

# Government commits to 80,000 new SWAPs opportunities

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has today given a further boost to jobseekers by increasing the number of retraining places on the Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) to 80,000 for the next financial year – building on the 40,000 already successfully delivered over the last eight months.

SWAPs offer jobseekers across England and Scotland a six-week training programme, where they learn new skills, gain hands-on work experience and build their contacts in a new line of work. Whether it's from aviation to care, or finance to logistics, every SWAP participant is guaranteed an interview at the end of their course for a live job vacancy.

Already, the £30bn Plan for Jobs investment is helping people across Britain find new employment and upskill in key growth sectors – with the DWP on track to be able to help over 1.8 million people into work.

Work and Pensions Secretary Therese Coffey said:

More people are looking at ways to apply their skills in new industries and many are interested in retraining in sectors such as care. That's why we're increasing the number of SWAPs on offer – giving jobseekers a vital chance to get back on their feet, through our Plan for Jobs.

The Sector-based Work Academy Programme gave Grace Simpson from the West Midlands the skills and confidence she needed to move into work in care.

Grace said:

The most valuable thing about SWAPs was giving me the knowledge and experience that I needed to be able to work in the care sector.

With the Kickstart Scheme creating hundreds of thousands of new opportunities for young people, Job Finding Support offering 160,000 newly unemployed jobseekers online help, and the JETS Programme supporting a quarter of a million people to fire up their work search – the two million helped will include people of all ages and abilities.

Deputy CEO of the Recruitment & Employment Confederation, Kate Shoesmith, said:

The Plan for Jobs should be at the heart of the recovery –

focussing on how to get people into work quickly is fundamental. REC is proud to be a Kickstart Gateway employer and why so many of our recruiters are providing places on the scheme.

Help with practical job finding tools, like CV writing and interview practice, is a great support to jobseekers. Recruiters do this every day – last year 1 million people found a new permanent job with the help of a recruiter. Employment businesses are ready to work with government and play their part as job experts in building back the labour market to full strength.

Other work to level up the country and build back better includes green jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships, as well as the bespoke support each and every Universal Credit claimant receives from Work Coaches located throughout the country.

To help spearhead efforts to get Brits back in work the DWP is continuing to hire an additional 13,500 new dedicated Work Coaches with 8,500 already in post, and later this year the new Restart Scheme will help over a million people out of work for more than a year.

The announcement comes as the vaccine continues to roll out across the country with millions already receiving the vital shot in the arm, and recent employment figures reporting an uptick in vacancies on the quarter.

For more information on Plan for Jobs, visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/plan-for-jobs>.

## **Further information**

Scheme Estimated number of people supported – –  
Work Coaches 13,500 recruited by March

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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## **[Minister for the Constitution & Devolution: Local Elections](#)**

I am updating Parliament on the government's plans to proceed with the local elections on 6 May 2021 and the [statutory instruments](#) I am laying today on nominations.

Safe and secure elections are the cornerstone of our democracy. The government has long been clear that there should be a very high bar for delay, but it was responsible to keep the situation under review in order to take into account the views of the electoral community and of public health experts. Having considered these views, the government confirmed on Friday 5 February 2021 that the range of polls scheduled for 6 May 2021, including council and mayoral elections in England, and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales, will go ahead as planned. It is important that we give this certainty to the electoral sector and political parties.

The government has also published a [Delivery Plan](#) setting out how the polls will be delivered in a COVID-19 secure and effective way. It sets out how these polls will proceed, from announcement to results, and then covers the four major areas that we are addressing: public health and social distancing; nominations and campaigning; voting; and the delivery of elections. The government is providing a package of measures to support statutorily independent Returning Officers to deliver these elections successfully and with the right precautions in place. Those measures include changes to proxy voting rules so that those affected by COVID-19 can still vote; and the provision of indemnity to Returning Officers for COVID-19 risks in respect of these elections.

There will be an estimated £92 million of government grant funding that will be provided to local authorities for the elections; of this, £31 million is an uplift to directly address costs associated with making the elections COVID-19 secure.

I am today providing further detail of the measures the government intends to take to change temporarily the nominations process, in light of the exceptional circumstances. For potential candidates standing for elected office in the council, mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections, we are introducing measures to reduce the travel and contact involved in completing their nomination form.

The government has listened to the views of the electoral sector, candidates and political parties that the need to collect a high number of signatures for nomination as a candidate in some types of poll was encouraging an unhelpful and unnecessary amount of interaction, as well as complexity for candidates. While it is essential that candidates in a poll can demonstrate a clear amount of local support, we must balance the importance of democracy with the need to protect people in these unique circumstances. In reaching a decision about the approach to nominations we have consulted with the Parliamentary Parties Panel and considered other cross-party representations.

These statutory instruments, one affirmative and one negative, will therefore make changes to the nomination process to reduce the number of signatures that candidates are required to collect for almost all types of poll due to be held on 6 May, including council elections, mayoral elections and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections. These provisions are time-limited; the elections next May (2022) will automatically revert to the standard rules.

I intend to publish further guidance for candidates, their agents and political parties later this month. The government will be engaging with Parliamentary Parties Panel on the new guidance and on campaigning provisions, to ensure the views of political parties are taken into account.

The associated documents have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

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## **Trade in live bivalve molluscs from GB to EU for purification in the EU**

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, George Eustice has written to Stella Kyriakides, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety about trade in live bivalve molluscs from Great Britain to the European Union for purification in the EU.

