

Press release: Amber Rudd: “Behind our supportive staff is a compassionate system”

Praising staff for their commitment to support Hastings residents, Amber Rudd will also host a summit with local charities, including Citizens Advice, to better understand how people in Hastings are dealing with benefit changes she is making to the welfare system.

There are 4.6 million people in work in the south east, with unemployment down 129,000 since 2010.

Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd said:

I have long admired the hard work and the empathy of staff at the Hastings jobcentre. Like all staff across the country, they are also unafraid to make sure I hear the unvarnished view.

It's the dedication and experiences of these staff who have helped inform the changes I have sought to make to Universal Credit.

The changes I am making ensure that behind our supportive staff, is a fairer and more compassionate system.

From scrapping any extension to the 2 child policy limit to stopping unnecessary reassessments for disabled pensioners, we are re-designing the welfare system so that it supports people who want to work and protects the vulnerable from poverty.

The visit is part of Amber Rudd's fact finding tour about how Universal Credit is working for people across the country.

As a system that has to work for everyone, the Secretary of State's tour is taking in the experiences of people living across the UK, from coastal communities like Hastings to rural towns and cities, including Taunton and Stoke-on-Trent.

Today's (15 March 2019) Hastings visit follows the announcement this week that benefit claimants in Harrogate will be the first to move from old style benefits to Universal Credit.

Amber Rudd has already announced changes designed to make Universal Credit fairer, including pilot schemes to provide more frequent payments for new claimants, a new online system for private landlords and a more flexible approach to childcare provisions.

And earlier this month Amber Rudd announced new measures to support disabled

people, including stopping unnecessary reassessments for disabled pensioners.

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Press release: Glasgow medical firm showcases the best of UK life sciences sector

This British Science Week, Glasgow-based company, Tissue Solutions Ltd, demonstrates why the UK is a world leader in life sciences and medical research.

Founded in 2007, Tissue Solutions is a global virtual biobank providing fully consented human tissue and biomaterials to pharmaceutical and biotech companies across Europe, Asia and the U.S to develop new drugs and diagnostics.

The company has since gained international reputation as a high-quality ethical provider of human tissue, working to support scientific discoveries and improve clinical success for oncological diseases, autoimmune diseases and more.

Dr Mike Short, Chief Scientific Adviser at the Department for International Trade, said:

Companies like Tissue Solutions ensure that the UK remains a world leader in medical research and innovation. In 2018, the UK exported nearly £25 billion in medicinal and pharmaceutical products alone, showing the global demand for British scientific excellence.

In 2017, the UK Government launched the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy which demonstrates our commitment to the sector. Therefore, I would encourage companies to get in touch with DIT through [great.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) if they need support to enter new markets overseas.

The UK has one of the strongest and most vibrant health and life sciences industries in the world, which supports 240,000 jobs and generates a turnover of around £70 billion per year.

British Science Week is an annual celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) across the UK. The event encourages

organisations, professionals, and science communicators to get involved in STEM events and activities.

The UK is the number one destination for life sciences inward investment in Europe, and is home to the top 25 global pharmaceutical companies and top 30 medical technology companies.

With 20 employees based in its Glasgow office, Tissue Solutions operates a virtual tissue bank with a client base that includes over 80% of pharmaceutical and life sciences companies in the Fortune 1000.

Dr Morag McFarlane, Chief Executive Officer at Tissue Solutions, said:

Ethically sourced human biomaterials lead to new treatments and are increasingly important for scientific breakthroughs.

We are committed to providing human tissues to researchers worldwide and exporting has always been central to our business. We have grown a lot since 2007, with support from DIT, and now provide a range of tissue related services to the global research community.

[Press release: UK aid to give clean energy boost to Kenya](#)

The UK government, through InfraCo Africa, a Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG) company, is investing Ksh. 220 million (US\$2.2m) in the development of two solar plants in rural Kenya.

At an event in London, the UK's Minister for Africa, Harriett Baldwin, announced the commitment by InfraCo Africa to develop two solar plants in Samburu and Transmara, each with a capacity of 10 MWAC, to give more people access to affordable, clean energy.

The UK's Department for International Development's Transforming Energy Access programme, has already helped people and businesses across Africa cut 2 million tonnes of carbon emissions and improve the lives of 3.2 million low income people. It has also leveraged \$359 million worth of investment in clean energy from the public and private sectors.

Minister for Africa, Harriett Baldwin, said:

Transforming Energy Access is using the UK's expertise in technology and finance to provide power for people across Africa

and tackle one of the world's biggest challenges, climate change.

The UK government's investment in clean energy and waste reduction for people and businesses will help millions of people across Africa. It's a win for the developing world and a win for the UK.

In 2018, the Government of Kenya reaffirmed its intention to achieve Universal Electricity Access by 2022 and to continue developing the power sector: including the strategic use of on-grid, off-grid and small-scale solutions. The Samburu and Transmara projects will directly contribute to achieving this goal. To date, private sector investment in Kenyan solar has focused on either large-scale plants or local mini-grids/solar systems. The Samburu and Transmara projects will demonstrate the commercial viability of strategically sited small-scale solar plants (10MWAC and below) and so mobilise greater private sector participation in this market segment. In addition, work is also underway to explore the potential for one or both of these solar projects to take part in a local currency power purchase agreement (PPA) pilot. If confirmed, the solar project(s) would be amongst the first in sub-Saharan Africa to have negotiated local currency renewable energy PPAs outside of South Africa.

