

Press release: New help for small businesses launched

A new online tax forum and dedicated webchat service for small businesses and the self-employed has been launched today by HMRC.

The Small Business Online Forum is a quick and easy way for small businesses to get answers to their tax questions, as well as help with:

- starting a business
- support for growing a business – including taking on employees and expanding
- buying and selling abroad
- completing tax returns
- tax credits

Linked to the forum, HMRC's new dedicated webchat service offers direct support to businesses and the self-employed.

[Mel Stride](#), Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General, said:

The UK's 5.4 million small businesses play a vital role in our economy. We want to help businesses get off the ground and support them as they grow.

That is why we are launching a new forum and webchat service which will give these companies useful hints and tips – including how to complete tax returns, grow a business and trade outside the UK – so that they can continue to flourish.

1. The Small Business Online Forum forms part of the government's business tax roadmap announced at Budget 2016.
 2. A pilot was launched in March 2017 and since then the forum has grown to have more than a 1,000 registered users.
 3. The forum does not deal with questions about taxpayers' individual circumstances. Any comments which include personal information will be deleted.
 4. While no personal or case-specific information is posted on the forum, customers may be offered help through HMRC's webchat service and their personal case handled by an adviser.
 5. Follow HMRC Press Office on [Twitter](#).
 6. HMRC's Flickr channel can be found [here](#)
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Press release: How to watch marine wildlife responsibly

As large numbers of visitors begin to flock to the Cornish coast, the Cornwall Marine and Coastal Code Group is sending out a timely reminder on how to responsibly enjoy watching marine wildlife such as dolphins and basking sharks.

The species most often affected are seabirds and seals as they come on to land to rest, but dolphins and basking sharks close to shore will quickly attract a lot of attention, making them vulnerable to overcrowding or being chased and can lead to accidents.

The Cornwall Marine and Coastal Code group includes Cornwall Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, Cornwall Seal Group, National Trust, Marine Stranding Network and the British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR), Cornwall Council, Devon and Cornwall Police Marine & Coastal Policing Team, the Marine Management Organisation and Natural England.

Full guidelines can be found on the [Cornwall Wildlife Trust's website](#). These recommendations include:

- keep your distance from resting animals such as seals and seabirds on land
- remain calm and quiet so resting animals are not disturbed and scared off
- move slowly and avoid sudden changes in direction and speed if animals are nearby
- stay side on to the animals while watching them rather than approaching directly
- if there are other boats/kayaks etc nearby then ensure the animals have plenty of space and an obvious escape route should they choose to leave, and to not pursue them when they do

One such incident off Padstow in 2013 resulted in the death of a bottlenose dolphin calf from a local inshore pod, threatening the long-term survival of the group. [The people responsible were successfully prosecuted.](#)

Dan Jarvis from BDMLR said:

The South West has an amazing range of marine species that are a big part of why lots of people love to visit the region, but sometimes people's encounters with our wildlife do not go well for the animals involved.

We are incredibly fortunate that we have these animals here in the first place and it is a privilege that we're able to see them, so we want to help people get the best out of these encounters by following some simple guidelines that will avoid causing distress

and harm.

By encouraging people to use these guidelines, we hope that they in turn will share them with others, so that many more people are aware of how their actions, and those of others, can affect the behaviour of animals that need to use these habitats too. We are all out on the coast to enjoy the amazing environment we have here and we need to make sure the animals that live there are still able to enjoy it too, otherwise they could abandon the area and we all lose out.

Guidance for recreational boaters

The Green Blue, the joint environment campaign run by the Royal Yachting Association and British Marine, has worked with other organisations including the MMO to produce The Green Wildlife Guide for Boaters. This advises boaters on how to get the best experience out of their wildlife encounters by acting responsibly and cautiously to minimize the risk of disturbance while keeping participants and their boats safe.

The guide is [available online](#) or a hard copy can be obtained by emailing info@thegreenblue.org.uk.

Campaign Manager for The Green Blue, Kate Fortnam, said:

It is perfectly safe and lawful to view marine wildlife by adopting a few simple measures – acting responsibly and cautiously to minimise the risk of disturbance is always the safest course of action.

Visit thegreenblue.org.uk for your copy of The Green Wildlife Guide for Boaters, or drop us a line for a hard copy.

Reporting incidents of marine wildlife disturbance

If you see marine species such as dolphins, porpoise or whales being disturbed, please contact your [nearest MMO office](#) or local police force wildlife crime officer on 101.

Incidents of disturbance in Cornwall can be reported to the Cornwall Wildlife Trust's disturbance hotline on 0345 201 2626, which has seen a steady increase in the number of calls over the last few weeks with the warmer weather.

Laws protecting marine wildlife

Details of the laws protecting marine species can be found on [the Government's website](#). They have also been [previously explained by the MMO](#).

