

[News story: Community projects to benefit from £45 million of HS2 government funding](#)

- community projects along High Speed Two (HS2) railway route to get a cash boost from £45 million government pledge
- HS2 Minister Nusrat Ghani visits Crewe to announce £5 million to help communities along HS2 Phase 2a from the West Midlands to Crewe
- first recipients of the Community and Environment Fund (CEF) and Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF) are confirmed today
- fund will provide legacy of improvements along the Phase One route from London to the West Midlands

Community projects along the new HS2 railway route will receive more than £245,000 as part of a £45 million pledge by the government to provide a legacy of improvements for generations to come, HS2 Minister Nusrat Ghani announced today (25 January 2018).

A Northamptonshire pre-school, a 900 year-old Warwickshire church and an environmental awareness charity in London are amongst the first recipients of the Community and Environment Fund (CEF) and Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF) – a £40 million fund to support local economies and communities affected by the Phase One construction of HS2 between London and Birmingham.

Today HS2 Minister Nusrat Ghani visited Crewe station to announce an extension of the scheme – with a further £5 million being made available to help communities along HS2 Phase 2a route from the West Midlands to Crewe.

[Community projects to benefit from £45 million of HS2 government funding](#)

HS2 Minister Nusrat Ghani said:

HS2 will be the backbone of our national rail network – supporting growth and regeneration and helping us build a Britain fit for the future. Whilst we know there will be disruption as we deliver one of Europe's biggest infrastructure projects, we are absolutely committed to minimising the effects of building the new railway.

That is why I am delighted to see this significant funding helping to unlock the potential of communities and businesses along the route, ensuring the legacy of HS2 extends beyond the railway. These diverse and empowering projects will help regenerate local areas and bring people closer together, and I look forward to seeing more grants being funded in the future.

These funding allocations highlight the government's determination to ensure

HS2 is more than just a railway, but a catalyst for economic growth, driving regeneration as well as improving the transport landscape around the rail line.

The cash will be spent on public projects such as the refurbishment of community centres, nature conservation and measures to support local economies and employment.

Cathy Elliott, independent chair of CEF and BLEF said:

We have had a fantastic response so far and are proud to be supporting a variety of projects which will bring huge benefits to their communities for many years to come.

More funding is available for eligible applicants in the HS2 Phase One area and throughout the construction of Phase One. We look forward to announcing more funded local projects for Phase One and the launch date for Phase 2a applications.

Mark Thurston, HS2 Ltd chief executive, said:

As we deliver HS2, we have the opportunity to leave a positive legacy for the communities along the route of the railway. Our Community and Environment Fund, and its twin Business Fund, are starting to support important local initiatives, including building renovations and environmental projects. We're encouraging local people to come forward with other opportunities, such as community-led nature projects which could contribute to the 'green corridor' we're creating alongside the railway.

This grassroots activity is in addition to the national benefits of HS2, which will rebalance the economy by connecting 8 out of our 10 biggest cities, increase rail capacity on the current system and reduce journey times, while also creating thousands of jobs across the UK.

[Community projects near the HS2 route to benefit from £45 million fund](#)

The first organisations to secure CEF local grants are:

- Castlehaven Community Association in Camden, London, receiving £73,591 to support 'Greengage', a local community initiative to get more residents engaged in environmental issues
- Helmdon Acorns pre-school in Northamptonshire, receiving £5,442 to improve the safety and accessibility of the children's play area
- Thorpe Mandeville Village Hall Trust receiving £4,600 to resolve damp issues at the village hall
- Steeple Claydon Methodist Church in Buckinghamshire, receiving £12,000 to make a number of improvements to the church premises

- West Euston Partnership in London, receiving £74,804 to support 'Healthtrain', a community-led local health initiative
 - Wormleighton Parochial Church Council in Warwickshire, receiving £74,982 to install toilets and catering facilities in St Peters Church
-

[Press release: Rules Based International System Conference](#)

The first Rules Based International System (RUBIS) conference in Seoul, part funded by Global Britain Fund discussed RUBIS in Asia with @WiltonPark and IFANS

On 22 November Wilton Park and its South Korean counterpart the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS) will jointly host the first Rules Based International System (RUBIS) conference to happen in East Asia, at the Four Seasons Hotel in Seoul, South Korea. The event is co-sponsored by the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The conference will bring together South Korea and the UK alongside other regional partners, that are major security and economic actors in the region, to exchange views and thinking regarding the role of the RUBIS system and its contribution to regional stability, security and economic growth.

