

[Press release: Government delivering on pledge to give back British expats the right to vote](#)

The government will today (8 February) restate its commitment to ending the current 15 year time limit on British expats registering as overseas electors.

As well as removing a time limit on the right to vote for UK citizens living abroad, the government intends to enfranchise any British expats who was previously resident or registered to vote in the UK. This is 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.

Combined, these changes will mean millions of UK citizens overseas will be eligible to register to vote. British expats – under existing laws – have the lowest level of voter registration of any group.

The government published the policy statement [“A democracy that works for everyone: British citizens overseas”](#) in October 2016 asking for views on its detailed plans to introduce votes for life. It set out how it would scrap the rule that bars British citizens who have lived abroad for more than 15 years from voting in UK Parliamentary Elections, as set out in the government's manifesto.

The response to the consultation about the votes for life policy statement will be published on GOV.UK today, ahead of the second reading debate in the House of Commons on 23 February of Glyn Davies MP Private Members' Overseas Electors Bill.

The policy statement attracted a range of responses from the electoral community and the public.

Minister for the Constitution Chloe Smith said:

Participation in our democracy is a fundamental part of being British, no matter how far you have travelled from the UK. It is right that we should remove the 15-year time limit on voting rights of British citizens living overseas and allow those who previously lived in the UK the chance to participate in our democracy.

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.

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.

[Press release: Record road investment plans in the South West are set to achieve key milestones](#)

Highways England's plans for the improved A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down will be on show at a series of public events starting on Friday.

The consultation, which runs until 6 April, will outline for the first time initial designs for the scheme and how it will restore the tranquil environment and setting of the Stonehenge monument and surrounding landscape by removing the sight and sound of the road.

Since the last consultation in September, Highways England has continued to work with heritage groups such as the National Trust, Historic England and English Heritage, as well as experts in the field, including the Stonehenge Scientific Committee – a body of leading independent archaeologists – to ensure a new route is built sensitively to the World Heritage Site.

The route has been carefully chosen to avoid monuments and barrow groups as well as avoiding any intrusion on views of the winter solstice from Stonehenge and reconnect the World Heritage Site, which is currently split by the A303.

Highways England is now seeking feedback from the public to help shape the scheme further before they submit an application for a Development Consent Order.

This upgrade is one of five multi-million pound road schemes aimed at boosting the economy, tourism and heritage in the South West which will reach key milestones in the first six months of 2018.

Other key milestones include consultations on the:

- A358 Taunton to Southfields dualling scheme.
- A303 Sparkford to Ilchester.
- A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross.
- A417 Missing Link scheme.

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

These upgrades in the South West will improve millions of journeys. Each of these milestones in the region is evidence of Highways England delivering major infrastructure upgrades for the whole country.

The upgrades are funded by the Government's £15 billion investment in motorways and main A roads, and being delivered by Highways England.

April will mark three years since Highways England embarked on delivering the Government's Road Investment Strategy, the biggest investment in the country's major roads since the 1970s.

Across the country almost 40 schemes are reaching key milestones in the first half of this year and will join the 18 major projects that have already opened to traffic since April 2015. In addition, a further 16 are currently in construction, the latest of which to start initial works was a major upgrade to the M49 near Bristol.

Statutory consultation for the A303 Stonehenge scheme will offer the public and all interested parties the chance to see the progressed plans, including visualisations of how the new route might look, including the Winterbourne Stoke bypass and initial designs for the junctions along the route.

Following public consultation in early 2017 and further engagement with local communities, heritage groups, archaeologists, historians and engineers, the preferred route was chosen so that the route now closely follows the existing A303 through the World Heritage Site.

For more information on the consultation and public information events, [visit the scheme website](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Oxford flood scheme moves a step closer](#)

The £120m Oxford flood alleviation scheme, which will reduce flood risk to

homes, businesses, and transport in Oxford and the surrounding area, has moved a step closer.

The Oxford flood alleviation scheme partnership has just announced that it has secured the funding for the scheme, which will include at least 5 hectares of new habitat creation, 7 new bridges and 2.6 kilometres of new flood defences.

More than £65m in funding has already been committed by Government. A record amount of partnership funding totalling over £55m has now been given by a wide range of partners. Investment has been secured from Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Thames Water Utilities and the University of Oxford.

Joanna Larmour, Project Director at the Environment Agency, said:

This is a huge scheme – one of the biggest the Environment Agency is working on – and when complete it will not only reduce flood risk to homes across Oxford but it will also protect vital infrastructure, enabling the city to keep moving during flooding. It will also benefit communities and wildlife in a number of ways, including improving existing public footpaths and creating new habitat for wildlife and improving biodiversity.