Notes to editors

- The Transforming Energy Access programme supports early stage testing and scale up of innovative technologies and business models that will accelerate access to affordable, clean energy services for poor households and enterprises, especially in Africa.
- This announcement comes following the UK's Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry's announcement of [£100 million of funding](#) to support up to 40 renewable energy products in sub Saharan Africa at COP24 in Poland in December, giving hundreds of thousands of people electricity for the first time.

[Press release: UK issues call for proposals for Business Innovation Challenge](#)

The UK Government has issued a call for proposals for a Business Innovation Challenge, under its new four-year Kenya catalytic jobs fund.

The Business Innovation Challenge seeks proposals from enterprises who are developing innovative solutions to create jobs, especially for Kenya's youth. Up to five successful enterprises will receive grant funding and technical assistance worth up to KSH 13million (£100,000) each. The call for proposals

targets initiatives that are innovative, scalable, sustainable and which can demonstrate substantial impact. The Challenge is focussed on three broad areas: agriculture and manufacturing, the informal sector, and people in marginalised groups and areas. Shortlisted applicants will present their innovations at a pitch event in front of a panel of expert judges. The Kenya Catalytic Jobs Fund is a KSH 650 million (£5m) 4-year programme, which will test and support innovations with the potential to stimulate large-scale job creation. The new Fund was announced by British Prime Minister, Theresa May, during her visit to Kenya in August 2018 as part of a package of announcements aimed at supporting Kenya's young people to achieve their goals.

Speaking about the Kenya Catalytic Job Fund, the British High Commissioner, His Excellency Nic Hailey said:

More than 70 per cent of Kenyans are under the age of 30, and we know that job opportunities are a priority for them. This fund will harness the innovation and energy of Kenya's entrepreneurs to spur job creation and support our mutual prosperity – and I am delighted that it will provide opportunities for marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities.

The call for proposals for the Business Innovation Challenge will close on Monday 8 April 2019 at 11:59 pm EAT. To enter the Business Innovation Challenge, applicants must submit the online application form found at the [Kenya Catalytic Jobs Fund website](#). The Business Innovation Challenge will be implemented by Mercy Corps as part of the fund's pilot phase.

Notes to editors

- The British Prime Minister, Theresa May, announced a package of new initiatives to support African youth during her visit to the continent last year. This included a number of new initiatives in Kenya. For more information, see [press release](#).
- In 2018, the UK Department for International Development and the British Council co-funded the Next Generation Kenya research which aimed to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voices and, in turn, make a contribution towards improved youth policy. The report found that Kenyan youth are passionate about their country and are eager to contribute to its future, but highlighted job creation as an area of concern. Find the [2018 Next Generation Report](#).
- The Kenya Catalytic Jobs Fund will focus on creating jobs for young people, including marginalised groups. Disability inclusion is a priority for the UK Government. Following the UK and Kenya government co-hosted Global Disability Summit in 2018, governments, including Kenya, made commitments to fully value the contribution people with disabilities can make to the success of their nations. You can see a [full list of the commitments](#) including Kenya, made at the Summit.

News story: Forensic Science Regulator calls for statutory enforcement powers

The Forensic Science Regulator (FSR) has reiterated calls for statutory enforcement powers to ensure forensic providers and police forces in England and Wales meet quality standards, in her [annual report](#) published today (Friday).

Dr Gillian Tully has again urged the Home Office to put forward legislation to enable her to enforce quality standards. Currently the regulator sets the standards forensic science providers and police forces in England and Wales should meet but has no legal powers to enforce compliance, despite the government committing to introducing such powers in 2016.

The regulator's annual report also finds that dozens of police forces across England and Wales are making improvements in various areas of forensic science, including fingerprint comparison and areas such as crime scene examination and the extraction of data from digital devices.

However, she warned that both commercial forensic science providers and police forces in England and Wales are under financial strain, which represents a risk to the quality and sustainability of their work.

Forensic Science Regulator, Dr Gillian Tully, said:

Over the past year there has been progress in some areas by police in England and Wales but there is more work to be done to ensure all are adhering to internationally-recognised standards.

It is clear that the government must give this office the legal authority to enforce these standards and ensure the quality of forensic science continues to improve.

Dr Tully added that dozens of forces are now beginning to comply with fingerprint comparison standards. However, this follows an EU legal requirement to do so by March 25 2019 being brought into UK law. In October 2018 only 3 police forces in England and Wales had met the FSR's own non-legally binding deadline for fingerprint comparisons. She cited this as evidence of the need for statutory enforcement powers.

The FSR's annual report also updates on developments between November 2017 and November 2018 and priorities for the year to come. These include:

- the regulator's continued work to engage with those who influence policy

and practice, including the Home Office and National Police Chiefs' Council, to highlight ways in which the quality of forensic science is at risk and could be improved

- that forensic teams of police forces in England and Wales are insufficiently resourced to enable them to deliver operationally and achieve quality standards. In digital forensics the situation is even worse, where there are reports of police dropping cases because digital evidence is not available
- the letters the Regulator has written to the Chief Officers of 5 police forces requesting urgent action to ensure they use the latest contamination elimination database to avoid investigations being misled
- the publication for consultation of a draft quality standard for taking forensic samples from complainants in sex offence cases along with accompanying guidance
- an update to the latest regulator's codes of practice and conduct, which is due to be published in Spring 2019.