

Transport Secretary launches £794 million investment to boost rail links in north and south

- £794 million investment into next phase of East West Rail and reopening of the Northumberland line as part of government's ambition to build back better
- final round of Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund opens to develop proposals to restore railway lines, services and stations axed under the Beeching cuts
- investment to reconnect communities and stimulate economic growth, with East West Rail works set to create 1,500 skilled jobs

A £794 million investment package to reopen 2 important rail routes closed more than 50 years ago has been announced today (23 January 2021) by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps.

The new funding includes £760 million for the delivery of the next phase of East West Rail, which will create 1,500 skilled jobs, and reinstate direct rail services between Bicester and Bletchley for the first time since 1968.

[Short video on the next phase of East West Rail and the reopening of the Northumberland Line](#)

It also includes £34 million to rapidly progress plans to reopen the Northumberland line between Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Ashington, which closed to passengers in 1964 as part of the Beeching cuts.

The Transport Secretary has also today called on local authorities, MPs and community groups to submit bids for a share of the [third and final round of the Department for Transport's Ideas Fund](#), designed to encourage proposals to reopen railway lines, services and stations.

Today's announcement forms part of the government's commitments to build back better from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and level up transport infrastructure across the country by investing in rail connections that will boost economic growth, unlock new housing, and create jobs and opportunity.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Restoring railways helps put communities back on the map, and this investment forms part of our nationwide effort to build back vital connections and unlock access to jobs, education and housing.

Returning these routes to their former glory, and progressing work to reopen even more lines and stations shows our commitment to levelling up journeys across the country as we build back better

from the pandemic.

Simon Blanchflower, Chief Executive Officer at East West Railway Company, said:

We are delighted that the government has shown a big commitment to East West Rail and the Oxford-Cambridge arc with today's investment decision. This funding will enable us to get on with the construction work that will connect communities who live on the East West Rail link.

We are committed to improving connectivity across the Oxford-Cambridge arc, and fully recognise our responsibility to ensure that it is delivered in a way that minimises disruption, supports the regional economy, maximises benefits and supports jobs across the region.

Today's funding marks an important milestone in the delivery of East West Rail, which will provide better connectivity along the Oxford-Cambridge arc and shorten journey times between routes outside of London, boosting economic growth and serving major new housing developments.

The works between Bicester and Bletchley are expected to create 1,500 jobs. This phase of the project will include the construction of a new stations at Winslow, as well as enhancements to existing stations along the route, including Bletchley. By 2025, 2 trains per hour will run between Oxford and Milton Keynes via Bletchley.

The investment on the Northumberland line will fund preparatory works, including land acquisition, detailed design work and early site works.

Northumberland County Council Leader Glen Sanderson said:

This is absolutely fantastic news, and means we can now finalise our plans to deliver this transformational project for both Northumberland and the wider region.

The Northumberland line will bring a huge boost to the area in terms of economic growth, housing, employment and education opportunities, as well as providing a fast and efficient new transport link between the south-east of the county and Tyneside.

Plans for the project include new stations at Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth Bebside, Newsham, Seaton Delaval and Northumberland Park in North Tyneside, as well as upgrades to the track and changes to level crossings where bridges or underpasses may need to be built.

The latest round of the Ideas Fund will run until 5 March 2021 with

successful bids due to be announced later this summer.

[Appointment of Scott Mann MP as a Government Whip: 22 January 2021](#)

Press release

The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Scott Mann MP as a Government Whip (Lord Commissioner of HM Treasury).



The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Scott Mann MP as a Government Whip (Lord Commissioner of HM Treasury). This role is unpaid.

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[UK Government and seafood industry make good progress on exports](#)

News story

Today Minister David Duguid spoke with senior figures in the Scottish seafood industry to acknowledge there have been difficulties and provide solutions



Temporary issues felt in the seafood supply chain are steadily improving, UK Government Minister for Scotland David Duguid heard in a meeting he chaired today with senior figures in the industry.

“The UK Government has been striving night and day to help the industry and I am encouraged that solutions now in place are beginning to bear fruit,” he said after the latest meeting of the Scottish Seafood Export Working Group, attended online by the Scottish Seafood Association and Scottish Fishermen’s Federation.

The Minister also spoke with DFDS, the logistics experts who operate the Larkhall hub, through which much of Scotland’s seafood exports pass.

He said:

It is essential that we know precisely what difficulties are arising so we can tailor solutions. The excellent feedback from DFDS is massively helpful. We are working to streamline systems, while supporting exporters and partners such as DFDS, and the commitment to making the system work is clear across the board.

The UK Government has acknowledged there have been difficulties and we want to work together to provide solutions and restore confidence within this crucial sector so that world-class Scottish seafood can be harvested at sea and sped from port to plate for customers here and abroad.

