

Jenrick confirms Housing Department Wolverhampton HQ in historic move

Communities Secretary confirms dual headquarters in Wolverhampton.

In a key milestone for the government's levelling up agenda, Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP today (20 February 2021) confirmed that the government will create a second headquarters in Wolverhampton with at least 500 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Group roles set to be based across the West Midlands by 2025 – with further increases planned by 2030.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is leading the way and the new HQ in Wolverhampton will include the presence of ministers – making it the first such ministerial office outside of London with a regular ministerial presence. Senior civil servants will also be based in Wolverhampton, ensuring this becomes a centre for policy development and decision making.

This historic move signals a culture change in civil service to give a stronger voice to communities in our mission to level up opportunity and prosperity across the regions. This is a significant increase on the 300 roles currently in the region and is part of plans to have at least 800 roles outside of London by 2030 – including 50% of the most senior positions. This will ensure that more local voices are reflected in the creation of government policy.

These moves will help provide an economic boost to these areas, bring a greater variety of voices and experiences into the Civil Service and provide improved career paths outside of Whitehall.

Recruitment is already underway, with 40 roles already relocated to the region in the last 12 months. A further increase in the number of roles is set to occur by 2030.

MHCLG will be working in partnership with other government departments to improve collaborative working and develop greater career options outside London so we retain talented civil servants based outside of London. We expect to announce the new building for the headquarters in the spring.

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

As Communities Secretary, I am determined to spread opportunity and prosperity to every part of our nation. That is why I am delighted to be taking the historic step of moving significant numbers of senior roles out of Whitehall and creating the first ever ministerial office outside of Westminster in Wolverhampton – increasing the jobs in the Midlands to over 500.

With a dual headquarters in Wolverhampton my department will not only change where we work but how we work, signalling the end of the Whitehall knows best approach. All of us at the department are looking forward to having the opportunity to work there.

This government knows that by having more local voices at the heart of our policy development and delivery, we will support our communities more effectively, and we will continue to develop greater career options in government outside of London.

In choosing the city of Wolverhampton we are also backing our great smaller cities, some of which have been neglected for too long. We want to raise their stature, encourage civic pride and commercial success.

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Further information on the building in Wolverhampton that will house the new second HQ in the region will be announced later this year.

Government announces boost for women's sport in latest round of Sport Winter Survival Package

- £2.25 million confirmed for Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship
- £4.2 million to netball, which has allowed the Vitality Netball Superleague to begin
- Combined £4 million funding also confirmed for badminton and basketball
- Women's sport to be prioritised for 250,000 free Covid-19 testing kits being made available to elite sports, worth £1.5 million
- Initial 19 National League Step 1-2 clubs to be offered loans worth up to £5.4 million

The Culture Secretary has announced the latest tranche of funding from the Government's Sport Winter Survival Package, providing a boost to women's sport.

The Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship will receive a combined £2.25 million of grant support for essential league costs, in addition to a proportion of 250,000 free Covid-19 lateral flow testing kits being made available by the Government to elite sports, with women's sport designated as

a priority.

In netball, England Netball and the Vitality Netball Superleague will receive a total of £4.2 million in grants, which has already provided the expanded league with the confidence to start its 2021 season on 12 February.

In basketball, British Basketball League clubs – including Women's British Basketball League clubs – will receive £2.5 million in grants and loans, whilst Basketball England will receive a £200,000 grant.

Badminton England will also receive a grant worth £1.3 million. The grant funding for England Netball, Basketball England and Badminton England is designed to cover essential costs to ensure the survival of these organisations.

This is the second tranche of funding to be announced from the Government's [£300 million Sport Winter Survival Package](#) that is focused on helping those major spectator sports severely impacted by coronavirus restrictions survive the winter.

It follows [the first announcement in January confirming that Steps 3-6 of the National League system will receive up to £10 million to protect the immediate future of approximately 850 clubs over the winter period.](#)

Submissions for support have been made from individual sports to an [independent decision-making Board](#), supported by Sport England.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

We are committed to helping our treasured sports through these challenging times. And today's announcement is more evidence of our support for them.

