Government protects vital Dawlish coastal rail route with a further £32 million

- Rail Minister announces another £32 million of funding to install new netting and fencing along the crucial Dawlish rail link
- works will give passengers safer, more reliable journeys and will future-proof the line and protect the local community following the severe storms in 2014
- new funding is part of government's £155 million investment to level up connections between communities in the South West

A further £32 million of funding to add vital netting and fencing along the iconic Dawlish and Holcombe route, protecting passengers and safeguarding access to the network for local residents, has today (1 April 2022) been announced by Rail Minister Wendy Morton.

This latest round of funding, which follows on from 3 earlier phases of work and takes the total to more than £150 million, will prevent storm debris from reaching the railway, creating strong resilient transport links to the area and giving passengers safer and more reliable journeys.

Following the devastating storms of 2014, which saw the railway damaged beyond use for 8 weeks, the government intervened to prevent this from happening again by launching the South West Rail Resilience Programme (SWRRP).

SWRRP is a £155 million commitment to create a more resilient railway, protect the safety of Dawlish's passengers and ensure that local communities are no longer at risk from being disconnected from the network for long periods of time.

Through this funding, the government has successfully rebuilt the sea wall along the Marine Parade, added further cliff protection measures and implemented accessibility improvements.

Rail Minister Wendy Morton said:

> Devon's iconic sea wall and the picturesque towns surrounding it are jewels in the British crown, and we're committed to protecting this vital line and the communities it serves.
>
> Through our wider £155 million investment, we're also working to boost connectivity and support the thriving local economy and tourism.

The new funding is part of the SWRRP £155 million government investment to level up connections in the South West and deliver reliable and punctual journeys across Devon and Cornwall, boosting the local economy and tourism in the process. This includes:

- a £53 million complete upgrade to the train care depot in Exeter, improving service reliability and capacity for passengers across the region
- £80 million of funding to deliver a new sea wall at Dawlish, between Colonnades Bridge and Kennaway Tunnel, which opened in 2020, with the next phase of work to the east currently under construction

Mike Gallop, Network Rail's Western route director, said:

> We are delighted to once again receive the support from government, which enables us to carry out the next phase of our resilience work between Dawlish and Teignmouth.
>
> This will mean that passengers using GWR and CrossCountry services on this vital rail link to and from the South West will have more reliable journeys, as the railway along the Devon coast will be better protected from rising sea levels, extreme weather, landslips and rockfalls for the next 100 years.

National Living Wage Increase boosts pay of low-paid workers

The National Living Wage (NLW) will increase on Friday 1 April by 6.6 per cent to £9.50, providing a pay rise to millions of workers across the UK. There will be a real terms pay increase for 21-22 year olds who will see their pay increase by 9.8 per cent to £9.18 per hour. These increases follow recommendations made to the Government by the Low Pay Commission in the autumn. The increase means a significant step forward towards reaching the target set by the Government for the NLW to reach two-thirds of median earnings by 2024.

The Government published its remit to the LPC for 2022 in March. This asks the Low Pay Commission (LPC) "to monitor the labour market and the impacts of the National Living Wage closely, advise on any emerging risks and – if the economic evidence warrants it – recommend that the government reviews its target or timeframe. This emergency brake will ensure that the lowest-paid workers continue to see pay rises without significant risks to their employment prospects." The LPC will make its recommendations to Government on the 2023 National Minimum Wage rates in October.

Bryan Sanderson, Chair of the Low Pay Commission, said:

> Minimum wage workers across the United Kingdom continue to play a vital role in ensuring a strong post-pandemic economic recovery. In previous years the LPC has sought to keep increases to the minimum wage above inflation. However, inflation is now expected to be higher than the forecasts we had when we made our recommendations last October.

> Workers on the minimum wage; care for our elderly and sick, harvest and deliver our food, and do a multitude of other tasks which help us all. Many public sector workers including for example teaching assistants will also shortly be included. They all deserve to be properly remunerated and respected as key members of our society.