Today's fantastic news shows that working in partnership can help us get the best scheme for Oxford. We are very pleased that our partners have recognised the multiple benefits it will bring and helped us secure the funding required to progress the scheme to the next stage.

The scheme will benefit everyone who lives, works in or visits Oxford. As well as reduced property flooding, the railway and Botley and Abingdon roads will be protected keeping the city open for business during future flooding. There will also be fewer flood related electricity, telephone and internet disruptions. The scheme will allow

Oxford's successful economy to continue to thrive and also provide environmental benefits and a longterm green legacy.

County Councillor Yvonne Constance said:

The flood relief channel has been a hope for many people for a long time. Now we are at the stage where it has the funding it needs to be made into a reality there will be thousands of homes and businesses protected from the devastating effects of flooding.

Clearly there is still much work to do, but this funding announcement means we can continue to work in partnership to move forward to the next stage.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of Oxford City Council, said:

The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme will bring huge benefits to householders in West and South Oxford, and to all parts of the business community. I am delighted that we have been successful in our application for this final tranche of funding.

HM Treasury approved the outline business case for the scheme in November 2017. This detailed that full funding for the scheme had to be committed before it could move to the next stage. This has now been confirmed, thanks to increases in contributions from the scheme partners.

The total amount covers the design and construction costs to deliver the scheme. The project team will now work on the Full Business Case, which will be submitted to HM Treasury later this year. Partners will continue to work together on ongoing negotiations with external companies for future investment in the scheme.

The Environment Agency will submit the planning application for the Oxford flood alleviation scheme in March. It will take approximately 3 years to build the scheme, which is designed to work with the natural floodplain west of Oxford.

Press release: Knighthood and Damehoods conferred: February 2018

The Queen has been pleased to approve that the honour of Knighthood be conferred upon Timothy Miles Fancourt, QC and that the honour of Damehood be conferred upon Christina Caroline Lambert, QC, on their appointment as Justices of the High Court.

Notes for editors

Timothy Miles Fancourt was called to the Bar in 1987 and took Silk in 2003. He was appointed as a Recorder in 2009.

Christina Caroline Lambert was called to the Bar in 1988 and took Silk in 2009.

Press release: Clean Growth top of the agenda for ministerial visit to Teesside

Energy Minister Claire Perry with Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen.

The region has the potential to exploit opportunities from future growth industries such as carbon, capture usage and storage (CCUS), district heating and the hydrogen economy.

The UK government has made a firm commitment to regeneration and clean energy production in the Teesside area, with an ambition for 25,000 new jobs and over £1 billion of investment across a 10-year period, and today, the minister spoke about making that a reality.

Energy Minister Claire Perry said:

Today I have seen the exciting opportunities here to regenerate this iconic site, and, crucially, bring skilled jobs and clean growth to the area. I look forward to seeing the development of these proposals to develop and breathe new life into this site.

The government has already invested substantial amounts in the area and the Autumn Budget set out a further £123 million of funding to continue work to secure the site. Today, the minister met Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen, the Local Enterprise Partnership, Clean Growth investors, the South Tees Development Company and members of the South Tees Site Company as well as taking a tour of the former steel site at Redcar and Cleveland.

Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen said:

Our concentration of industry along the coastline perfectly places the region as the go-to location for green energy proposals such as Carbon Capture and Storage. It is fantastic that government recognises our industrial strengths and has reaffirmed their commitment to developing this transformational proposal. I was delighted to share our ambitious plans with the minister today, and made clear to her that Teesside is ready and waiting to take this forward.

A move to low-carbon, clean energy offers a remarkable economic opportunity for our area and the UK as a whole. Our projects would attract inward investment, create jobs and put Tees Valley at the forefront of the clean energy revolution. Now we need to work constructively with government to push ahead and make these schemes

a reality.

The site is of particular interest in the development of carbon capture usage and storage – which aims to capture carbon dioxide emitted from industry and power plants for permanent storage under the North Sea. This game-changing technology and many more exciting projects were discussed as part of today's visit.

Business Minister Richard Harrington was also in Teesside today setting out his vision through a keynote speech to workers, industry and local MPs at Community Union's Steel Sector Conference. The minister talked about his commitment to steelmaking regions across the UK and the importance of putting the sector at the heart of the UK's Industrial Strategy.

Last year, the government set out its plan for growth and regeneration across the UK with its [Industrial Strategy](#) aiming for an economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK. A key part of that is growing new jobs, and Teesside has a crucial role to play.

Photos and videos of the visit are available by contacting gillian.capewell@beis.gov.uk.