In particular, Women's sport has faced acute pressures. The past few years have seen fantastic progress – with greater participation, employment, commercial opportunities and visibility in the media. I am determined not to let it take a back seat again.

This targeted funding will enable sports to keep playing and inspire many more stars of the future.

Chair of the independent Board, Sir Ian Cheshire said:

Following thorough conversations with each party to assess their individual needs, the Independent Board is pleased to be able to confirm a substantial package of survival funding for netball, badminton, basketball and women's football, totalling over £10 million.

For those confirmed as recipients of support as part of this second

tranche, this funding is vital in helping keep their respective clubs and leagues operational at this time.

Meanwhile an initial 19 clubs across Steps 1-2 of the National League system will be offered loan packages worth up to £5.4 million. Whilst discussions remain ongoing with other clubs across the system, clubs in Step 1 will also receive free Covid-19 testing kits from the Government.

It follows a [provisional £11 million in low interest, long term loans being offered to clubs in Steps 1-2](#). Clubs are being assessed as quickly as possible to help those most in need.

In all, 250,000 free lateral flow Covid-19 testing kits worth £1.5 million are being made available to selected elite sports in need, due to the financial impact of testing on their ability to continue competitions as planned. It will ensure that the health and safety of elite athletes remains a priority, any Government funding directly benefits clubs and resources are not diverted to testing.

In addition to women's football and National League Step 1 clubs, England Netball, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and Rugby Football League (RFL) women's competitions are in discussions with the Government to take delivery of testing kits which will allow clubs to maintain their competitive schedules should they choose to do so.

It follows the Government recently acquiring new testing capacity. Testing kits will be distributed through the same channels as the Government-wide asymptomatic testing programme, with the current supply expected to support sports through to the end of March 2021. The offer will be extended to more potential recipients in due course.

On testing, Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden added:

We promised to support our national sporting life when we had to postpone the return of fans. Once again, we are doing just that. These free testing kits will help ensure the health and safety of elite athletes in competition remains paramount and mean resources can be focused on protecting the future of sports as we recover from the pandemic.

The Sport Winter Survival Package is a sector-specific intervention that is on top of the multi-billion pounds worth of business support that has been made available by the Government, including the furlough scheme, business rates relief and business interruption loan scheme that has helped many sports clubs to survive.

Further confirmations of funding from the Sports Winter Survival Package will be made in due course.

Notes to editors:

A [detailed factsheet](#) on how the Sport Winter Survival Package works and the criteria when assessing applicants has been published by Sport England.

[In a press conference at 10 Downing Street in May 2020, the Culture Secretary said:](#)

given the deserved momentum that had built up behind women's sport after the football, cricket and netball world cups, I will be working hard with the Sports Minister to make sure we don't lose any of that progress. Visibility matters. Our daughters deserve to see female athletes on the main stage.

On top of the Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship receiving a combined £2.25 million of grant support for essential league costs, any women's football clubs can apply for grants and loans to the main Sports Winter Survival Package through Sport England, should they require urgent financial support to survive through to the end of March 2021.

National League Step 1-2 clubs will be notified of their individual decisions early next week.

Kelly Simmons, FA Director of the Women's Professional Game, said:

This grant will help provide vital financial support to give the best possible opportunity to complete both the Barclays FA Women's Super League, and FA Women's Championship campaigns. Starting during pre-season last summer, we have carried out COVID-19 testing for players and staff every week in the top two divisions to ensure they can take to the field safely. With this grant from the Sport Winter Survival Package, we will be able to continue to do this right through to the end of the 2020/2021 season.

Fran Connolly, CEO of England Netball, said:

This funding has come at such a critical time for our sport, and will allow us to return visibility, momentum and continued opportunities at all levels of the game. This money has already helped us to restart and deliver the Vitality Netball Superleague 2021 season, which without it wouldn't have been possible. It's provided security and protection for our clubs within the league who are currently without the usual income from ticket sales. We have been particularly concerned about the significant impact COVID has had on women and girls who play the game at a community level, particularly on women's mental health and physical wellbeing. It's vital that we get them back on courts as soon as it's safe to do so, and the Sports Winter Survival Package will help us do that. We

are delighted we have this support and are excited about the future of our game.