[News story: Shoes to seamines – 20,000 items recovered preparing for carriers' new home](#)

More than 20,000 items, ranging from shoes to sea mines, have been found during the dredging of the approach to the Harbour, many dating back several centuries.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) awarded a contract to Boskalis Westminster to make room for the 65,000-tonne HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier and her sister ship Prince of Wales two years ago.

20,000 items have been found in Portsmouth harbour, including 36 anchors.

Since then, specialist dredging vessels have been at work, removing 3,200,000 cubic metres of sediment – the equivalent to 12,800 Olympic swimming pools.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

Upgrading the future home of HMS Queen Elizabeth is another completed step in the carrier's journey to becoming the nation's flagship, ready to operate around the world and help keep us safe in a world of intensifying threats.

The work to prepare for our naval future has unearthed objects from our naval past which are part of Portsmouth's proud maritime history. More than £100 million has been invested in Portsmouth's naval base to ensure that it is ready for the state of the art Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers.

The wealth of artefacts uncovered, include eight cannons, an aircraft engine, 36 anchors and a human skull which was passed to the local police.

There was an arsenal of old ordnance too, ranging from bullets and cannonballs to a British torpedo. A German sea mine and five large bombs were found, before being made safe by the Royal Navy's Explosive Ordnance Disposal team.

Among some of the artefacts unearthed were eight cannons.

Elsewhere the dredging uncovered bottles, plates, ceramics and shoes which probably belonged to sailors. They have been passed to the project's archaeologists at Wessex Archaeology for study.

Portsmouth now awaits the upcoming arrival of the HMS Queen Elizabeth. Find

out more about the [nation's new flagship](#).

Philip Wise, Principal Project Manager for DIO, said:

We're delighted with the successful completion of the dredging work. It marks the conclusion of DIO's £100m infrastructure project to ready Portsmouth for the forthcoming arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth, of which the dredge was only part. We look forward to welcoming HMS Queen Elizabeth to her new homeport.

Capt Iain Greenlees, Head of Infrastructure at Her Majesty's Naval Base Portsmouth, said:

The dredging was the culmination of twelve years work monitoring the seabed environment around the harbour and unearthed a huge array of items, some of which may be historically significant, and underlines again Portsmouth's long maritime history.

I am grateful for the patience of all harbour users and those who live and work around the waterfront during this challenging project.

Completion of the dredge is the final critical step in a wide range of activities preparing for HMS Queen Elizabeth's arrival later this year and the base is now ready to support the nation's future flagship.

Gerrit Jan van den Bosch, Project Manager for Boskalis Westminster, said:

The Boskalis Westminster team is proud of the challenging dredging project that has been safely completed prior to the arrival of the HMS Queen Elizabeth. With good cooperation and involvement from the Navy, DIO and other parties we look back on a successful project.

Although the main dredging work has now completed there will be an on-going need to remove new material that naturally settles in the channel over time. This will be achieved by maintenance dredging on a yearly basis.

Press release: £35 million of innovative employment schemes to benefit thousands of disadvantaged people

The schemes will be developed and delivered by 6 combined authorities in partnership with the government. The specialist tailored support is expected to help over 18,000 people – including disabled people and older people – tackle long-term barriers to work and in-work progression.

Up to £28 million has been committed by the Department for Work and Pensions for the schemes. They include:

- a 'Health and Care Sector Progression Academy' to train social care workers in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- an 'early intervention' scheme in Sheffield to prevent people from long-term unemployment
- a new business-led training hub for modern work skills in the Tees Valley

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, David Gauke said:

We have record numbers of people in work which is great news, but there are still people missing out on the available opportunities because of barriers to employment.

These pilots are yet another step forward in our efforts to help people of all backgrounds enjoy the benefits of work, and will boost the wide ranging support we currently offer through local experts like Jobcentre Plus.

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid added:

As part of the devolution revolution we've handed swathes of power and significant investment to help boost jobs and growth across the country.

Now we're going even further to support 6 areas with devolution deals by working with the new combined authority mayors to pilot innovative employment schemes.

These pilots will trial new approaches to help the most disadvantaged people in our society to get the security of a good job and a regular pay packet, helping to build a country that works for everyone.

Commenting on the 'Health and Care Sector Progression Academy' pilot, Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, James Palmer said:

This is a prime example of the benefits Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will receive because of our devolution deal with central government. The additional £5.2 million is set to create 600 new apprenticeships, providing us with an opportunity to upskill local people whilst supporting the health and care industry. I am excited to see this pilot develop and help us make a difference in the county.

Commenting on the new business-led training hub, Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen said:

Over the last 4 years, the unemployment rate in the Tees Valley has halved. Our economy is growing, and more people are in work providing for themselves and their families.

Things are getting better, but there remain stubborn barriers to work. This new investment from the government, secured because we have a mayor, gives us a unique opportunity to address long-term unemployment.

Today I'm calling on local support services, voluntary organisations and local councils to work together to provide the best possible support to help people back to work.

