

[News story: Aviation Minister hails 10-year high in Newcastle air passenger numbers](#)

The Aviation Minister, Baroness Sugg, today (23 February 2018) recognised Newcastle International Airport as one of the north-east's "great success stories" as new figures revealed a 10-year-high in passenger numbers.

The latest statistics show the airport enjoyed its best start to a year since 2008, with more than 283,000 passengers passing through its terminal in January alone. The figures show how travellers from across the world are taking advantage of greater connectivity in the north.

Baroness Sugg is visiting Newcastle International Airport today as part of Northern Powerhouse International Week, in which the government is celebrating the global success of businesses in the north.

And the airport, which is also today announced as an official [Northern Powerhouse partner](#), represents a fitting example of that success, with its new passenger numbers underlining the growth in tourism and business in the north.

[Newcastle Airport video](#)

The rise comes on the back of a series of extra routes opening up at the airport in the past year, with new flights to a number of destinations including Egypt, Tunisia and Iceland.

Aviation Minister Baroness Sugg said:

These latest statistics just underline how the northern economy continues to go from strength to strength.

Newcastle International Airport is undoubtedly one of the north-east's great success stories, bringing thousands of jobs to the area and delivering vital links with countries around the world.

And we are determined to help boost productivity in the region even further, starting with the significant investment we're making in transport infrastructure to improve connections between the north's towns, cities and counties.

As passenger numbers grow, the need for better connectivity increases and the government is responding with more than £13 billion worth of investment in transport across the north through to 2021.

And with multiple daily flights from Newcastle to Heathrow, the region is

also in line to benefit from an expanded Heathrow, with the potential for new jobs and business opportunities.

Northern Powerhouse Minister, Jake Berry, said:

I'm delighted to welcome Newcastle Airport as our newest Northern Powerhouse partner. With their international flights connecting the Northern Powerhouse to the wider world, boosting exports by millions of pounds and driving up visitor numbers to the region, they are helping create a truly global north.

The government will provide funding which will go towards upgrading the A1 and completing the route from Newcastle to London as well as improvements to the Tyne and Wear Metro, an important link between Newcastle Airport, Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland.

These projects will benefit from the biggest investment in the north for a generation underlining the government's commitment to improving journeys for people across the entire region and delivering greater connectivity to the north-east's largest airport.

Newcastle International airport supports more than 19,000 jobs with 4,500 of those on site and serves a catchment area which contributes more than £1.6 billion to the regional economy every year.

Nick Jones, Chief Executive Officer at Newcastle International Airport said:

I'm delighted that Newcastle Airport has been announced as an official Northern Powerhouse partner today by the Aviation Minister.

As the north-east's largest airport, we're already going a long way to facilitating a truly 'global north' and we're committed to continuing to help the region achieve its best in the future, whether that's through our work promoting the north-east to overseas visitors, our role as international gateway for the [Great Exhibition of the North](#), or simply our extensive worldwide connections.

Councillor Iain Malcolm, Leader of South Tyneside Council and lead of the LA7 shareholders, said:

Newcastle International Airport is hugely important to the north-east, both as a gateway for the region and as a generator of jobs and millions of pounds for the local economy. The airport is critical to the regional economy, providing connections across the world, either directly or via a number of major hubs. We have already demonstrated with Emirates that we can both secure and make

a success of a game changing new air route.

The team behind Newcastle International Airport and its shareholders work tirelessly to open up new market for both our leisure and business customers and I am delighted that today the airport is being announced as an official Northern Powerhouse partner, which will help to further increase the important role the airport plays.

More than £58 billion and 15,000 jobs have already been created by foreign investment in companies based in the north of England and as an official partner, Newcastle International has committed to helping the north attract new jobs and more investment.

They will work jointly with a number of other partners to promote the strengths of the north in 4 key areas of:

- connectivity and transport
- skills, science and innovation
- quality of life and culture
- devolution

This formal commitment will see Newcastle International work to proactively promote and publicise the successes of the Northern Powerhouse. Passengers travelling through the airport will also see evidence of this with branding appearing across the site.

[News story: Fairer pay for criminal defence advocates in legal aid cases](#)

The reformed Advocates' Graduated Fee Scheme (AGFS) will ensure that pay better reflects the actual work being done by criminal defence advocates and that advocates are being fairly remunerated for work in more complex cases.