British Basketball League Chairman Sir Rodney Walker said:

We were very pleased with the outcome from our negotiations, which will go a very long way to sustaining the top flight of our great game, and to sustaining our associated community programmes. We know the Government recognises the impact of basketball, and the work of many BBL WBBL Clubs, through their Foundations and Community Interest Companies, goes well beyond sport. These activities by our clubs go to the heart of the challenges faced by our young people in our disadvantaged communities, including related to physical activity, healthy eating, education related, social cohesion and mental health. This support will be very important in sustaining these programmes when the Covid pandemic is behind us.

Adrian Christy, Chief Executive at Badminton England said:

We are delighted, and extremely appreciative of the award made to badminton and the YONEX All England Open Badminton Championships. Because of the Sport Winter Survival Package, and the incredible support and understanding of colleagues at the DCMS and Sport England throughout this extraordinary time, we can proceed with our plans to stage this world leading event under strict Covid precautions whilst at the same time begin to plan for the restart and rebuilding of community badminton.

Grassroots sports clubs also have access to £220million in emergency funding from Sport England.

[Prime Minister's speech at the Munich Security Conference: 19 February 2021](#)

There is a habit of turning up at occasions such as these and announcing portentously that the West is locked in terminal decline, the Atlantic alliance is fractured, and NATO is in peril, and everything we hold dear risks being cast into oblivion.

And that industry of pessimism has thrived recently, perhaps even in Munich.

So without wishing for a moment to downplay the challenges and dangers we face, in the teeth of a global pandemic, let me respectfully suggest that the gloom has been overdone and we are turning a corner, and the countries we call the "West" are drawing together and combining their formidable strengths and expertise once again, immensely to everybody's benefit.

As you've seen and heard earlier, America is unreservedly back as leader of the free world and that is a fantastic thing.

And it's vital for our American friends to know that their allies on this side of the Atlantic are willing and able to share the risks and the burdens of addressing the world's toughest problems

That is why Global Britain is there and that is exactly what Global Britain is striving to achieve.

I'm delighted to report that I detected precisely that willingness among my fellow G7 leaders when I chaired a virtual meeting earlier today. The shared goals of the UK's presidency of the G7 are to help the world to build back better and build back greener after the pandemic and minimise the risk of a catastrophe like this happening again.

We all have lessons to learn from an experience that none of us would want to repeat.

At the last UN General Assembly, I proposed a five-point plan to protect the world against future pandemics and today the G7 agreed to explore a Treaty on Pandemic Preparedness, working through the World Health Organization, which would enshrine the actions that countries need to take to safeguard everyone against another Covid.

I intend to bring together my fellow leaders, scientists and international organisations for collective defence against the next pathogen, just as we unite against military threats.

The heroic endeavours of the world's scientists produced safe and effective vaccines against Covid in barely 300 days. In future we should aim to telescope that even more: by drawing together our resources, we should seek to develop vaccines against emerging diseases in 100 days.

Even in the early weeks of the pandemic, I hope that we in the UK resisted the temptations of a *sauf qui peut* approach and tried to keep the flame of global cooperation alive.

We helped to establish COVAX, the global alliance to bring Covid vaccines to developing countries, and today Britain ranks among COVAX's biggest donors, with the aim of supplying a billion doses to 92 nations, and we will also share the majority of any surplus from our domestic vaccination programme.

When Oxford University and AstraZeneca began their momentous effort against Covid, their express aim was to design a vaccine that would be cheap to obtain and easy to store, so that it could be speedily administered by every country.

Protecting ourselves also means tracking the virus's mutations, and nearly half of all the genome sequencing of possible Covid variants, anywhere in the world, has taken place in the UK.

Now we need to mobilise our shared expertise to create an early warning system for the next pathogen, enabled by a worldwide network of pandemic surveillance centres, and the UK intends work alongside the WHO and our friends to bring this about.