> Therefore, while today's NLW increase of 6.6 per cent gets us back on track to reach the 2024 target of two-thirds of median earnings, it will unfortunately likely be a real terms cut. Though, 21-22 year olds will receive a real terms increase with a rise of 9.8 per cent. We will soon make this group eligible for the NLW and judged it sensible to close the gap between the rates over a longer period, rather than a very large increase once they become eligible.

> The Low Pay Commission met with around a hundred representative bodies last year before making its recommendations. We are frequently their main sometimes even their only advocates. With government support we will continue to try to ensure that they do not suffer from the neglect which was so often characteristic of the past.

The LPC has today published a short report which looks ahead at what the new rates will mean, and the path of the NLW to its target of two-thirds of median hourly earnings by 2024. Estimating the forward path of the NLW is very challenging as earnings growth is difficult to measure and predict in the current economic climate. Nevertheless, our estimate of the on-course rate of the NLW for 2023 is £10.32 (an 8.6% increase) and £10.95 in 2024 (a 6.1% increase). Because of the uncertainty we will update our estimates in the summer

Today, the other rates of the National Minimum Wage will also increase alongside the NLW.

	Previous rate	Rate from April 2022	Increase
National Living Wage	£8.91	£9.50	6.6%

	Previous rate	Rate from April 2022	Increase
21-22 Year Old Rate	£8.36	£9.18	9.8%
18-20 Year Old Rate	£6.56	£6.83	4.1%
16-17 Year Old Rate	£4.62	£4.81	4.1%
Apprentice Rate	£4.30	£4.81	11.9%
Accommodation Offset	£8.36	£8.70	4.1%

We are seeking evidence on the effects of the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage, to inform our recommendations on the 2023 rates. This consultation will run from: 28 March to 20 June 2022. For more information on the consultation including how to respond please see here.

Notes for editors

1. The LPC originally submitted its recommendations in October 2021. The Government subsequently announced its acceptance of those recommendations on 27 October 2021. The LPC's 2021 Report, which sets out the evidence underpinning its recommendations, was published in December 2021.
2. Rationale for our recommendations: In October 2021 we judged that the economic situation had improved in 2021. GDP was approaching its pre-crisis level and the labour market was also recovering, with payroll employment above its pre-crisis level and vacancies hitting record levels, suggesting further improvement, although total employment remained below its pre-crisis level. In October, we also noted some risks to the economy relating to global supply chains, the end of the furlough scheme, rising input costs and staff availability. The improvement in the economic and labour market situation led us to recommend an NLW increase (6.6 per cent) that was expected to get the NLW back on track to the 2024 target, following the relatively low increase (2.2 per cent) in 2021. We plan to align the 21-22 Year Old Rate with the NLW by 2024, so we judged it sensible to reduce the gap between the 21-22 Year Old Rate and the NLW next year and recommended an increase of 9.8 per cent to £9.18. For the other youth rates we recommended an increase of 4.1 per cent because their labour market position was not as strong. We recommended going ahead with our previous proposal to align the Apprentice Rate with the 16-17 year old rate with a 11.9 per cent increase. Our letter to the Minister and our full report provide more detail on our recommendations.
3. The National Living Wage (NLW) is the statutory minimum wage which will apply as of 1 April for workers aged 23 and over. Different minimum wage rates apply to 21-22 year olds, 18-20 year olds, 16-17 year olds and apprentices aged under 19 or in the first year of an apprenticeship.
4. The age threshold for the NLW will be reduced to 21 by 2024. This follows the LPC's review of the structure of the National Minimum Wage youth rates and its recommendations in 2019.
5. The Government published its remit to the LPC for 2022. In the remit, the Government asks the LPC "closely monitor developments in the labour market, including the impact of increases to the minimum wage rates, and advise on emerging risks … if the economic evidence warrants it, the Low

Pay Commission should advise the government to review the target or its timeframe. This emergency brake will ensure that the lowest-paid workers continue to see pay rises without significant risks to their employment prospects." The full remit letter is available [here.]