These new pilots were agreed with 6 combined authority areas as part of ground-breaking devolution deals and the government's plan to hand new funding and powers back to local areas across the country. These schemes are aimed at boosting growth and jobs by working with the new combined authority mayors.

This announcement follows on from the [Work, health and disability: improving lives](#) green paper, which marks the next stage of the government's action to confront prejudices and misunderstandings within the minds of employers and across wider society.

In total, 6 combined authorities with a devolution deal will receive support from government.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

Create a new Health and Care Sector Progression Academy to train those outside the sector to gain employment, and help those already working in the sector to progress.

Tees Valley Combined Authority

Create a Tees Valley Hub to join up the services available to the individual and offer key workers to provide one-to-one support.

Sheffield City Region Combined Authority

Implement a new early intervention system for individuals identified as being at high risk of becoming long term unemployed.

Leader of Rotherham Borough Council and Chair of the Sheffield City Region Skills, Employment and Education Board, Councillor Chris Read said:

I am very pleased to see this pilot, which will help underpin the inclusive approach of the Sheffield City Region. We are in the vanguard of this work. As we see the numbers of our high value jobs growing we are ensuring that no one in our communities misses out on this growth.

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

Testing the value of utilising social networks and social capital in removing barriers to paid employment.

WMCA lead member for skills and productivity and leader of Coventry City Council, Councillor George Duggins said:

Supporting those who need it most is a fundamental value for the WMCA and why we will be using this pilot scheme to help disadvantaged people into work.

Having a secure and properly paid job is one of the most effective ways for people to improve their quality of life but we have to make sure that everyone in society benefits from the job opportunities being created, especially those on low incomes and the young, unemployed people so they can reach their full potential.

West of England Combined Authority

Set up a new system which supports individuals trapped in low paid jobs to achieve in work progression through tailored interventions.

West of England Mayor, Tim Bowles said:

This is an important project that will help improve the skills and opportunities of up to 3,000 adults across the region. It will help grow our skills base to ensure a stronger economy and higher

quality of life for all.

Through this scheme, we will work with individuals who are already in employment, claiming in-work benefits and are social housing tenants. We will help them raise their own skill levels and gain more secure and higher-quality jobs.

I am committed to improving people's skills and supporting our residents to benefit from the prosperity and opportunities available in the West of England region.

Liverpool City region

Test a new approach which focuses efforts on households where 2 or more adults are out of work.

Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor, Steve Rotheram said:

Improving the employment and skills prospects for our residents is a key priority for the combined authority. Our Households into Work programme is an example of where assisting our residents with tailored support will help them to prosper, as well creating opportunities that they might previously not have been able to access. I look forward to seeing this programme develop over the coming months.

Follow DWP on:

[Press release: Welsh Secretary announces trade and investment visit to Japan](#)

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will travel to Japan this week (1-4 Aug) for a series of meetings with businesses to discuss the great potential for further inward investment in the United Kingdom.

The visit comes hot on the heels of a series of visits by the Secretary of State to Japanese companies with an existing presence in Wales. In June, Mr Cairns visited Newtown based motor technology company Nidec and in July, met executives at Panasonic in Cardiff with the aim of giving maximum certainty and security to international businesses based in Wales as the UK prepares to leave the European Union.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

My visit to Japan shows that the UK Government wants to work closely with businesses from every part of the world, to demonstrate the huge investment potential available to them here, and to ensure that those that already have a presence here get the certainty they need to expand and grow.

Japanese companies invest more than £40 billion in the UK and our commercial relationship is stronger than ever. We want to see that partnership continue to grow and flourish.

I wanted to make it a priority to visit this important trading partner to send a clear message that the UK is – and always will be – open for business.

During his mission, Mr Cairns will discuss strengthening UK-Japanese economic ties with the British Ambassador to Japan and meet executives from Panasonic, Sony and Toyota to offer the reassurance that Wales will still be the same outward looking, ambitious country it has always been after the UK leaves the EU.

The Secretary of State will also meet with Hitachi – the parent company of Horizon Nuclear Power and Hitachi Rail Europe.

Before boarding his flight, the Secretary of State will take the opportunity to learn more about the expansion plans of one of the world's busiest international airports. Heathrow acts as a crucial artery for inward investment in the UK and Mr Cairns will meet with the airport's CEO, John Holland-Kaye before taking a tour of the control tower and the runways where over 200,000 passengers take off and land on a daily basis.

Mr Cairns added:

My visit to Japan is a continuation of my commitment to engage with global companies based in Wales and the UK as a whole. We are proud to have so many international companies employing our local skillset and contributing to local economic growth.

Post EU exit, we want to continue to be an influential power on the world stage, working with international partners to ensure security and prosperity.

To highlight the strong cultural links between Japan and Wales, Mr Cairns will also deliver a speech at a dinner to mark the 35th anniversary of Clwb Hiraeth – a group set up in 1982 by Senior Executives who worked in Wales and returned to Japan with a huge affection for the country.