A £23m additional support scheme for the seafood sector has been announced and the UK Government knows the urgency of rapid delivery. Meetings such as today’s allow us to take on board the industry’s concerns about the eligibility for that support fund, about making it swift and readily accessible.

There are still issues with the supply chain and we are doing all we can to ease them. I have today written to Scottish Government’s Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy, Fergus Ewing, encouraging take-up of our offer of additional support for Food Standards Scotland at Larkhall and providing further detail of our direct support for businesses with the embedding of experts to help firms with paperwork required by the EU.

We want a workable, sure-footed system so the industry can maximise the benefits of Britain's new status as an independent coastal state, outside the Common Fisheries Policy.

The £23m fund will be targeted at fishing export businesses who can evidence a genuine loss in exporting fish and shellfish to the EU. Support will be available immediately and paid retrospectively to cover losses incurred since 1 January 2021. The scheme will be targeted at small and medium enterprises and the maximum claim available to individual operators will be £100,000.

The Marine Management Organisation will administer the scheme on behalf of exporters across the UK. More details will be available on eligibility criteria in the coming days. The UK Government will be consulting industry across the UK and working with the devolved administrations on these eligibility criteria before they are confirmed.

Other support provided to the industry includes:

- Constructive dialogue between UK Government and industry has already helped to resolve a number of initial problems that caused difficulties for the industry, including – but not limited to – computer system glitches.
- Issuing clear guidance on the required IT forms and paperwork to stakeholder representative groups, hauliers and businesses.
- Frequent meetings with businesses to understand and address issues as they arise.
- Working closely with individual businesses to help them get used to the new procedures required to ensure that errors or problems are tackled early.
- The UK Government is providing extra physical resources to support certification in Scottish Hubs.
- The UK Government has provided specialist certifiers to support Food Standards Scotland and DFDS.
- An experienced certifying officer from Defra is in Lanarkshire supporting Official Veterinarians with the issuing of health certificates.
- Additional Official Veterinarians are on standby, available to Scottish Hubs, to support exporters if required.
- Working with French authorities to ensure that minor administrative issues associated with EHCs do not prevent goods from entering the market, and working with the EU Commission to help member states adopt consistent approaches.
- Providing extensive guidance as part of a range of measures to help the industry meet new export requirements, including training, regular engagement and weekly bulletins. Separately, the Prime Minister has also committed to providing a £100m fund to help modernise fishing fleets, the fish processing industry, and rejuvenate a historic and proud industry in the UK, on top of the £32m that will replace EU funding this year.

New hard-hitting national TV ad urges the nation to stay at home

- New emotive TV ad challenges the public to think about the impact their actions might have by asking: “Can you look them in the eyes and tell them you’re helping by staying at home?”
- The TV advert will launch on ITV and Channel 4 this evening and further advertising will run across radio, out of home, digital and across social media from Saturday evening
- Someone is admitted to hospital every 30 seconds with the virus, and a quarter of those are under the age of 55

There are currently over 38,000 beds taken up in England by COVID-19 patients.

Everyone across the UK is being asked “Can you look them in the eyes and tell them you’re helping by staying at home?” in a new government advertising campaign which will act as a stark reminder to the public of the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the extreme pressures facing frontline workers.

The powerful new campaign will run across TV, radio, press, digital, out-of-home advertising and social media, looking into the eyes of NHS staff and COVID-19 patients and documenting their emotions. It will air for the first time on Friday evening (22 January 2021) on ITV and Channel 4.

With a shift in tone to previous adverts, the new campaign features raw footage and testimonials from patients who have COVID-19, as well as the NHS staff who are working around the clock to look after them at Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital.

The impact of the second wave is still being seen in hospitals across the country with someone admitted every 30 seconds with the virus, and a quarter of those are under the age of 55. There are currently over 38,000 beds taken up in England by COVID-19 patients.

The adverts are designed to remind everyone, including those who have had the vaccine, of the ongoing need for caution when on public transport, or shopping, and to make sure they only use these services when it is essential to do so and to adhere to the principles of hands, face and space. The

campaign challenges the public to question their actions, and asks if they can look frontline workers in the eyes and tell them they are helping to stop the spread by following the rules and staying at home.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock, said:

The NHS is under intense pressure. They are relying on all of us to follow the rules.

I know how long the last few months have felt, and I know the vast majority of people are following the rules, but we have come too far to let up now.

Every day we are closer to beating this virus, and already over 5 million people across the UK have been vaccinated. But right now more than ever we need to stick together to protect our NHS and to keep saving lives.

The message couldn't be clearer – stay at home.

Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty, said:

The impact of the current wave is still putting significant pressure on hospitals across the country and many patients are very sick.

Vaccines give clear hope for the future, but for now we must all continue to play our part in protecting the NHS and saving lives.

Latest COVID-19 stats show the UK has seen the highest number of deaths recorded from COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, with over 1,000 people dying per day for the last 10 days.