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## **FCDO Competition launched to mobile investment in emerging and developing countries**

The UK Government today (8 February), invites the private sector to participate in a Competition to identify innovative product proposals to mobilise investment in sustainable infrastructure in emerging and developing countries.

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is launching a public Competition, engaging financial institutions in a competitive search for the best sustainable infrastructure proposals that can list, either on the London Stock Exchange and/or local exchanges.

In working with partners across the finance industry, the FCDO seeks to demonstrate that large scale institutional flows of capital for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and climate financing through listed instruments is possible. The Competition is the first in a series under the Mobilising Institutional Capital Through Listed Product Structures ([MOBILIST](#)) programme. MOBILIST seeks to identify listed product structures or platforms for FCDO to invest in and eventually bring to Initial Public Offering (IPO).

The Competition will feature at COP26 and also directly delivers a Government commitment made at the UK-Africa Investment Summit. The FCDO is backing the

Competition with public capital; with technical assistance and by working across HMG and our network of diplomatic Missions around the world.

Emerging and developing countries continue to face significant shortfalls in their private (and sovereign or public) sector financing needs to around \$2.5 trillion a year. Low and Low Middle-Income countries need \$1.4 trillion of this. As part of our efforts to bridge this gap, the UK Government supports the identification, development and listing of new instruments that meet these objectives: i) commercial viability; ii) replicability; iii) scalability; iv) additionality; v) feasibility.

MOBILIST is the entry-point to the FCDO's ambition for a UK Mobilisation Platform that acts in public and private markets and represents a long-term commitment by the UK Government to securing new sources of investment at scale, to finance global development for decades ahead.

The Competition is being managed by PwC who will host a market briefing event on the 19th February 2021. To sign up for this event, complete the PwC form [here](#).

For further information, email: [uk\\_mobilist\\_infracompetition@pwc.com](mailto:uk_mobilist_infracompetition@pwc.com)

The FCDO's work on Mobilisation includes programmes with and through the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), Development Finance Institutions (in particular CDC and the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG)). It also includes financial sector programmes such as Financial Sector Deepening Africa (FSDA).

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## [Experts share tips for tackling plastic pollution in Portsmouth](#)

Behaviour change is the focus of an online plastic pollution workshop being held for Portsmouth communities today (Monday 8 February).

The interactive event, jointly hosted by the Environment Agency and the University of Portsmouth, is aimed at representatives from zero waste groups and plastic free communities who want to encourage local people to stamp out avoidable plastic waste in their lives.

Experts believe around 10 million tonnes of plastic waste enters the ocean every year, which is equivalent to a bin lorry load every minute.

Jonathan Harvey, from the Environment Agency's Plastics and Sustainability Team, said:

Bringing together experts and sharing their valuable skills and

experience with Portsmouth communities will provide encouragement, confidence and reassurance that local organisations can make a real difference.

If we are going to improve the quality of our environment, it is important to get everybody involved. Today's workshop supports communities with the latest tools, knowledge, and evidence to change behaviours and tackle plastic pollution within their patch.

We're encouraging everybody to re-evaluate the things that they buy and consume – to step away from single-use items and choose more reusable, repairable, and sustainable alternatives.

Whatever you do, small steps will contribute towards creating cleaner communities and marine environments.

Attendees will also have the chance to discuss the barriers they have faced in trying to change people's behaviours, how to engage hard to reach groups, and how they can apply behaviour change theory to their own work.

Professor Steven Fletcher, Director of Sustainability and Environment at the University of Portsmouth, said:

The University of Portsmouth is delighted to be working with the Environment Agency, our community partners, to support actions that are better for people and the planet. Community-based action is critical to building healthy and sustainable communities.

The workshop is the second plastic pollution event aimed at Portsmouth communities as part of the EU-funded Interreg Preventing Plastic Pollution project – a programme to understand and reduce the impacts of plastic pollution in river and marine environments. The first workshop took place in October and encouraged communities to form a network, access resources and collectively start taking steps to tackle plastic pollution.

### **Preventing Plastic Pollution: Working in partnership with 18 organisations from across France and England.**

Preventing Plastic Pollution (PPP) seeks to understand and reduce the impacts of plastic pollution in the river and marine environments. By looking at the catchment from source to sea, the project will identify and target hotspots for plastic, embed behaviour change in local communities and businesses, and implement effective solutions and alternatives.

PPP is a €14million funded EU INTERREG VA France (Channel) England Programme project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund which works mainly across East Hampshire, Test and Itchen, Poole Harbour, Medway, Tamar, and Great Ouse, Brest Harbour, Bay of Douarnenez, and Bay of Veys catchments.

The event also supports Revolution Plastics – a project launched by the

University of Portsmouth to find solutions to the world's plastic problem by bringing together teams of scientists, business-leaders, campaigners and citizens who share an ambition to transform the way we make, use and dispose of this polluting material.

Experts will share tried and tested engagement methods for inspiring change, including:

- Sohvi Nuojua from the Behavioural Science Team at the University of Plymouth. Sohvi is sharing evidence-based techniques that can be used to reduce littering, encourage recycling and cut down use of plastics by disrupting habits, highlighting environmental consequences and other methods.
- Clare Seek from Plastic Free Portsmouth. Clare will be talking about her experiences and challenges working with community groups in Portsmouth, including litter, children's experience of nature, and repair cafe fixes.
- Dr Daphne Kaklamanou, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology, at the University of Portsmouth.

To find out more about the workshop email [plasticsandsustainability@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:plasticsandsustainability@environment-agency.gov.uk).