The event will be opened by Chancellor CHO Byung-jae of IFANS and will include speakers from South Korea, UK, Australia, Canada, Japan and China, including Vice President of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Danny Alexander.

British Ambassador to South Korea, Charles Hay, said:

I am very excited to be co-sponsoring this important conference with IFANS. This century is the Asian century as countries in the region become more prominent on the issues that are critical for global security and economic development. Influential East Asian countries like South Korea will be instrumental in shaping the future of the international rules based order.

Additional Information

RUBIS – The rules-based international system (RBIS) is founded on relationships between states and through international institutions and frameworks, with shared rules and agreements on behaviour. It works for UK interests in multiple ways: promoting peace and prosperity through security

and economic integration; encouraging predictable behaviour by states; and supporting peaceful settlement of disputes. It also encourages states, and a wide range of non-state actors, to create the conditions for open markets, the rule of law, democratic participation and accountability.

Wilton Park – Wilton Park organises over 60 events a year in the UK and overseas, bringing together leading representatives from the worlds of politics, diplomacy, academia, business, civil society, the military and the media. They focus on issues of international security, prosperity and justice. Their meetings provide a neutral environment where conflicting views can be expressed and debated openly and calmly, allowing acceptable compromise and resolution to be achieved.

Their priorities include:

- Conflict prevention, resolution and state building
- Defence and security
- Global economy
- Human rights, good governance and faith
- Multilateral institutions, key countries and regions
- Sustainable development and the environment

You can find more information here: <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/>

[News story: Department for Education launches Commonwealth education pack](#)

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb met with his counterparts from across the world today to launch a new resource for teachers, aimed at helping them to inform and explain the importance of the Commonwealth to their pupils.

The new classroom tools are for teachers working with 11 to 14 year olds and contain information on the Commonwealth and its values, accompanied by a range of classroom activities relating to topics including citizenship, geography, general studies and history.

It has been created ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April, where leaders, business, civil society and young people from around the world will gather in London to focus on a common future and helping ensure every young person can access a world-class education.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Standards are rising in our schools thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers. There are 1.9 million more children in good

or outstanding schools than in 2010 and our recent rise up the international rankings for reading and literacy puts our achievements on a global scale.

We are already sharing best practice internationally. Last year, I visited Australia to discuss with policy makers the evidence behind the success of phonics in teaching children to read. This included the introduction of the Phonics Screening Check to ensure all 6-year-olds are on track to becoming fluent readers. As a result of that check, our focus on phonics and the hard work of teachers, there are 154,000 more 6-year-olds on track to becoming fluent readers than in 2012.

By working collaboratively with other countries we can create ever more opportunities for young people and help build a Britain that is fit for the future.

Mark Herbert, Head of Schools Programmes at the British Council said:

As the home to one third of the world's population, 60% of them under the age of 30, young people have always been at the heart of the Commonwealth. This pack, designed specifically for primary and secondary schools in the UK, will help pupils understand the Commonwealth and why it matters to us all in an ever-more connected world.

The materials in this pack can support teaching of a range of subjects and topics across the curriculum including history, geography, economics, citizenship, art, design and personal and social education. The resources link to the Commonwealth Summit's overall theme of 'Towards a Common Future' and, at a local level, encourage pupils to contribute to a fairer, more prosperous, secure, inclusive and sustainable future for all.

The activities in the new teacher resource have been designed to be delivered collectively to form a complete lesson or individually to complement other classroom activities.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting will bring leaders from up to 52 countries spanning six continents together to ensure that the Commonwealth is able to tackle current and future challenges effectively and will focus on ensuring the Commonwealth is meeting the ambitions of young people as the organisation works towards a common future.

[Press release: Growth Deals and future tech top North Wales visit agenda for new UK Government Minister for Wales](#)

UK Government Minister Stuart Andrew will make his first official visit to North Wales today (Thursday 25 January) to underline the UK Government's vision for the region and to throw his weight behind the drive for a North Wales Growth Deal.

Mr Andrew will meet members of the North Wales Growth Deal project team at Glyndwr University to discuss the ongoing progress of the plans for the Deal.