6. Rates for workers aged under 23, and apprentices, are lower than the NLW in reflection of lower average earnings and higher unemployment rates. International evidence also suggests that younger workers are more exposed to employment risks arising from the pay floor than older workers. Unlike the NLW (where the possibility of some consequences for employment have been accepted by the Government), the LPC's remit requires us to set the rates for younger workers and apprentices as high as possible without causing damage to jobs and hours.
7. The Accommodation Offset is an allowable deduction from wages for accommodation, applicable for each day of the week. In April 2022 it will increase to £8.70 per day.
8. The National Living Wage is different from the UK Living Wage and the London Living Wage calculated by the Living Wage Foundation. Differences include that: the UK Living Wage and the London Living Wage are voluntary pay benchmarks that employers can sign up to if they wish, not legally binding requirements; the hourly rate of the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage is based on an attempt to measure need, whereas the National Living Wage is based on a target relationship between its level and average pay; the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage apply to workers aged 18 and over, the National Living Wage to workers aged 23 and over. The Low Pay Commission has no role in the UK Living Wage or the London Living Wage.
9. The Low Pay Commission is an independent body made up of employers, trade unions and experts whose role is to advise the Government on the minimum wage. The rate recommendations introduced today were agreed unanimously by the Commission.
10. The current Low Pay Commissioners are: Bryan Sanderson, Professor Patricia Rice, Professor Jonathan Wadsworth, Kate Bell, Kay Carberry, Simon Sapper, Matthew Fell, Louise Fisher and Martin McTague.
11. Bryan Sanderson can be contacted via the Low Pay Commission's press office (0207 211 8132).

Pay boost for millions as National Minimum and Living Wage rates go up from today

- Around 2.5 million UK workers will receive a pay rise, as the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage increase today
- £1,000 a year pay rise for full time workers following the largest ever uplift to the National Living Wage for workers aged 23 and over

- Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng: “While no government can control the global factors pushing up the cost of everyday essentials, we will absolutely act wherever we can to mitigate rising costs.”

Millions of UK workers will receive a pay rise from today (Friday 1 April 2022), as the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rise comes into effect.

The uplift in wages, which will benefit around 2.5 million people, includes the largest ever increase to the National Living Wage. It will put £1,000 a year more into full-time workers’ pay packets, helping to ease cost of living pressures.

With today’s rise, the yearly earnings of a full-time worker on the National Living Wage will have increased by over £5,000 since the introduction of the National Living Wage by the government in April 2016.

As a direct result of government action, the current number of employees on the payroll is over 600,000 more than pre-pandemic levels – and unemployment has fallen to 3.9%.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

> We have never been more determined to make work pay, and by providing the biggest cash increase ever to the National Living Wage from today, we are giving a boost to millions of UK workers.
>
> While no government can control the global factors pushing up the cost of everyday essentials, we will absolutely act wherever we can to mitigate rising costs.
>
> With more employees on the payroll than ever before, this government will continue to stand up for workers.

Today’s uplift will particularly benefit workers in sectors such as retail, hospitality and cleaning and maintenance. Apprentices will also get a large 11.9% increase to their minimum hourly pay, with 21 to 22 year-olds seeing an immediate 9.8% rise. The National Living Wage, the minimum wage for over 23 year-olds, will now move up to £9.50 an hour.

Last year, the age threshold for the rate moved from age 25 to 23, meaning that more young workers are now eligible for a higher wage.

The new National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates are both statutory minimums, and businesses are encouraged to pay workers above these whenever they can afford to do so.

Recent studies show significant benefits for employers who pay their staff higher wages, which includes higher job retention and staff productivity.

In full, the increases from 1 April 2022 are:

Rate	From April 2022	Current rate (April 2021 to March 2022	Increase
National Living Wage	£9.50	£8.91	6.6%
21 to 22 year old rate	£9.18	£8.36	9.8%
18 to 20 year old rate	£6.83	£6.56	4.1%
16 to 17 year old rate	£4.81	£4.30	4.1%
Apprentice rate	£4.81	£4.30	11.9%
Accommodation offset	£8.70	£8.36	4.1%

With the rates going up from today, workers across the UK are being urged to check they are being paid properly. This can be done by visiting the Check Your Pay site, which also offers advice on what to do if you are being underpaid.