If anything good can possibly come from this tragedy, we have at least been given the chance to build a global recovery on new and green foundations, so that humanity can prosper without imperilling the planet.

To that end, as you've just been hearing from John Kerry, Britain will host COP-26 in Glasgow in November and I'm delighted that America under President Biden's leadership has rejoined the Paris Agreement.

The UK's aim will be to help to rally as many countries as possible behind the target of Net Zero by 2050.

We were the first industrialised nation to adopt this goal and we have made it legally binding and published our plan for a Green Industrial Revolution to show how we will get there, so I hope that other countries will follow the UK's example.

But we can only address global problems alongside our friends, and extend Britain's influence around the world, if the UK itself and our own citizens are safe, including from the terrorist threat we all face.

The starting point of our Integrated Review of foreign, defence and development policy – which will be published next month – is that the success of Global Britain depends on the security of our homeland and the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area.

If climate change and pandemics are silent and insidious threats, hostile states may seek to harm our people in direct and obvious ways, as the Russian state did with reckless abandon in Salisbury three years ago, only to collide with the immovable rock of trans-Atlantic solidarity, sanctions and coordinated diplomatic expulsions, an outstanding act of collective security, for which I once again thank our friends.

If we are to assure our safety, our democracies need to strengthen their capabilities to meet the rigours of an ever more competitive world.

And it is precisely for that reason, so that we can keep our people safe, by fulfilling our obligations to NATO and enhancing the UK's global influence, that is the reason I have decided to bolster our armed forces with the biggest increase in our defence budget since the Cold War.

The UK's defence spending will rise by £24 billion over the next four years, comfortably exceeding the NATO pledge to invest 2 percent of GDP, and ensuring that we retain the biggest defence budget in Europe and the second largest in NATO, after the United States.

We will focus our investment on the new technologies that will revolutionise warfare – artificial intelligence, unmanned aircraft, directed energy weapons and many others – so that we stand alongside our allies to deter any adversary and preserve the peace.

This year, the Royal Navy's new aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, will embark on her maiden deployment, sailing 20,000 nautical miles to the Indo-Pacific and back.

On her flight deck will be a squadron of F35 jets from the US Marine Corps; among her escorts will be an American destroyer, showing how the British and American armed forces can operate hand-in-glove – or plane-on-flightdeck – anywhere in the world.

But investing in new capabilities is not an end in itself. The purpose of the military instrument is to strengthen diplomacy and therefore maximise the chances of success.

We do not wish to live in a world of unchecked rivalry or decoupling or obstacles to sensible cooperation and global economic growth. Nor are we concerned solely with trade: I hope the UK has shown by our actions that we will defend our values as well as our interests.

In leaving the European Union we restored sovereign control over vital levers of foreign policy.

For the first time in nearly 50 years, we now have the power to impose independent national sanctions, allowing the UK to act swiftly and robustly. Our first decision was to create a Magnitsky regime designed to punish human rights offenders. The UK then became the first European country to sanction senior figures in Belarus after the stolen election. We have now imposed sanctions on over 50 human rights violators, including from Russia, Myanmar and Zimbabwe.

We have consistently spoken out against China's repression of the Uighur people in Xinjiang province – and we will continue to do so. We have introduced new measures to ensure that the supply chains of UK companies are not tainted by the violations in Xinjiang. After China broke a treaty and imposed a repressive national security law on Hong Kong, the UK offered nearly 3 million of the territory's people a route to British citizenship. We acted quickly and willingly – with cross-party support at home – to keep faith with the people of Hong Kong.

Now that we have left the EU, Parliament has a greater say over foreign policy and this has only reinforced our national determination to be a Force for Good in the world.

Britain is working alongside France, Germany and the United States in a trans-Atlantic quad to address the most pressing security issues, including Iran.

And I sense a new resolve among our European friends and allies to come together and act again with unity and determination, and we witnessed that

spirit after the attempted murder of Alexei Navalny, as he recovered in a hospital bed in Berlin.