The changes will bring the scheme in line with modern practices, taking into account the fact that more and more evidence is submitted electronically.

The process of determining fees will be simplified so that advocates can better understand how they will be paid for their work before they take on a case.

The new scheme is part of ongoing reforms to deliver a modern and effective justice system, whilst ensuring that legal aid is available in cases where it is most needed.

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said:

These changes will create a simpler and more modern pay system for defence advocates in legal aid-funded criminal cases.

We have listened to the views of legal professionals to ensure that advocates will be paid in a way that better reflects the reality of the work they do.

The government previously consulted on the fee proposals and has taken on feedback from professionals to help shape the scheme.

Significant changes have been made to the original proposals to ensure that the vital contribution of junior barristers and solicitor advocates is better recognised in the new scheme.

The changes will come into effect on 1 April 2018 and will keep spend on fees at the current level, so that the reforms come at no additional cost to the tax payer.

Notes

The [AGFS consultation response](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

[News story: CCTV in slaughterhouses: Legislation laid in Parliament](#)

Legislation to make CCTV cameras mandatory in slaughterhouses in England to safeguard animal welfare has been laid today (23 February) by Environment Secretary Michael Gove.

The legislation will come into effect from May 2018, once it passes through Parliament, at which point businesses will have six months to comply.

In August 2017, the Secretary of State [launched a consultation](#) on the plans to deliver a manifesto commitment for CCTV to be required in every slaughterhouse in England in all areas where live animals are present, with unrestricted access to footage for Official Veterinarians – reassuring consumers that high welfare standards are being effectively enforced.

A [summary of responses](#) published in November showed that of almost 4,000 respondents, more than 99% were supportive of the plans.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

We have some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and want to cement our status as a global leader by continuing to

raise the bar.

Introducing compulsory CCTV cameras in slaughterhouses is a further demonstration to consumers around the world that as we leave the EU, we continue to produce our food to the very highest standards.

The previous reaction to the consultation highlighted the strength of feeling among the public that all animals should be treated with the utmost respect at all stages of life and be subject to the highest possible welfare standards.

The proposals will also give the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Official Veterinarians (OVs) unfettered access to the last 90 days of footage to help them monitor and enforce animal welfare standards.

The FSA has strict processes in place for the approval of slaughterhouses, and specially trained vets carry out checks to make sure the welfare of animals is protected throughout their time in the slaughterhouse. If breaches are found, a slaughterhouse can be given a welfare enforcement notice, have its staff's licences suspended or revoked, or be referred for a criminal investigation.

Heather Hancock, Chairman of the Food Standards Agency, said:

I welcome this new legislation being introduced. It will help businesses to improve animal welfare and hygiene standards across the industry.

We look forward to working with the industry as CCTV plans are implemented, and to seeing public confidence rise as a result.

Businesses will have six months to comply with this legislation once it has passed through Parliament. The penalty for failing to comply will be an enforcement notice to the business or prosecution.

1. Read the ['Mandatory Closed Circuit Television \(CCTV\) recording in slaughterhouses: Summary of responses and Government response'](#)
 2. For more information on this story, contact the Defra press office on 020 8225 7318.
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Speech: Chloe Smith writes about votes for life for British expats

Today (Friday 23 February) we'll be debating the Overseas Electors Bill, introduced by Conservative Glyn Davies MP. I hope it will command cross-party support, alongside the firm support of the government.

The Bill sets out to end the current 15-year time limit on British expats voting back at home in the UK. At the moment, British citizens who live overseas find themselves abruptly disenfranchised after they have lived abroad for 15 years, even where they still feel closely connected to our country and want to take part in elections that can affect them like any other citizen. To many, this has been a terrible injustice.

As well as removing the time limit on the right to vote for UK citizens living abroad, we intend to enfranchise any British expats who were previously resident or registered to vote in the UK. Currently, only British citizens who were registered to vote before leaving the UK may apply to become overseas electors. The bill is seeking to change this. These changes are part of the Government's wider ambition to strengthen the foundation of democracy and continually increase voter registration by ensuring every voter's voice is heard.

British expats – under existing laws – are estimated to have among the lowest level of voter registration of any group, with only around 20% of eligible expats registered to vote for the June 2017 general election.

We think it's right to encourage everyone to register to vote, and that's why, last December, the government launched the first ever Democratic Engagement Plan to tackle democratic exclusion and outline how it will increase participation among under-registered groups. The Plan set out how we are launching National Democracy Week to promote democratic engagement and identifying the barriers faced by specific groups that are currently under-represented on the electoral register.

