

Swansea's new Arena opens with City Deal funding

Swansea's new £135 million Copr Bay destination has been officially opened.

UK Government Minister David TC Davies was among those present to officially open Swansea's 3,500-capacity venue, called the Digital Arena, which has been part-funded by the £1.3bn Swansea Bay City Deal.

The new facility hosts its first show on 15 March 2022 when stand-up comedian, John Bishop performs there.

The Digital Arena is at the heart of the £135 million Copr Bay development, and is surrounded by a new 1.1 acre coastal park, accessed by a new bridge over Oystermouth Road.

UK Government Minister David TC Davies said:

Copr Bay is a wonderful addition to Swansea and I'm absolutely delighted that the UK Government has contributed £13.7m to the project. It will attract visitors and provide a great leisure destination to Swansea's residents. And it will support jobs and opportunities, as we build back better after the Covid pandemic.

Projects like this one demonstrate what the UK Government means when we talk about Levelling Up and means that Swansea has a great future.

I'd like to thank all our partners for the hard work that has gone into this fantastic project.

Cllr Rob Stewart, Swansea Council Leader, said:

The official opening of Copr Bay phase one is delivering on our promise to the people of Swansea. This shows Swansea is not a city of artist's impressions – we are transforming the city with a £1bn programme of investment.

Copr Bay will create a fantastic new leisure destination and hundreds of jobs and opportunities for local people, while also helping support local businesses and generate more footfall and spending for our city centre.

We've delivered this scheme during a pandemic, so everyone involved deserves enormous credit – from council staff and funding partners to our contractors and Ambassador Theatre Group, who will operate the arena on our behalf and bring world class entertainment to

Swansea.

Worth £17.1m a year to Swansea's economy, Copr Bay is already acting as a catalyst for even more jobs and investment, meaning Swansea is very well-placed to quickly bounce back from the economic impact of Covid.

It's a key part of a £1bn regeneration story that's unfolding in Swansea, transforming our city into the UK's best to live, work, study and visit.

Mark Drakeford, First Minister of Wales, said:

This is a very exciting time for the regeneration of Swansea and I'm delighted that we've been able to invest in these projects which will increase the connectivity between the city centre and the waterfront and provide Swansea with a state-of-the-art facility that will increase its ability to host major cultural and business events. I'd like to congratulate all partners on delivering this project in such difficult circumstances.

[Statement on the phasing out of Russian oil imports](#)

Introduction

Thank you very much Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to start by saying what a privilege it was for all of us to hear the historic address in the House yesterday by President Zelenskyy. I am sure all Members will join me in thanking him once again for his inspiring words, his great leadership. And it is with those words in mind, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I come here today.

With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the UK phase out of imports of Russian oil in response to Vladimir Putin's brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The UK joins key allies, including the United States, in halting the import of Russian oil, which makes up 44% of Russian exports and 17% of the government revenue through taxation.

This action follows the most punishing set of sanctions the British state has ever imposed on a G20 nation.

Our trade, financial, and personal sanctions are having an effect on the Russian economy, the Ruble as I speak has now fallen by nearly 42% – and the Moscow Exchange's stock trading has been shut since 25 February.

The British government has sent a clear message to Putin's regime and those who support him in his war against Ukraine.

Russian Oil Supply

It is important to remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, Russia produces only a fraction of the fuel products currently imported to the UK. In a competitive global market for oil and petroleum products, demand can be met by alternative sources of supply.

As a result of international revulsion at Putin's action, Russian oil is already being excluded from much of the market and currently it is trading at quite a sharp discount from other crude oil sources.

Measure detail

But we want to go further, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Yesterday I set out that the UK is phasing out imports of Russian oil during the course of the year.

This transition will give the market, it will give businesses and supply chains more than enough time to substitute Russian imports.

UK resilience

Businesses should use this year to ensure as smooth a transition as possible so that consumers will not be affected.

The government will work with companies through a new Taskforce on Oil to support them to make use of this period in finding alternative supplies.

Yesterday, I spoke with businesses, unions and representatives from the sector, and of course I and officials in BEIS will continue to engage and support British business.