While NATO was being written-off in some places, the supertanker of European defence spending was quietly beginning to turn, and while this delicate high seas manoeuvre is far from complete, and the vessel needs to alter course a good deal more, the fact is that NATO defence spending – excluding the United States – has risen by \$190 billion since the Wales summit in 2014.

When our allies on the eastern flank sought reassurance about their security, NATO responded by deploying a multinational force in Poland and the Baltic states and the UK was proud to make the biggest single contribution, leading the battlegroup in Estonia, showing that we mean it when we say that our commitment to European security is unconditional and immovable.

I believe that Europe increasingly recognises the necessity of joining our American friends to rediscover that far-sighted leadership and the spirit of adventure and trans-Atlantic unity, that made our two continents great in the first place.

A new world is rising up around us, patterns of trade and commerce are changing, the global centre of gravity is moving eastwards, the technological revolution proceeds with blistering speed. But none of us should fear or resent these changes.

Free societies are united by their faith in liberal democracy, the rule of law and free markets, which surely comprise the great trinity of human progress.

Free countries – many of them located far beyond the geographical “West”, by the way – possess a boundless and inherent ability to release the talents and enterprise of their people to master and adapt to change.

It is no coincidence that of the 10 most innovative nations in the world – as ranked by the Global Innovation Index in 2020 – all but one are liberal democracies.

There is no reason why our countries should not be stronger and safer in 2030 – or indeed 2050 – than today, provided we share the burdens, compete successfully and seek out friends and partners wherever they may be found. I have invited South Korea, and Australia and India to attend the next G7 summit as guests, alongside leading international organisations.

So let's resist any temptation to bemoan the changes around us.

Let's build a coalition for openness and innovation, reaching beyond established alliances and the confines of geography, proud of our history, but free of any temptation to turn back the clock, and harnessing the genius of open societies to flourish in an era of renewed competition.

Let's respectfully dispel the air of pessimism that has sometimes attended our conferences.

America and Europe, side by side, have the ability to prove once again the innate advantages of free nations, and to succeed in forging our own destiny.

UK donates equipment to Peru to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

News story

The donation of 60 ventilators and 40 monitors by the UK government will strengthen the care of patients with COVID-19 in Peru.



Ambassador Harrisson, with the Prime Minister Violeta Bermúdez and the Minister of Health Óscar Ugarte, during the handing ceremony.

Today (19 February), the United Kingdom government donated 20 mechanical ventilators, 40 non-invasive ventilators and 40 monitors to the Ministry of Health of Peru to contribute to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The donation, valued at two million soles (520 thousand pounds sterling), was delivered by the British ambassador, Kate Harrisson. She said:

The COVID-19 pandemic is a truly global challenge and we must come together to defeat it and help our countries to recover. I am therefore very pleased that the United Kingdom is able to donate this life saving equipment to the government of Peru. I hope it will help to ensure that fewer families suffer the loss of a loved one at the hands of this terrible virus. We will continue to do all we can to share expertise, resources and information with Peru as we face this shared challenge.

It is necessary to continue complying with safety measures in light of recent increases in cases in Peru. Let's continue with social distancing so that the contagion curve does not rise again

UK Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas, Wendy Morton, said:

International collaboration is key to beating COVID-19. That is why the UK is working in partnership with countries, including Peru, to bring the virus under control.

I am proud that the UK is providing the life-saving equipment Peru needs at this important time. Only by working together will we be successful in saving lives and ending the pandemic.

The implements for the care of patients with COVID-19 were delivered to the Ministry of Health, who will be in charge of their distribution to the different hospitals across Peru.

The governments of Peru and the United Kingdom have been in constant communication to join forces in the fight against COVID-19, and continue to strengthen the bilateral relationship and joint work between both countries on projects such as the reconstruction of the north of Peru, and commercial opportunities and investment.

This donation ratifies the UK's leading role in the global and scientific response to the COVID19 pandemic. The United Kingdom is also the main donor to the COVAX Facility, which seeks to ensure accessible vaccines to the countries of the world when it is finalised.

