

UK commits to maintain funding share of Caribbean Special Development

During a pledging conference on 29th January, the UK committed to maintain its share of funding to the Caribbean Development Bank's Special Development Fund, pledging up to £21m over the next four years to continue supporting life changing projects in the Caribbean.

The Special Development Fund provides loans and grants to support projects in the most vulnerable countries in the region to tackle poverty, inequality and global challenges such as climate change and access to quality education.

For example, in Haiti, the Caribbean Development Bank has worked alongside the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank to improve primary school outcomes. The provision of tuition waivers, which allow students between 6 and 12 years old to access primary education, have supported over 260,000 children to complete their primary education.

The fund is replenished every four years and the UK's pledge cements its position as one of its largest donors.

Countries that will continue to benefit from the fund include Haiti, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname.

This commitment follows the announcement of £4.5 million additional funding from the UK Government to the Special Development Fund in September 2020 to support countries in the region with their COVID-19 recovery.

The pledged funding will help Caribbean countries better cope with the COVID-19 crisis, help mitigate the wider social and economic impacts, increase funding to tackle climate change, strengthen resilience to disasters, and protect the most vulnerable.

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1. 18 February 2021

updated questions and answers document.

2. 9 February 2021

Updated the questions and answer document

3. 5 February 2021

Operational questions and answer document updated.

4. 29 January 2021

Questions and answers published.

5. 22 January 2021

First published.

Coronavirus testing facility opens at Royal Mint

A new walk-through coronavirus testing facility has opened for people with symptoms to book appointments at the Royal Mint's Visitor Centre Car Park as part of the UK Government's drive to continue to improve the accessibility of coronavirus testing for local communities.

Testing at the new site, in Llantrisant, Rhondda Cynon Taf, started on Thursday 28 January with appointments made available each day.

The site is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history which has the capacity to process more than 700,000 tests a day and includes more than 800 sites across the UK. In Wales, this includes 10 drive-through sites, 20 walk through sites, 22 mobile units, plus the Newport Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

In March, prior to the setting up of the new testing centre in its car park, the Royal Mint transformed its visitor centre into an emergency production line – making 1.9 million medical visors for the NHS.

Before the new testing facility opened on Thursday afternoon, Welsh Secretary Simon Hart visited the site to thank staff and to learn about how UK Government testing facilities are rolled out at speed in communities.

Welsh Secretary Simon Hart said:

The network of testing centres set up across the length and breadth of Wales by the UK Government and its partners is truly impressive.

It was fantastic to see the work that goes into setting up these facilities at speed and the dedication of the people who operate them.

Along with the rollout of vaccines, easily accessible testing is vital as we continue to combat the virus. Walk-through centres, like the one in Llantrisant, are crucial in this effort.

Testing at the new Llantrisant site is only available for those with coronavirus symptoms – a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste. Anyone with one or more of these symptoms should book a test at nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119.

The testing centre is being operated in partnership with Mitie and will offer self-administered tests.

Simon Venn, Mitie Chief Government & Strategy Officer, said:

Our priority during the pandemic is to support efforts to fight COVID-19 and help keep the country running. Testing is a critical part of the UK's strategy to combat coronavirus and we're proud to support the UK Government with this vital task.

A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline heroes in Llantrisant, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.

[Drug dealer jailed after MOD Police Crime Command operation](#)

News story

Close working with Merseyside Police leads to arrest.



Jacob Bullen. 2021 Crown copyright.

Drug dealer Jacob Bullen (26) was arrested in possession of just over 1 kilogram of cocaine with a street value of £75,000, an electronic currency note counting machine and multiple mobile phones.

His arrest in Everton, supported by Merseyside Police, followed a proactive intelligence gathering police operation by Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) detectives.

Bullen, who was already on a suspended sentence for possession with intent to supply controlled drugs from a previous offence, pleaded guilty to a similar offence at Liverpool Crown Court, where he was jailed for a total 6 years and 8 months on Friday 29 January 2021.

Quantity of white powder seized. 2021 Crown copyright.

Det Supt Raffaele D'Orsi, Head of Intelligence and Investigations for MDP Crime Command, said:

This is an outstanding milestone in safeguarding the communities of Merseyside and the MOD from those predisposed to peddle class A drugs to enhance their criminal enterprises.

I am proud of the officers and staff involved in securing such overwhelming evidence against Bullen that has resulted in him pleading guilty and being sentenced within 43 days of his arrest. The MDP Crime Command will continue pursue all threats to the MOD, its personnel, assets or estates, in whatever form they may take or wherever they may originate from.

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