.

Thanks to the UK's phenomenal vaccine programme and the huge wall of defence, we can safely take steps to reduce self-isolation for people who are fully vaccinated, and those aged under 18, and instead advise people to take a PCR test. Positive cases will still need to self-isolate.

Step-by-step, and jab-by-jab, we're replacing the temporary protection of the restrictions, with the long-term protection of a vaccine.

Regular testing remains critical to controlling the virus as restrictions ease. Advising double vaccinated contacts and children to take a PCR test with a requirement to self-isolate for those who test positive will reduce the risk of onward transmission. Alongside PCR testing, everyone in England is encouraged to take up the government's offer of free, twice weekly rapid testing.

As with fully vaccinated adults, children who are close contacts of a positive case will instead be advised to take a PCR test. If the PCR test is positive they will need to self-isolate, as any other positive case.

Robust protective measures are in place across schools, including twice weekly testing to protect students and prevent transmission. NHS Test and trace will continue to provide age appropriate advice for testing in schools in the coming months.

## **Background information**

The Government will make an announcement on whether the UK will move into step 4 of the COVID-19 roadmap on 12th July on the basis of its four tests

Children who are aged under 5 years old who are identified as close contacts would only be advised to take a PCR test if the positive case is in their own household.

If someone gets their second dose just before, or after, the 16th of August, they'll need to wait until two weeks after they get the second jab to benefit from these new freedoms so the vaccine has time to build the maximum possible protection.

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## **[Consultation launched on potential](#)**

# change of ownership of Channel 4

Press release

The public and interested parties are being asked to contribute their views on the potential change of ownership of the Channel Four Television Corporation (Channel 4).



- Will consider a change of ownership of Channel 4 to ensure its future success and sustainability
- Views and evidence provided will be taken into account before a final decision is made
- Responses will feed into the government's ongoing review of public service broadcasting

Today the government has launched a [public consultation](#) on the future ownership of Channel 4, as part of the government's review of public service broadcasting. The consultation will consider both the ownership and remit of Channel 4.

The current strength and variety of the UK's TV production sector is in part thanks to the role of Channel 4 which the government wants to protect. However, the fast evolving media landscape, with increased competition and changing audience habits, is posing serious challenges to traditional 'linear' TV broadcasters, which means it is now time to review its ownership structure.

The government wants to preserve Channel 4's status as a public service broadcaster producing original, distinctive content as well as high quality news and current affairs serving every corner of the country.

It believes private-sector ownership of Channel 4 and a change to its remit could enable it to thrive in the decades to come as a successful and sustainable public service broadcaster.

Private ownership could benefit Channel 4 by enabling it to access new capital and diversify its income streams to give it a greater and more resilient financial base from which to invest in new technology, content and programming. It could also help the broadcaster form new strategic

partnerships and reach international markets.

The government is seeking views and supporting evidence on what the economic, social and cultural costs and benefits could be if it were to release Channel 4 from the constraints of public ownership.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

The media world has changed immeasurably since Channel 4's creation in the early 1980s, but whilst we have more choice today the need for a strong and successful Channel 4 continues.

So in the face of rising global competition, now is the right time to strengthen UK public service broadcasters and consider releasing Channel 4 from the constraints of public ownership, enabling it to thrive for the next 40 years and beyond.

All responses received as part of the consultation will be carefully analysed before the government publishes its response and sets out next steps.

**ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors:**

- The [consultation](#) will last for 10 weeks and closes on 14th September 2021 at 23:45
- At present Channel 4 is entirely commercially funded, but it has been publicly-owned since it began broadcasting in 1982.
- The UK's system of public service broadcasting (PSB) is the result of a series of regulatory interventions designed to make sure UK audiences can enjoy a wide range of high-quality programmes which meet people's needs and interests. There is no single piece of legislation covering public service broadcasting, but the Communications Act 2003 provides many of the key building blocks. For example, it designates certain broadcasters as 'public service broadcasters' – the BBC, ITV, STV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and S4C.
- In November 2020 the government announced that it was bringing together a [Public Service Broadcasting Advisory Panel](#) made up of experts from broadcasting and other related sectors. The panel will support the government in taking forward the recommendations in the reports from both the House of Lords Communications Committee and the DCMS Select Committee, as well as Ofcom's PSB Review.
- The government will publish a broadcasting white paper due in the autumn which will consider the future of the country's broadcasting landscape with the ultimate aim of making sure it serves listeners and viewers on all platforms and across the UK.
- The White Paper will also be influenced by Ofcom's ongoing PSB review, the government's own strategic PSB review as well as the recommendations of the Digital Radio And Audio Review which will report this summer.

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