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[COP26 President Alok Sharma welcomes Nepal's positive action on climate change](#)

- Alok Sharma's first visit to Nepal as COP26 President to see the effects of climate change on the Himalayan region
- He met with Nepal's Prime Minister Oli, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, other government Ministers and officials, community leaders and civil society
- Supporting women's voices in climate action ahead of COP26 was a key part of visit

The COP26 President Alok Sharma visited Nepal this week to observe the effects of global warming on mountainous communities first-hand and learn more about the country's ambitious work to tackle climate change.

During his two day visit, Mr Sharma met Nepalese Prime Minister KP Oli, President Devi Bhandari, government ministers, mountain communities and climate activists, including female climate leaders and young climate champions, to better understand the opportunities and challenges around making climate action happen in Nepal.

Mr Sharma congratulated Prime Minister KP Oli on Nepal's recent commitment to net zero by 2050— a crucial step in the global fight against climate change — and they discussed increasing climate ambition ahead of COP26.

President Bhandari and Mr Sharma spoke about the challenges Nepal faces as a highly climate vulnerable country and an extremely low emitter, and how the UK and Nepal can share their experiences to achieve net zero.

They also spoke about how the UK can help amplify women's voices on climate at the COP26 climate summit which will be held in Glasgow later this year.

The UK is already working with development partners to coordinate a \$7.4 billion Green Recovery Support package that will help Nepal build back greener from Covid-19. The package will help Nepal recover sustainably from the immediate impacts of the pandemic, by investing in clean energy, water and projects such as flood prevention, and tree planting, whilst mobilising support for sustainable job creation in agriculture, forestry, and tourism.

Alok Sharma, COP26 President-Designate, said:

As COP26 President it's important to me that I was able to see first-hand the very real impacts of climate change including on the lives of mountain-based communities.

People here are incredibly resilient but it is an injustice that one of the lowest carbon emitters in the region is being hit in this way.

There is clearly a strong understanding of the urgent need for climate action among women and young people here, and I was glad to hear that sentiment echoed by the Government of Nepal.

Globally we must do more to support those on the frontline of climate change. Seeing the British Gurkha projects in action shows how we can improve lives if we work together.

Nepal negotiates with the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group and has been asked by its Chair, Bhutan, to represent the interests of the Hindu Kush Himalaya's at COP26.

The Himalaya supply 1.6 billion people with fresh water and Nepal alone supplies 400 million.

Annual warming in the Himalayan region is twice the global average and glaciers are retreating by up to 60 metres per year. Mr Sharma saw this when

he visited the region and spoke with mountain communities about the impacts of climate change on the Himalaya and retreating glaciers.

Access to water is a pressing issue for some Himalayan communities and Mr Sharma met with people who are building resilience against the effects of climate change with the help of a project run by British Gurkha Nepal.

Minister Sharma also met the British Embassy's Mountains and Climate Change Champion, ex-British Gurkha Nirmal 'Nimsdai' Purja who is supporting the British Embassy's year long #ActionIsPossible campaign.

The British Ambassador to Nepal, Her Excellency Nicola Pollitt, said:

I am delighted that the COP President Sharma was able to visit Nepal and see first-hand the severe impacts of climate change on the mountains, on biodiversity, on communities and the region. As COP President, he is uniquely placed to deliver clear messages on the need for climate action in the Himalaya to the rest of the world.

Nirmal 'Nimsdai' Purja, British Embassy Kathmandu's Mountains and Climate Change Champion, said:

I've seen the impact of climate change in the mountains. On K2 as well as on Nepal's mountains. On Manaslu, my team and I were able to boil snow for drinking water in 2012. In 2020, there was no snow to boil. We had to carry water all the way up. If we work together, action is possible.

Ends.

Notes to editors:

1. COP26 President Alok Sharma visited Nepal on 17-18 February 2021.
2. The COP26 summit will take place on 1-12 November 2021 in Glasgow and will bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
3. The UK is committed to working with all countries and joining forces with civil society, companies and people on the frontline of climate change to inspire climate action ahead of COP26.