Whilst Russian imports account for 8% of total UK oil demand, the UK is also, one should remember, a significant producer of both crude oil and petroleum products. We participate in a global market for these products and we have resources in place in the unlikely event of supply disruption.

Over the course of the year the taskforce we set up will work closely with international partners including the USA, the Netherlands, and the Gulf to ensure alternative supplies of fuel products.

Last week I addressed the International Energy Agency and tomorrow we will have an extraordinary meeting of the G7 Energy Ministers to discuss further steps.

While businesses should do everything they can to source oil from alternative sources, they will still be able, it is important to emphasise this, to import Russian oil during the transition period.

These measures target oil related products imports only. The UK is not dependent on Russian natural gas, making up less than 4% of our supply. However, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be exploring options to end this altogether.

I want to be clear to the House that we fully intend, and we must, end our dependency on all Russian hydrocarbons.

In the meantime, we need more investment in North Sea oil and gas production as we make the move to cheaper and cleaner power.

Turning off domestic production – as some are calling for – at this moment would be completely the wrong thing to do. We're not going to do it.

The Prime Minister has also confirmed that the government will set out an energy strategy to explain the UK's long-term plans for greater energy security, including both renewable and nuclear power – building on our [Ten Point Plan](#).

Wider sanctions

This measure – and those being taken by our allies in terms of the oil phase out – will move the West away from a dependency on Russian oil.

It will take us on a road to building a stronger more resilient British energy system.

It will increase the growing pressure on Russia's economy.

And it will ultimately hamper Russia's ability to impose further misery on the Ukrainian people.

[£11.6m boost for local authorities to tackle air pollution](#)

Blaby District Council Purchase of particulate matter monitors and development of a public facing app supported by communication and engagement activities for most vulnerable. Recruitment of an Air Quality Officer. £155,121 Bradford Metropolitan District Council Purchase of particulate matter monitors and development of the existing public facing website for information on particulate matter relating to domestic combustion and Non-Road Mobile Machinery. Supported by communication and engagement activities for vulnerable groups. £253,432 Brighton and Hove City Council

Retrofit of 40 buses to Euro-VI standard. (Working in partnership with Lewes and Eastbourne District Councils, Worthing-Adur District Council, Horsham District Council, Crawley District Council and Rother District Council) £499,500 Brighton and Hove City Council Sensors upgrade to monitor particulate matter; supported by community engagement with a focus in schools. (Working in partnership with Lewes and Eastbourne District Council, Worthing-Adur District Council, Horsham District Council Crawley District Council) £376,800 Buckinghamshire Council Renovation of a 10 year old Dennis Eagle 26 tonne Refuse Collection Vehicle to include an electric power train; installation of telematics system and 5 years' worth of replacement parts. £578,000 Buckinghamshire Council Purchase and trial of electronic diffusion tubes implemented by the public, and community engagement focussed on schools. £91,273 Canterbury City Council Purchase of sensors to publicise real time data on particulate matter and NO2 on existing website – supported by an education and communication campaign. £129,681 Cheshire East Borough Council Communication campaign to raise awareness in Cheshire East on the health impacts around idling and domestic burning to encourage behavioural change. £54,607 Colchester Borough Council Development of an e-cargo bike delivery service made through a bespoke booking app so shoppers and visitors to Colchester Town Centre can book deliveries to their homes within a 5 mile radius or a nearby smart locker. £188,587 Doncaster Council Schools' street closure, and communication and engagement project to raise awareness of transport emissions to change attitudes and influence behaviour and encourage mode shift from car to active travel £104,000 Dorset Council Additional monitoring and public awareness campaign to improve knowledge of particulate matter £53,339 Eastleigh Borough Council Communication campaign and schools' engagement focussed on active travel. £132,932 Essex County Council Schools' education and awareness theatre production and air Quality monitoring in schools. Plus, updates to existing local Air Quality website £279,489 Gloucestershire County Council Development of an E-bike company that will operate a small fleet of bikes and electric vehicles out of a warehouse near the centre of Cheltenham to act as delivery depot. £40,000 Hammersmith and Fulham Council Monitoring, engagement, and awareness raising in schools £145,590 Hertfordshire County Council Air Quality data collection for particulate matter and NO2 communications campaign to raise community awareness. £132,000 Ipswich Borough Council Domestic burning behaviour change campaign £115,632 Islington London Borough Council Audit of care homes to introduce air quality improvement measures £267,060 Lancaster City Council Domestic burning behaviour change campaign £198,794 London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Development of Barking & Dagenham Airspace platform to encourage engagement between vulnerable groups £218,800 London Borough of Camden Large communication campaign across 13 London Boroughs on particulate matter and domestic burning. (Working in partnership with London Borough of Islington, London Borough of Brent, London Borough of Croydon, London Borough of Ealing, London Borough of Haringey, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames, London Borough of Lewisham, London Borough of Merton, Royal Borough of Richmond Upon Thames, London Borough of Sutton, London Borough of Waltham Forest, London Borough of Wandsworth, City of Westminster) £300,000 London Borough of Ealing Air Quality Educational resource supported by live data. £237,502 London Borough of Hackney Creation and promotion of local web site to improve knowledge and encourage behaviour