The vast majority of people are staying at home and, as a result, the number of COVID-19 cases has reduced, but infections remain high and there are signs of a plateau. Everyone must continue to play their part to ensure rates reduce even further.

The new strain of the virus is around 50% to 70% more transmissible than the strain circulating in 2020. Additionally, it is now estimated around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms and are spreading it without knowing. The actions of a few people who are ignoring or bending the rules are putting everyone at risk and placing further pressure on doctors, nurses and NHS staff across the country.

The government guidance remains clear – stay at home unless absolutely essential.

To support the message, an additional short film has been developed featuring one-on-one interviews with the hospital staff from Basingstoke and North

Hampshire Hospital. and patients from both Basingstoke and St George's hospital in London who feature in the new advertising campaign. Within the interviews you hear about the daily lives of these hospital staff and the impact COVID-19 has had on them and calls on the public to take the message seriously and stay at home to help stop the spread.

Alex Whitfield, Chief Executive of Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, whose hospital the advert and film was created in, said:

We are going through the biggest national health emergency that many of us will see during our lifetime. COVID-19 is serious, lives are at risk and the pressure the NHS is under to provide care is real. Our staff, and other NHS staff across the country are working around the clock to provide vital care for those with COVID-19 and other health conditions.

We are pleading with the public to stay at home in order to look after each other and support our NHS staff so we can ultimately all play a part in saving lives. We hope that by having a film crew in here to hear how much pressure our hospital and staff are under, the public will get an understanding of what happens here every day. The threat is very real to us all.

Dr Emeka Okorochoa, Accident and Emergency Doctor, East London Hospitals, comments:

The past year has been tough on everyone and I know that lockdown has been so frustrating for so many of us. However, life is really tough on the frontline at the moment, so ask yourself, is it worth breaking the rules to go and meet friends?

Lives are being lost and the strain on my colleagues is clear. We're all exhausted but we are still here fighting the good fight against this horrible disease. We are asking everyone to stay safe, protect themselves and help us out by just staying at home and following the government guidelines – it is the easiest way that you can help.

[View the TV advert](#)

[View the PR short film](#)

Coronavirus vaccine for UK nationals living in the Czech Republic



Residents of the Czech Republic who have public health insurance, including British nationals, are eligible to receive the vaccine through the Czech national vaccination programme in accordance with their rollout plan. If you are currently eligible for a vaccine, i.e. you have residency in the Czech Republic and are 16+, you can now register for a vaccine.

British residents who have private health insurance can register for a vaccine within the Czech health system from 11 June. Workers who are posted to the Czech Republic by their UK employer are eligible for a vaccine if they request an S1 certificate. More information on the form and how to apply is available on the [Your Europe website](#).

We are aware that some British nationals have experienced issues when trying to register for a COVID-19 vaccine in the Czech Republic. These were mostly caused by the fact that the online booking system originally required a “birth registration number” (rodné číslo), which is something not all UK nationals living in the Czech Republic have.

The Czech Ministry of Health has recently updated the online booking system and UK nationals can now register for a vaccine by using their health insurance number instead of a birth registration number. The health insurance number is provided by your Czech health insurance company and can be found on the insurance card issued by the company in the box called “číslo pojištění”, as shown on the picture below.

Please use the number in the “číslo pojištění” box when registering for a vaccine.

Details of the national vaccination programme and the online booking system are available on the [Ministry of Health website](#). You can find more information on COVID-19 measures in the Czech Republic in our [Travel Advice](#).

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Last updated 16 June 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 16 June 2021

Updated information on privately insured UK nationals now being able to register for a vaccine within the Czech health system.

2. 4 June 2021

Updated information on more age groups being eligible for a vaccine – people 16+ can register for a COVID-19 vaccine in the Czech Republic from 4 June 2021.

3. 26 May 2021

Updated information on more age groups being eligible for a vaccine – people 30+ can register for a COVID-19 vaccine in the Czech Republic from 26 May 2021.

4. 19 May 2021

Updated information on age groups being eligible for a vaccine – people 40+ can now register for a COVID-19 vaccine in the Czech Republic. Posted workers with private health insurance can also access vaccines through an S1 certificate.

5. 11 May 2021

Updated information on more age groups being eligible for a vaccine – people 45+ can register for a COVID-19 vaccine in the Czech Republic from 11 May 2021.

6. 28 April 2021

Updated information on more age groups being eligible for a vaccine – people 55+ can register for a COVID-19 vaccine in the Czech Republic from 28 April 2021.

7. 1 March 2021

Coronavirus vaccine for UK nationals in Czech Republic: Anyone over 70 can register for a vaccine from 1 March 2021.

8. 23 February 2021

Information for UK nationals living in the Czech Republic about registering for a vaccine using their health insurance number.

9. 22 January 2021

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