

New 'Nightingale Court' opens at University of Hull

- new temporary Nightingale court opens in Hull
- 36 additional court rooms are now open with more to come
- part of government's plan to ensure justice continues to be served throughout pandemic

The new site will be in the recently revamped, Victorian-era Canham Turner building. It will provide an extra courtroom that will hear civil and family cases – providing additional capacity at Hull Crown Court.

Temporary 'Nightingale' courts, have been set up across the country to enable more socially distanced trials to take place, ensuring justice continues to be served.

This is because more space is required than was previously the case due to the need to keep everyone distanced in the buildings – such as jurors, witnesses, court staff, legal professionals and judges.

Courts Minister, Chris Philp MP, said:

I am grateful to Hull University for joining the national effort to reduce delays and deliver speedier justice for victims in Humberside.

This is having a real impact and the number of crown court cases being heard across England and Wales is now back up to what it was before the pandemic struck last Spring. We are also cutting backlogs in the magistrates' courts where most cases are heard.

The move forms part of a £110 million investment to deliver 40 Nightingale court rooms and funds a range of measures to address the number of outstanding cases.

These efforts will be supported by an extra £337 million announced in the recent Spending Review to deliver swifter justice and support victims, while £76 million will further increase capacity in family courts and tribunals

Further sites in Staffordshire and Cirencester are expected to open later this month, bringing the total number of temporary court rooms set up nationwide to 40.

These form part of wider measures designed to keep the justice system moving and ensure the quickest possible recovery – including the recruitment of 1,600 more court staff, rolling out further technology, and installing temporary jury rooms across the country to enable more trials to be heard safely.

These measures are beginning to show positive results:

- Since August, we have been sitting additional magistrates' court sessions on a Saturday, amounting to around 100 extra sessions a month, and these courts have cleared over 3,000 cases. During this time, magistrates' courts have been consistently completing more cases than they have received, and the outstanding caseload is therefore reducing.
- More jury trial rooms open every week, with more than 290 courtrooms being assessed as capable and available to hold jury trials.
- Plexiglass screens have been installed in more than 400 court rooms and jury deliberation rooms, enabling more jury trials to be heard.

Meanwhile, a [major £153 million investment across the courts system](#) announced in July 2020 will speed up technological improvements and modernise court rooms.

Notes to editors

1. More than £110 million is being invested in a range of measures to tackle the impact of COVID-19, including the recruitment of 1,600 additional staff and opening more Nightingale courts
2. We're also spending £153 million to improve court and tribunal buildings – the biggest single investment in court estate maintenance for more than 20 years
3. This progress will be bolstered by an extra [£337 million the government is spending next year](#) to deliver swifter justice and support victims, while an additional £76 million will further increase capacity in family courts and tribunals
4. [Details on measures to keep courts safe, secure and clean](#)
5. More details on the [Nightingale court rooms in operation](#)

[UK Government helps more than 90,000 businesses in Scotland](#)

- More than 86,000 loans worth more than £3.4 billion have been offered under the Bounce Back Loans Scheme
- More than 4,000 loans worth £982 million have been offered under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme
- 142,000 people in Scotland have benefitted from the self-employment income support scheme

Businesses in Scotland benefitted from more than £3.4 billion of UK Government-backed loans to protect and support jobs across the region, new data reveals today.

More than 86,000 loans have supported businesses across all sectors,

protecting jobs. But the retail and construction sectors have benefitted the most, demonstrating how UK Government support helped those businesses that were impacted hardest by the pandemic.

Similarly, the self-employment income support scheme has benefitted business people across all sectors, with 142,000 people in Scotland benefitting from SEISS, with an average claim of £2,500.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak said:

Throughout this crisis, we have provided more than £280 billion of support to protect jobs and livelihoods up and down the country.

We are committed to continuing to ensure jobs are protected and opportunity is created.

Companies across Scotland have benefitted from support through government-backed loans, including engineering animation consultants, Cadherent, based in Aberdeen.

David Thomson, managing director of Cadherent said:

The availability of CBILS has been a huge help to our business during this crisis. The scheme has allowed us to take stock as the situation has evolved, without making knee-jerk decisions.

Without the loan, we'd certainly have been forced to take a far more cautious approach in the short term while the markets settle. This would have meant some employees losing their jobs and the business having to immediately stop any spending within its supply chain.

