

# First phase of school transformation launched

Tens of thousands of pupils are set to benefit from new, modern, energy efficient school buildings as 50 schools are confirmed for the first wave of the Prime Minister's ten-year rebuilding programme, to level up opportunities for all.

Transforming education for thousands of pupils, the first 50 projects announced today are supported by £1 billion in funding and mark the start of the School Rebuilding Programme, which is due to deliver 500 rebuilding projects over the next decade. The schools include primary, secondary and specials as well as a sixth form college in West Yorkshire, with more than 70 per cent of the schools in the North and Midlands. The initial rebuilds and refurbishments will create modern education environments, providing new facilities from classrooms and science labs, to sports halls and dining rooms. The schools will also be greener, helping meet the Government's net zero target.

Over 15,500 children will also benefit from 21 new free schools, the government has confirmed today, with ten opening in some of the most deprived areas. Three are in Opportunity Areas, where the Department works to remove barriers that could stop young people from achieving their potential.

More than £10 million will also be invested to support school sports and swimming facilities in England, and will be distributed through Sport England. This targeted investment to selected schools will build on existing funding to help schools open their facilities outside of school hours, and encourage pupils to be more physically active.

Today's announcement for a revamp of schools across the country comes as the department continues to plan to welcome students and teachers back to face to face education as soon as possible. Testing and strong safety measures will be in place as before, to make sure that schools remain as safe as possible despite the challenges brought by the new variant. This first phase of the school rebuilding programme, the commitment to 21 new free schools and extra support for physical activity, provides a boost for us all to build back better, concentrating on levelling up opportunities for all.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Today we are launching the first phase of our ambitious new schools programme, with 50 rebuilds and 21 new free schools.

The rebuilding projects are just the start of our major ten-year programme, transforming hundreds of schools and improving the education of tens of thousands of children. Alongside this, over 15,500 children will now benefit from 21 new free schools across

the country as we look to build back better after the pandemic.

I am determined to get all children back into education as soon as possible, and will make sure we do not let the pandemic stand in the way of giving every young person the opportunity to succeed, progress and fulfil their potential.

Unity Howard Director of New Schools Network said:

This is fantastic news for communities across the country. Free schools have an incredible track record of driving up standards, and we have seen over the past decade just how popular free schools are with parents.

The groups planning these new free schools should be proud today; the free school application process is demanding, and this year they have dealt with additional uncertainties owing to the pandemic. I wish them the very best of luck as they begin working towards welcoming children through the doors of their new schools in the years to come.

The 21 new free schools announced today reflects the Government's continued commitment to the free school programme. 558 free schools have already opened across the country to date.

Project planning for the 50 rebuilds is already advanced on a number of schools following site visits last year, so construction can begin on the first projects from autumn 2021. The programme will help create jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities across England, with suppliers offering training and apprenticeships as part of their work on the rebuilds. The majority of the first 50 rebuild projects under the programme are expected to be completed within three to five years.

Alison Rigby, Headteacher of St John Fisher Catholic High School, Wigan said:

We cannot express our sheer delight that our young people will have access to modern, state-of-the-art facilities in the future. We all know buildings don't educate children, people do, but the environment in which children learn and are encouraged to grow is vital in producing decent human beings.

It is great that our school has been identified for this investment – we have a unique sporting heritage – we have produced international Rugby league, Rugby Union and Netball players and athletes – despite our modest sporting facilities!

This new build project will boost our curriculum offer and provide

fantastic facilities in which our learning community will continue to flourish, and, most importantly, build confidence in our young people because they will feel valued and invested in and – ultimately, loved.

The investment of over £1 billion to support the first round of the School Rebuilding Programme comes on top of the Government's commitment to allocate £1.8 billion for school repair and upgrade projects over this coming year. It represents a sustained investment in our schools, creating classrooms and environments that support the country's world-leading teachers to deliver the best possible education.

Further details about the School Rebuilding programme will be set out later in 2021, including how evidence about schools' condition needs can be provided to support prioritisation for future rounds of the programme.

Projects will range from replacing or refurbishing individual buildings through to whole school rebuilds. The department also plans to consult this year to gather views on how schools are prioritised for future rounds of the long-term programme. The sports facilities funding will be distributed through Sport England and their county level networks, Active Partnerships, who will work with local schools to identify who are most in need. Schools in disadvantaged areas, or areas with high inactivity among children, will also be given the opportunity to bid for funding. The investment can also support schools with opening in a Covid-secure manner, such as with additional signage, touch-free entry and cleaning equipment.