change in vulnerable groups. (Working in partnership with City of London, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, London Borough of Newham) £313,720 London Borough of Southwark Project aims reduce emissions from gas boilers at schools through installation of replacement heat pumps. Supported by a Project officer to co-ordinate. £375,000 Medway Council Taxi and private hire Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Feasibility Study £113,400 Medway Council Anti-idling campaign on busy high street £14,110 North West Leicestershire District Council Monitoring of particulate matter to develop knowledge of domestic burning and reduce emissions through behavioural change. (In partnership with Harborough District Council) £27,240 Oxfordshire County Council Expansion of a Zero Emissions Zone in area in Oxford city following on from a previous pilot scheme. (Working in partnership with Oxford City Council) £970,700 Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Driver training scheme for Council employees £64,018 Southampton City Council Clean Air schools' engagement and behaviour change programme £350,533 London Borough of Southwark Air quality mapping tool to gather data and share info via air TEXT, schools messaging and hospital outpatient clinics. (In partnership with London Borough of Lambeth) £617,000 St Helens Borough Council Set up a programme to provide a grant programme to retrofit or replace polluting vehicles to low or zero emission. £650,000 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Air Quality monitoring and anti-idling campaign with schools £36,664 Transport for Greater Manchester Particulate matter monitoring and communication campaign to improve community knowledge and influence behaviour. (Working with Bolton Council, Bury Council, Manchester City Council, Oldham Council, Rochdale Council, Salford City Council, Stockport Council, Tameside Council, Trafford Council, Wigan Council) £573,956 Uttlesford District Council Particulate matter awareness and behaviour change. Clean air pilot scheme through try before you buy e-bikes, e-cargo bikes and e-vehicle car club, and a traffic management scheme £517,124 West Midlands Combined Authority Retrofit of 10 buses to Euro-VI standard and conversion of 6 buses to electric. (Working with Dudley MBC, Sandwell MBC, Walsall MBC, and City of Wolverhampton) £999,072 West Northamptonshire Council Data gathering on congested routes and public information campaign £148,297 Westminster City Council Project to move freight to London by river rather than road and continue ongoing deliveries through fleet of zero emission electric vehicles, cargo bikes and walking. (Delivered through Westminster Cross River Partnership in partnership with London Boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Wandsworth. Plus, Port of London Authority (PLA), Cadogan Estates, and The Fitzrovia Partnership) £1,000,000 Wigan Council Schools and community education programme. Followed by information campaign for vulnerable groups £99,094 Wokingham Borough Council Information and behaviour changes campaign to promote active travel in favour of cars and school buses £185,280

[Changes to Environment Agency's](#)

abstraction charges to safeguard water supplies for people and wildlife

- **New charging framework to protect the environment and England's long-term water supply**
- **It will provide a fairer system where people pay for the services they receive and those abstracting a lot of water will pay more**
- **The funding is needed to secure sustainable water resources for the environment, business, and society, now and into the future**

The new rules have been approved by government and published in the Environment Agency's response to the review of water resources abstraction charges and the outcome of its consultation.

The Environment Agency regulates the abstraction and impoundment of water, working with water companies, farmers, industry, businesses and others to protect access to water and make sure that the water in England is abstracted sustainably.