Scottish Secretary, Alister Jack said:

Throughout the pandemic, the UK Government has taken quick and unprecedented action to protect jobs and support businesses in Scotland.

Today's figures speak for themselves, over 90,000 businesses across Scotland have benefitted from £3.4 billion in UK-Government backed loans providing a vital lifeline and certainty to plan for the months ahead.

This is just part of a package of UK Government support for businesses which also includes the furlough scheme, now extended to April, self-employed income scheme and VAT cuts for our hospitality and tourism sectors.

We have also given the Scottish Government an additional £8.6

billion of upfront funding this year to help them respond to the pandemic with the good news last week that some of this money is now finding its way to businesses.

As we continue to see throughout this pandemic, the strength of the Union and support offered by the UK Treasury has never been more important.

At the start of Winter, the Chancellor announced that more than a million businesses who took out a Bounce Back Loan will now receive further protection from the Covid crisis through flexible repayments, under the new Pay as You Grow system, which gives businesses more time to repay. Since then, the UK Government has extended the loans schemes until March, and given businesses the ability to 'top-up' their loans if they need to.

The UK Government has invested more than £280 billion throughout the pandemic to protect millions of jobs and businesses, including extending the self-employed and furlough schemes through to April to give businesses the certainty they need to plan over the coming months.

Fascinating facts about Self Assessment

Did you know almost 100,000 people filed their tax returns on 6 April 2020, which is the first day of the tax year?

With the 31 January 2021 deadline fast approaching, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) shares some little-known facts about Self Assessment tax returns.

The April 'early birds' are not the only ones to make HMRC's list of Self Assessment facts; it is also 20 years since the tax authority introduced online tax returns. In 2001, 38,000 online tax returns were filed and this year, HMRC estimates around 11 million online tax returns – quite the increase and in line with the digitisation of the tax system.

HMRC's 7 Self Assessment facts are:

- 96,519 people filed their tax return on 6 April 2020 (first day of the tax year)
- it's the 20th anniversary of Self Assessment internet filing, the service began on 3 July 2000 – with 38,000 individuals successfully sending their digital tax return by 31 January 2001
- in January 2011, 3.4 million taxpayers completed a Self Assessment tax return online – this has increased to an estimated 5 million in January 2021

- this year's deadline (31 January 2021) is on a Sunday. The last time the deadline was on a Sunday was in 2016
- last year, the busiest filing day was 31 January with 702,171 returns completed
- the peak hour for filing last year was between 16:00 to 16:59 on 31 January when 56,969 customers filed
- HMRC has increased the self-serve Time to Pay threshold to £30,000 to help Self Assessment customers spread the cost of their tax bill

Karl Khan, HMRC's Interim Director General for Customer Services, said:

It's 20 years since Self Assessment online was introduced and it's how the vast majority of customers complete their tax return these days. Fewer and fewer people are doing it on paper each year.

There's still time for customers to complete their tax return before the deadline, and help and support is available on GOV.UK.

HMRC expects more than 12.1 million people to complete a Self Assessment tax return. Figures released earlier this month revealed that 55% of customers have already filed their returns, with more than 6.2 million choosing to submit online (93% of all returns filed).

Once customers have completed their tax return, and know how much tax is owed, they can set up their own payment plan to help spread the cost of their tax liabilities.

They can use the self-serve Time to Pay facility to set up monthly direct debits online.

This year, in light of the additional pressures caused by COVID-19, HMRC has increased the self-serve Time to Pay threshold to £30,000 to help Self Assessment customers spread the cost of their tax bill. Interest will be applied to any outstanding balance from 1 February 2021.

To see if they're eligible, customers can visit GOV.UK to find out more about [paying through instalments](#).

Be aware of copycat HMRC websites and phishing scams. Customers should always type in the full online address www.gov.uk/hmrc to get the correct link for their Self Assessment tax return online securely and free of charge.

They also need to be alert if someone calls, emails or texts claiming to be from HMRC, saying that they can claim financial help, are due a tax refund or owe tax – it might be a scam. Check GOV.UK for information on how to [recognise genuine HMRC contact](#).

See more information about [Self Assessment](#).