The funding can also support facilities to improve accessibility, especially for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. This could include buying adaptive sports equipment, like sensory balls for the visually impaired or wheelchair-accessible equipment.

ENDS

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## **State-of-the-art £31 million Feltham station update complete**

- £31 million Feltham station upgrade completed with extended platforms, new pedestrian and cycle bridge and step-free entrance
- closure of Feltham West level crossing has enhanced the safety of local community
- £375 million project to replace older signalling by 2024 continues, improving reliability on busy commuter line

Important upgrades to improve accessibility, local connections and increase

capacity at Feltham station have been completed, Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris has announced today (5 February 2021), thanks to government investment of £31 million.

The station and the surrounding area has seen a host of improvements since Network Rail began work in September 2018, delivering significant benefits to passengers on a busy commuter line into London Waterloo. These include extended platforms to allow longer 10-car trains to call, while the Feltham West level crossing has been closed to improve community safety.

Accessibility has also been enhanced with the construction of a new shared pedestrian and cycle bridge, providing a bike-friendly route over the railway, along with a further step-free entrance to platform 1, next to newly positioned bus stops, improving local connections.

It comes as a £375 million project to replace older signalling with new state-of-the-art equipment continues, with the new technology set to improve reliability for passengers by reducing the time it takes to restore services in times of disruption.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

These important upgrades to Feltham station will make a huge difference on this key commuter line from London Waterloo, providing smoother passenger journeys and improved accessibility into and between platforms.

This investment underlines our commitment to build back better out of COVID-19, delivering improved journeys for passengers as they return to the railway.

Mark Killick, route director at Network Rail Wessex, said:

We're committed to providing better journeys for passengers. These improvements, on a key route into London, make the station more accessible for passengers and the local community.

The [Feltham and Wokingham Resignalling Programme \(FWRP\)](#) involves the full renewal of the signalling systems and is being delivered in 6 stages between 2021 and 2024. As part of the work, a number of level crossings in the area are being upgraded to improve the reliability and resilience of services, and to ensure the safety of local residents using them.

Alex Foulds, South Western Railway's Commercial Projects Director, said:

This joint effort to enhance Feltham station is fantastic news for our customers and the local community. The improvements to accessibility, a modern new station entrance and improved links

with cycle and bus routes will make the station a first-class gateway to the area.

The extended platforms will also welcome our brand-new fleet of longer Arterio trains later this year, fully equipped with charging points at every seat, onboard wifi and increased capacity.

Today's news comes ahead of the introduction of a new state-of-the-art train stabling and maintenance depot in Feltham that will serve [South Western Railway's new £1 billion fleet of Arterio trains](#) when it opens later this year.

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## [Ghana-UK Joint Statement: Ghana-UK Trade Partnership Agreement](#)

Press release

Ghana-UK joint statement on a new interim Ghana-UK Trade Partnership Agreement



On 31 December 2020, Ghana and the UK announced that they had reached a consensus on the main elements of a trade agreement that would replicate the effects of the trade relationship between Ghana and the UK prior to the end of the Transition Period following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union. They stated their intention to finalise the text of the agreement to reflect progress made in relation to rules of origin, cumulation arrangements, time-bound commitments, provisions for development cooperation and commitments to human rights and good governance.

Today Ghana and the UK are pleased to announce that they have finalised negotiations on a new Interim Ghana-UK Trade Partnership Agreement. This Agreement will provide for duty free and quota free access for Ghana to the UK market and preferential tariff reductions for UK exporters to the Ghanaian

market.

The Agreement will enter into effect following the completion of relevant internal procedures required in both Ghana and the UK.

The new Agreement reaffirms the deep interest of both Ghana and the UK to strengthen their longstanding trade and economic relationship. The Agreement also reflects the importance of integration between the West African States within the context of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and amongst African States within the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The Agreement further underscores their shared ambition to enhance relations between the UK, ECOWAS and African States more broadly.