In 2014, we introduced online electoral registration which has already made it much easier for overseas electors to register to vote – and they have done so in ever increasing numbers. The latest figures from June 2017 showed that the highest ever total of overseas citizens registered to vote but potentially around one million have not registered. So I am proud this government is doing more to enfranchise our fellow citizens overseas and make it easier for them to take part in our elections.

Participation in our democracy is a fundamental part of being British, no matter how far you have travelled from the UK. Expats retain strong links with the United Kingdom: they may have family here, and indeed they may plan to return here in the future. Modern technology and cheaper air travel has transformed the ability of expats to keep in touch with their home country. Crucially, decisions taken by the UK government still affect them, such as

pensions policy or foreign affairs choices. These are our fellow citizens and they have every right to be involved in our country and its choice of government.

Of course, following the British people's decision to leave the EU, we need to strengthen ties with countries around the world and show the UK is an outward-facing nation. Our expat community has an important role to play in helping Britain expand international trade, especially given two-thirds of expats live outside the EU.

I am grateful to the many campaigners over the years who have asked for this rule to be changed, with dignity and passion. The Government pledged in our manifesto to make this change and I'm proud to deliver it. But it should be an aim we all share across parties. I will work closely with Mr Davies and everyone in Parliament, of any party, who wants to help every citizen of this country to register to vote and use their voice.

News story: Government commits £1.8 million to fund innovation in aviation security

Cutting-edge security technology could mean passengers see shorter queues and faster, more effective airport screening processes.

Eight projects have been awarded £1.8 million in government funding to develop innovative technology, which has the potential to bolster airport security while also speeding up the screening process for passengers.

The projects all apply novel approaches to aviation security which have the potential to improve threat detection capabilities. In addition to improving security, some of the projects have the potential to reduce the length of time passengers spend undergoing security checks.

One of the successful recipients of the funding is a small team based in Derbyshire, Security Screening Technologies, whose project uses sophisticated imaging to scan shoes for explosive materials.

The step-on shoe scanner being developed by the company can rapidly form high-contrast images of footwear which can then be analysed by computers that have been 'taught' to recognise threats. Any shoes which are flagged as having areas of concern could then undergo secondary screening.

The project could ultimately mean that passengers would no longer need to remove their shoes before going through airport central search, leading to reduced queuing times and a more customer-friendly experience.

Aviation Minister Baroness Sugg said:

This latest £1.8 million of funding invests in innovative projects that will ensure we are continuing to capitalise on pioneering research. The aim is to have a safer and smoother travel experience for air passengers.

The safety of people travelling on all modes of transport is our top priority and the Future Aviation Security Solutions programme is just one example of the huge importance we place on the security of passengers.

We have a proud history of the early adoption and use of cutting edge technology and this programme is helping to ensure we continue to lead the way in airport security.

The funding is part of the 5-year [Future Aviation Security Solutions \(FASS\)](#) programme, a multi-million pound initiative which seeks new solutions to strengthen aviation security.

It will go towards supporting a range of projects with pioneering ideas to reduce security threats in airports. These include the use of electromagnetic imaging to detect items of concern in luggage, filtering samples of gas taken from cargo containers to test for explosives, and using machine learning techniques to identify threats on people and in bags.

A joint Department for Transport and Home Office programme, FASS works closely with industry to fund research and encourage innovation.

Security Minister, Ben Wallace said:

We are determined to harness the power of innovation and this ambitious programme will help us continue to use the best technologies as part of our aviation security.

Our work in this area is just one example of how the government is supporting industry, academia and small enterprises to improve our resilience and strengthen our defences against terrorism.

Another of the successful recipients of the funding is a team based in Wales called Sequestim who have designed an alternative walk-through people screening system. State of the art technology within the device could reduce the need for manual checks and mean passengers do not have to remove outer clothing.

The project could also benefit passengers by speeding up the screening process and reducing the risk of false alarms which can cause disruption to passengers and screening processes.

As passengers move past a highly-sensitive camera, the natural radiation from their bodies is measured and turned in to an image. Computer learning can be applied to detect the presence of any threat the passenger may be carrying.

Each project team will have 12 months to develop their technology into a fully functioning prototype that could be trialled at airports.