England is facing increased pressure on its water resources due to population growth and climate change. Without action, by 2050 significant water shortages in parts of the country have been predicted and some rivers could have between 50 and 80 percent less water during the summer. Based on recent projections, more than 3.4 billion additional litres per day will be needed in England by then, an increase of 23% on today's supplies.

The Water Resources Review of Charges aims to create a fairer system where people pay for the services they receive and those abstracting a lot of water, such as water companies, will pay more, supporting behavioural change to use water more economically.

The new charges – which have not changed for the past 10 years – will be based on:

- the volume of water taken from the environment
- where the water is taken from
- how much of that water is returned to the environment

The new charging framework will secure £25 million in additional income each year to protect access to water and meet environmental challenges, including to help protect England's sensitive habitats, such as chalk streams.

The increase in funding from charges will enable further investment by the Environment Agency in:

- protecting future supplies through maintaining and operating infrastructure, including water transfer schemes, gauging stations, weirs and sluices
- modernising the water abstraction licensing system through digital transformation
- protecting and enhancing the environment through a more sustainable approach to water abstraction with increased emphasis on rare and sensitive habitats, such as England's unique chalk streams

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

The biggest long-term threat to the environment, our economy and our lifestyle is water quantity – simply having enough for people and wildlife.

In the face of the climate emergency, population growth and rising demand for water, we need to ensure that all those who use water, and rely on it for their business, can continue to do so now and into the future, as well as better protecting our rivers and aquifers.

As part of this we need a system that allows us to charge fully and fairly for the services we provide to preserve water supplies and help businesses meet their needs in a sustainable way that protects the environment.

[Search for new HS2 Ltd Chair is relaunched to help drive transformation and level up the](#)

country

- the search for a Chair to drive forward Europe's largest infrastructure project is relaunched
- the criteria for the role have been updated to appeal to a wider set of candidates able to take on the most important job in UK transport
- Sir Jon Thompson will take on an expanded role as Deputy Chair overseeing one of the UK's most critical and transformational programmes

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has today (9 March 2022) relaunched his search for a new HS2 Chair, to lead the way in driving forward Europe's largest infrastructure project.

This is one of the most important transport roles in the United Kingdom with HS2 sitting at the heart of the government's once-in-a-lifetime plans to improve transport connectivity across the North of England and the Midlands and level up the nation.

To reflect this, criteria for the Chair role have been updated to attract leaders from a wider field of sectors and backgrounds ready to take on the challenge of leading this transformational project. All candidates will be asked to demonstrate their experience in providing world-class strategic leadership in complex settings.

The new Chair will build on the work already undertaken by HS2 Ltd and former Chair Allan Cook CBE – which, one year on from the Prime Minister marking the start of construction, is supporting over 20,000 jobs and more than 600 apprenticeships.

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson said:

The Chair of HS2 Ltd is one of the most important transport jobs in the UK sitting at the helm of a project that will deliver on the government's promises to boost connectivity, level up communities across the North and Midlands and help the nation build back better.

We've relaunched our search with new criteria designed to ensure we recruit the best and brightest candidate, ready to take on this challenge and drive forward transformation across the nation."

This comes as the Secretary of State for Transport appoints Sir Jon Thompson to become Deputy Chair of HS2 Ltd.

Sir Jon Thompson said:

This is a once in a generation programme, which will transform

transport and connectivity in the UK and I am thrilled to take on an expanded role. Like the rest of the board, I am passionate about ensuring HS2 unlocks economic growth and jobs. As Deputy Chair, I will support the company to deliver the programme on time and on budget.

This role will include chairing HS2 Ltd until a permanent replacement is found and will be an extension of the duties Sir Jon has held as a Non-Executive Director since April 2021.

Sir Jon will support the HS2 Minister and future Chair to ensure HS2 is delivered on time and in budget whilst also working with the rest of the board and the executive to provide oversight, leadership and accountability for the HS2 programme.

Sir Jon brings decades of experience in the delivery of major projects to the role alongside world-class leadership experience having previously served as the Permanent Secretary at both the Ministry of Defence and HM Revenue and Customs.