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## [United Kingdom and Peru hold dialogue about future of trade](#)

Lima, 4 February 2021 – Today, the Minister of State for Trade Policy from the United Kingdom, Greg Hands and the Peruvian Minister of Foreign Trade and Tourism, Claudia Cornejo met virtually for the inaugural UK-Peru trade dialogue.

They welcomed the new UK- Andean Countries Trade Agreement that came into force in January and UK formal notification of its accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

They welcomed the UK's newly independent trade policy as a unique opportunity to further cooperate in areas such as agribusiness, green technologies and protecting the environment and agreed to a joint action plan to expand trade in digital products and services, including initiatives on sustainable agricultural and e-commerce.

Ministers agreed to work together to address global challenges such as COVID-19 recovery and climate change. They highlighted the continued role of free and open trade in 'building back better' and economic recovery for small and medium enterprises.

They looked forward to COP26 and role of trade in creating a low-carbon future. The UK government has committed £11.6 bn over the next five years to support developing countries combat climate change through the International Climate Finance (ICF), including £3bn to support nature and biodiversity initiatives. The UK will work with Peru in four ICF programmes for the next 3 years on halting deforestation, green finance and low carbon development.

They agreed on the need to on maintaining the highest environmental standards, and to increase collaboration on promoting the production and export of goods that protect biodiversity, and to address barriers to market for clean technologies, particularly in the energy sector.

Minister of State for Trade Policy Greg Hands said:

I was pleased to meet with Minister Cornejo and representatives from the Peruvian government today to continue strengthening our trade and investment ties. We look forward to boosting trade and investment within the framework of advancing clean and sustainable growth by creating new business opportunities in sectors such as services, technology and sustainable goods.

The United Kingdom sees Peru as a vital partner in the Latin America region and I look forward to working more closely together as the UK seeks to join CPTPP and we look to recover from the impact of Covid-19.

The Ministers also agreed on the need to accelerate efforts to remove any existing barriers to trade and investment, which create imbalances in bilateral trade, and acknowledged that a double taxation agreement will improve business activities in both countries.

They highlighted the importance of research collaboration to improving prosperity, particularly through the Newton Fund and the Global Challenges Research Fund.

Both Ministers committed to work together to help maintain free and fair trade as a driver of prosperity and recovery, including through reform and modernization of global trade institutions.

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## [Government publishes research into corrosive substances](#)

News story

The government has today published research into the motivations for carrying and using acid and other corrosives as a weapon.



The [research](#), which was commissioned in 2017 and carried out by the University of Leicester, delivers on a commitment made in the 2018 Serious Violence Strategy. It will help the government and law enforcement to continue cracking down on the use of acids and corrosives in crime.

The study was carried out using police data on corrosive-based crimes, interviews with convicted offenders and expert practitioners, and provides insight into the best approach around enforcement and prevention.

It found that:

- offenders carried corrosive substances for different reasons, including to commit criminal acts and as a result of peer pressure
- some were regular carriers of corrosives, while others used corrosives in the heat of the moment, such as during confrontations between gangs

The report made several proposals around prevention and enforcement of corrosive-based crimes, many of which the government and policing partners are already taking action upon.

Policing Minister Kit Malthouse said:

I'm determined to rid our streets of the scourge of violent crime, including acid attacks, which leave terrible physical and emotional scars on their victims.

This research will support the efforts of the government and law enforcement to bear down on criminals, deliver safer streets, and reduce crime.

Dr Matt Hopkins, Associate Professor in Criminology at the University of Leicester, said:

We are pleased to see this study published as it represents the first research to engage with offenders in order to identify reasons for carrying and using corrosives in crime. It represents a step forward in this area and forms a platform on which future research can be built.

Not only does it paint a clear picture of the patterns of corrosive use in the UK and why offenders may choose to carry and use corrosives, it also represents a step forward and a platform on which future research can be built.

We have also identified a number of areas for future preventative strategies.

To address the issue of violent crime, including corrosive-based crime, the government has:

- introduced the Offensive Weapons Act 2019, which bans the possession of dangerous and offensive weapons in private – including corrosive substances
- banned the sale and delivery of corrosive products to under 18s and made it an offence to possess a corrosive substance in a public place
- launched a campaign to recruit 20,000 additional police officers to fight crime – 6,620 of whom are already in post
- committed £176.5 million to the Serious Violence Fund over 2 years to bolster the police response in 18 areas most affected by violence in England and Wales

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