Minister Andrew will also be visiting OpTIC where he will be joined by Minister for Northern Powerhouse, Jake Berry. The OpTIC Technology Centre has been a hub for world-leading science and innovation since Wrexham Glyndwr University acquired the site in 2009. It is owned and run by the university and home to 18 businesses and more than 100 staff. These include Glyndwr Innovations, a leading provider of innovative product development engineering and technology consulting.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Minister Andrew said:

As the new UK Government Minister for Wales, I will be using every opportunity to champion the contribution every corner of Wales is making to the growth we are seeing in our economy.

From the businesses creating jobs, to the University that is competing with some of the world's best institutions, the UK Government understands the vital contribution the region is making to secure the success of our long-term economic plan.

The North Wales Growth Deal is a UK Government budget commitment. It sets out a vision for the region with the aims of creating 5,300 jobs and attracting private sector investment to the value of £1bn in the region over the next 15 years.

Plans have been supported by the region's six council leaders and chief executives, and today's meeting at Glyndwr University is an opportunity for the project team to present their plans to the new Minister.

Mr Andrew added:

The North Wales growth deal will have a transformational effect on the way our towns and villages in North Wales govern themselves – shifting powers from London and Cardiff to local leaders who are better placed to take decisions that affect their communities.

Successful Growth Deals are built on big ideas to unlock growth across cities and their wider economic areas. They work best when everyone in the local area, including civic, business and higher education leaders, come together to tell Government what needs to change and what can be done better.

With the launch of the Industrial Strategy last year there has never been a better time for businesses and local authorities to seize the opportunity to come together. UK Government is here to support and work with companies and groups on the ground as they develop a bespoke deal that works for the whole of North-Wales.

Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth Minister Jake Berry said:

This government has invested £3.4bn across the UK through highly successful Growth Deals which have fostered the right economic conditions for local areas to flourish. I look forward to working with the Minister to drive this exciting opportunity for North Wales forward over the coming months.

The Ministers will also be visiting the Menai Science park.

[Press release: HMRC halts thousands of scam text messages](#)

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has stopped thousands of taxpayers from receiving scam text messages, with 90 percent of the most convincing texts now halted before they reach their phones.

The milestone comes during Take Five To Stop Fraud Week, with the tax authority working to raise awareness of the tell-tale signs of fraud ahead of the Self Assessment deadline.

Fraudsters alleging to be from HMRC send text messages to unsuspecting members of the public. In these messages they will make false claims, such as suggesting they are due a tax rebate. Messages will usually include links to websites that harvest personal information or spread malware. This can in turn lead to identity fraud and the theft of people's personal savings.

HMRC will never contact customers who are due a tax refund by text message or by email.

Reports of this type of fraud have quickly increased in volume over the last few years. People are 9 times more likely to fall for text message scams than

other forms like email because they can appear more legitimate, with many texts displaying 'HMRC' as the sender, rather than a phone number.

HMRC, working with public and private partners, began a pilot in April 2017 to combat these messages. The new technology identifies fraud texts with 'tags' that suggest they are from HMRC and stops them from being delivered.

Since the pilot began, there has been a 90% reduction in customer reports around the spoofing of these specific HMRC-related tags on SMS and a five-fold reduction in malicious SMS reports. The initiative has helped reduce reports of these scams from over 5,000 in March 2017, before the new programme was introduced, to fewer than 1,000 in December 2017. This progress comes after similar successes in tackling fraudulent emails and websites.

In the last 12 months, HMRC has initiated the removal of 16,000 malicious websites, meaning even if the texts are delivered, the associated phishing website is likely to have been removed.

By introducing technical controls, HMRC has also stopped customers receiving over 300 million emails purporting to come from the tax authority.

HMRC's Director of Customer Services, Angela MacDonald, said:

HMRC is focused on becoming the most digitally advanced tax authority in the world, and a big part of that relates to keeping our customers safe from online scammers.

As email and website scams become less effective, fraudsters are increasingly turning to text messages to con taxpayers. But as these numbers show, we won't rest until these criminals are out of avenues to exploit.

We have made significant progress in cutting down these types of crime, but one of the most effective ways to tackle it is still to help the public spot the tell-tale signs of fraud.

HMRC is working with the National Cyber Security Centre to further this work and extend the benefits beyond HMRC customers.

1. Read more about the [Take Five to Stop Fraud campaign](#)
2. Follow HMRC's press office on Twitter [@HMRCpressoffice](#).
3. See [HMRC's Flickr channel](#).

For press enquiries only, please contact:

- Ed Rowley: telephone: 03000 585 028

- email: Edward.Rowley@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk
- out-of-hours: telephone: 07860 359544