The government also today announced it will be launching a communications campaign in the coming weeks to help increase understanding among minimum and living wage earners around the wages they are legally entitled to, as well as the steps they can take if they are concerned they are being underpaid.

Record increases in global gas prices this year saw the Energy Price Cap, set by the independent regulator Ofgem, rise by 54%. While a worrying time for households, the price cap continues to insulate millions of households from high wholesale gas prices.

Today's uplift comes alongside further government measures worth over £9.1 billion to support people across the UK with rising energy bills, with the majority of households receiving £350 in total. This will help over 28 million households affected by the large spike in global energy prices, protecting them from half of the average forecast bill rise.

The package includes a £150 rebate in Council Tax bills for all households in Bands A to D in England – 80% of households – with payments being made from today (Friday 1 April 2022), and a £200 reduction in energy bills for all households from October 2022 through the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

This contributes to wider government support to ease cost of living pressures worth £22 billion next financial year as well as government plans to drive £6 billion into making homes more energy efficient over the next ten years, which is vital to keeping household energy costs down.

The government is also announcing further help for low-income households to meet energy costs with the publication of consultation responses on the extension of the Warm Homes Discount and Energy Company Obligation schemes.

The Warm Homes Discount scheme is being extended until 2025/2026 and expanded to reduce the energy costs of around £3 million low-income and vulnerable households every year, while the Energy Company Obligation scheme will see £1 billion annual funding until 2026 to help upgrade energy efficiency measures in 450,000 homes, cutting an average of £300 off energy bills.

Going even further to ease the cost of living, last week as part of the

Spring Statement, the Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced a new Tax Plan, including cuts to fuel duty by 5p per litre, and that energy efficiency measures can be installed in homes VAT free for the first time ever.

The Chancellor Rishi Sunak said:

> This historic increase will mean a pay rise for millions of hard-working Brits – with an average full-time worker pocketing an extra £1,000 a year.
>
> We're doing everything we can to ensure people keep more of what they earn in these challenging times, with a new Tax Plan that delivers tax cuts for nearly 30 million people as well as £22 billion to help with the cost of living.

Bryan Sanderson Chair of the Low Pay Commission said:

> The Business Secretary's strong support is especially welcome at this difficult time. Workers on the minimum wage; care for our elderly and sick, harvest and deliver our food, and do a multitude of other tasks which help us all.
>
> Many public sector workers including for example teaching assistants will also shortly be included. They all deserve to be properly remunerated and respected as key members of our society.
>
> The Low Pay Commission met with around 100 representative bodies last year before making its recommendations. We are frequently their main sometimes even their only advocates. With government support we will continue to try to ensure that they do not suffer from the neglect which was so often characteristic of the past.

The new rates – announced at the Chancellor's Spending Review 2021 – were recommended by the independent body the Low Pay Commission, following extensive consultation.

The government is committed to the target of the NLW reaching two-thirds of median earnings by 2024, and this increase means we are on track to meet this.

Last week we published this year's remit to the Low Pay Commission, asking them to make recommendations later this year for minimum wage rates to apply from April 2023.

Examples on how paying a higher wage promotes good productivity includes: Riley and Bondibene, 'Raising the Standard: Minimum Wages and Firm Productivity', 2017

The workers most likely to benefit from the uplift is outlined in the government’s impact assessment published alongside the regulations.

Other changes to workers’ rights come into force today, including a certification officer levy for trade unions. Please find out more: government confirms plans to modernise trade union regulator.

Workers across the UK are entitled to the minimum wage, including Ukrainian refugees. For information on NMW entitlement please see: The National Minimum Wage and Living Wage.

We encourage all employees to check their pay, particularly if you feel you are being paid incorrectly. For more details on the check your pay campaign, please see: Check Your Pay site.