Find [help and support](#) on GOV.UK or through the HMRC app for customers completing their Self Assessment tax return.

If a customer's Self Assessment debts are more than £30,000, or they need longer than 12 months to pay their debt in full, they may still be able to set up a Time to Pay arrangement by calling the Self Assessment Payment Helpline on 0300 200 3822

To protect against identity fraud customers must verify their identity when accessing HMRC's online services. They must have two sources of information including:

- credit reference agency data
- tax credits
- P60/payslip
- UK passport

Customers can also [check on GOV.UK whether they need to declare, or possibly pay tax on any 'casual' income](#) they receive. The new interactive guidance is quick and easy to use and explains what individuals need to do if they receive non-PAYE income

Follow the National Cyber Security Centre's six essential steps to keep yourself and your business secure online by visiting [CyberAware.gov.uk](#).

[Prime Minister and Chancellor launch new Business Council](#)

Today the Prime Minister will chair the first meeting of a new Business Council established to work with government to fuel COVID-19 economic recovery and future growth plans.

The Build Back Better Council will bring together a broad range of business leaders from across the whole British economy to work in partnership with the government to unlock investment, boost job creation, promote Global Britain and level up the whole of the UK.

The Build Back Better Council will be comprised of 30 members representing industries from retail and hospitality, to finance, science and technology. It will be co-chaired by the Prime Minister and Chancellor, with the Business Secretary as a standing member, and other Cabinet Ministers attending as required – the Trade Secretary will join the first meeting.

At the first meeting, which will take place virtually, the Prime Minister will update leaders on the current COVID-19 situation, including the vaccine roll-out, as well as plans to rebuild the economy after the crisis has passed. Council members will share their views on the economy, provide a commercial perspective on policy and highlight obstacles and solutions to economic recovery.

Whilst recognising that the short term will be difficult, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor are committed to making sure that we will be ready to kickstart our economy as soon as we can, so vital work continues across government on supporting job creation, improving skills, opening up new investment, cementing the UK's position as a science superpower, delivering a once in a generation investment programme in infrastructure, launching a green industrial revolution and enabling our entrepreneurs to scale their businesses.

The government will take this opportunity as a truly independent country to forge our own economic and global path and we will explore how the opportunities outside the EU can help aid our recovery.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

We know the best way to rebuild our economy is to beat Covid which is why we have invested billions in new vaccines and a national testing operation so that we can reopen the economy safely as soon as possible in the future.

But despite this we – like many other countries – face a huge economic challenge. And as we recover from this crisis it won't be enough to just go back to normal – our promise will be to Build Back Better and level up opportunity for people and businesses across the UK.

This Build Back Better Council will ensure that government and businesses continue to work closely together. It will provide an important forum for frank feedback on our recovery plans and will help ensure the steps we are taking are the right ones.

The Business Council will meet quarterly, but with further meetings agreed with the Prime Minister and Chancellor if required. Each member is appointed to the Council for a term of 12 months.

It will complement the wide range of engagement with businesses, business representative groups and trades unions across the whole of Government.

Isabel Dedring, Arup

Leo Quinn, Balfour Beatty

Stephen Welton, BGF

Rachel Lord, Blackrock

Bernard Looney, BP

Sean Doyle, British Airways

Philip Jansen, BT

Poppy Gustafsson, Darktrace
Penny James, Direct Line
Ronan Harris, Google
Emma Walmsley, GSK
Lord Deighton, Heathrow
Mark Tucker, HSBC
Dame Carolyn McCall, ITV
Thierry Bolloré, Jaguar Land Rover
Dame Sharon White, John Lewis Partnership
Robert MacLeod, Johnson Matthey
Cressida Hogg, Landsec
Nigel Wilson, Legal & General
Vivian Hunt, McKinsey & the CBI
Ron Kalifa, Network International
Karen Jones, Prezzo
Laxman Narasimhan, Reckitt Benckiser
Liv Garfield, Severn Trent
Carl Ennis, Siemens
Martin Murphy, Syncona
Ken Murphy, Tesco
Alan Jope, Unilever
Charlotte Hogg, Visa
Sir Ian Wood, Wood

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): letter to all](#)

postmasters, January 2021

[unable to retrieve full-text content] Letter from the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility, Paul Scully, to all postmasters, their staff and Post Office employees.