The regional breakdown for people in the UK on the National Living Wage or National Minimum Wage are:

Region	Coverage of NLW and NMW rates
North east	113,000
North west	295,000
Yorkshire and Humber	236,000
East Midlands	214,000
West Midlands	256,000
South west	219,000
East	209,000
London	212,000
South east	284,000
Wales	122,000
Scotland	174,000
Northern Ireland	138,000

British Embassy Panama: 2022-2023 call for project proposals coming soon

News story

The British Embassy in Panama will soon announce a call for proposals through social media channels.

The British Embassy in Panama City will shortly be announcing its call for proposals for projects between April 2022 and March 2023. The call for project proposals will be published on the Embassy’s Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook accounts. We encourage non-profit and multilateral organizations to consider their ideas for the funding bids process.

We will consider proposals that directly support the following thematic areas:

1. Open societies

   a) Open Data and access to information

   b) Democracy

   c) Human rights (LGBT+, Afrodescendant people, indigenous communities)

   d) Media freedom

2. Climate change

   a) Waste management and recycling

   b) Implementation of COP26 commitments

   c) Energy transition and clean growth

   d) Links between climate change and academia

3. Accessible education

   a) Bilingualism

   b) Creative industries development, cultural, software, AI, IoT

   c) Technologies for virtual learning

   d) STEM education

About the International Programme Fund (IPF)

The International Programme Fund (IPF) of the United Kingdom was launched in 2015 as a responsive, agile fund to support the strategic objectives of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The IPF supports adaptive, short-term projects which also influence local policies and create networks that open opportunities for further engagement and diplomacy.

Projects must qualify as Official Development Assistance (ODA). ODA is a term created by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. ODA projects have, as a primary objective, the promotion of economic development and welfare, while ensuring gender equality, inclusion, and compliance with Paris Agreement objectives. To learn more about how the UK Government uses ODA, click here.

Recommendations to consider when preparing a proposal

- Project proposals must be aligned with the FCDO´s priorities and thematic areas above
- Projects cannot last longer than 9 months
- The total cost of a project should be between $10,000 and $30,000 USD (or the equivalent in other currencies)
- Unfortunately, we cannot consider projects which include the purchase of equipment and IT devices
- The call for proposals is not intended for individuals, for-profit or government organizations
- Project proposals should identify the key beneficiaries and reflect the “change” they will bring
- Project proposals should state the issues they will address and why the UK should fund them
- Payments to implementing partners during the project will be made in arrears (i.e. for actual costs incurred by the implementing partner after project activities take place). The Embassy cannot accept proposals that include advance payments

Published 31 March 2022

UK convenes international conference to secure military aid for Ukraine

Press release

The Defence Secretary hosted the second International Defence Donor Conference for Ukraine, leading efforts of partners to bolster the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The conference brought together over 35 international partners to discuss the latest situation in Ukraine and the country's most pressing requirements for lethal and non-lethal military aid.

The international community has committed to widening its package of military support for Ukraine and explored new ways of sustaining the Armed Forces of Ukraine over the longer term, including the provision of increasingly capable air and coastal defence systems, artillery and counter battery capabilities, armoured vehicles and protected mobility, as well as wider training and logistical support.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace MP said:

> Today's donor conference demonstrates the international community's determination to support Ukraine in the face of President Putin's illegal and unprovoked invasion by Russian forces.
>
> We are increasing our coordination to step-up that military support and ensure the Armed Forces of Ukraine grow stronger as they continue to repel Russian forces.

The first Donor Conference was held on 25 February, boosting the provision of immediate support as Russia commenced its invasion. The number of participants has since increased to 35.

The UK Government is now working with Poland, the United States, and other partners to coordinate the provision of longer term international support, alongside the recently announced new UK military support package for Ukraine.

The UK has supported Ukraine since the 2014 invasion, training over 20,000 Ukrainian personnel, and earlier this year started providing lethal aid. This has included over 4,000 NLAWs and Javelin anti-tank systems, as well as committing to send Starstreak air defence systems and 6,000 new anti-tank and high explosive missiles. This is in addition to a range of non-lethal aid including body armour, helmets, boots, ration packs, rangefinders and communications equipment.

Published 31 March 2022