

[News story: New low carbon heating for Gateshead unveiled](#)

The newly-completed Gateshead District Energy Centre is the first of its kind and scale in the North East and will generate and supply low-carbon, low cost energy for up to 350 local homes and businesses in the area.

On a tour of the new centre Minister for Industry and Energy, Jesse Norman said:

This investment in local energy supplies is intended to deliver low carbon energy at competitive prices for local customers. It is a great example of the kind of local initiatives our new Industrial Strategy is looking to support.

Through our ambitious Industrial Strategy Green Paper, the Government is working hard to promote growth across the North East and the rest of the UK, and to ensure the supply of secure, affordable and low-carbon energy for businesses and households.

Unlike conventional power stations, Gateshead's District Energy Centre is capable of capturing waste heat created during the energy generation process and recycling it to keep buildings nearby warm. In addition the network has been designed to ensure the Energy Centre will be able to meet all the energy needs of future developments planned for Gateshead town centre, underpinning the redevelopment of the Baltic Business Quarter, plus the Gateshead Quays area and major housing developments.

The energy centre uses a pair of 2MW gas-powered combined heat and power (CHP) plants to generate enough electricity to power 5,000 homes, with the waste heat from the engines being recovered to provide hot water for heating.

Affordable energy and clean growth is a key pillar of the government's Industrial Strategy green paper, with a clear commitment to ensure the supply of secure, affordable and clean energy for businesses and households across the UK.

[John McDonnell MP pre-Budget speech](#)

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, speaking at the South Bank Centre ahead

of next week's Budget, said:

*****CHECK
AGAINST DELIVERY*****

Next

week, the Chancellor will stand up in Parliament to deliver his first – and last – spring Budget.

He

will no doubt want to paint a rosy picture of progress since the Autumn Statement, just a few months ago.

But

if progress has been so significant, and all is going so well – why is the government continuing to pursue spending cuts?

From

the NHS to social care, from prisons to education, our public services are in crisis.

Brexit

will present challenges to this whole country.

Labour

is prepared to meet them.

Yet

instead of rising to the challenge I fear the approach from this government on the economy is to continue the failures of the past.

Look

behind the headline figures and the real story is apparent.

The

essential facts on our economy remain as follows.

Low

investment over many decades has led to a low productivity, low wage economy.

Insecure

and poorly-paid work dominates new job creation.

That,

in turn, means that the tax base needed to secure our public services is less stable.

Deliberate

decisions by this government to privilege tax giveaways to the super-rich and giant corporations have further undermined the tax base.

The

model is not sustainable.

The failure at a national level is palpable.

The Conservatives will soon have added three quarters of a trillion pounds to the national debt since they arrived in office.

At the same time, they will have imposed the first spending cuts on schools for forty years.

An NHS in a state of profound crisis.

Those who work in and manage our public services have done their best under the austerity onslaught.

Local authorities in particular have had to cope with the most extraordinarily sharp funding cuts.

They will not sustain a further round of spending cuts.

So when the Treasury casually announces that it is looking for a further 6% of funding cuts to some government departments, as they did this week, it is an act of gross irresponsibility.

And the comments today from the head of the Care Quality Commission that the NHS "stands on a burning platform" have driven home the scale of the crisis.

Cuts to social care, amounting to £4.5bn since 2010, have brought the system to the brink of collapse.

Over 1m vulnerable elderly people, including many who are very frail, now lack access to the care they need.

This is one of the richest countries in the world, and yet Tory austerity has brought our public services to the brink.

Social care has a £1.9bn deficit in funding for this year.

This
needs to be filled immediately to stabilise the system.

Based
on estimates by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy,
the
NHS and social care face a funding gap of between £8.5 and £15bn by 2020.

Published
figures indicate that tax receipts are currently higher than anticipated.

Given
that we're facing an immediate crisis in the NHS and social care, I'm calling
on the Chancellor to use that money to address this NHS and social care
emergency.

Any
measure less than this is likely to be inadequate.

It
is not just those who rely on our public services who have suffered under
this
government.

The
slump in living standards overseen by this Tory government is the worst this
country has experienced since the Industrial Revolution.

The
Chancellor may try and boast about rising GDP.

But
that hasn't turned into real improvements in people's lives.

The
reality of our economy is that average real hourly pay remains over 10% below
its level before the crash.

And
that cuts to public services have now placed them, as the independent
Institute
for Government has said, close to outright collapse.

The
record on living standards is the worst of any leading economy.

Only
Greece has seen a bigger fall in real pay.

Britain
has the distinction of being the only large developed economy in which wages

fell even as economic growth returned after the crash.

And now rising inflation as the government mishandles Brexit is devaluing people's wages further.

Yet the government has reneged on its promised National Living Wage level, and is continuing to pursue cuts in in-work benefits.

Analysis out this morning by the Institute of Fiscal Studies shows that low-income working families with children will suffer most.

The average household will be £5,000 worse off by the end of this Parliament than they might have expected.

If the economy is growing, the benefits must be shared fairly.

The Chancellor must reverse the £70bn giveaway to the super-rich and giant corporations between now and 2021.

And the cruel £3.7bn cut to Personal Independence Payment for disabled people must be halted.

Labour will bring in a £10 an hour Real Living Wage to make sure work always pays fairly.

Our public services, from education to local councils to prison services and social care are in deepening crisis and the burden is falling disproportionately on women.

It is women who are bearing the brunt of low pay, cuts to in-work benefits, and the public sector pay cap.

Put together, this government has created a toxic mix.

Independent estimates by the Women's Budget Group suggest that 86% of cuts in public spending since 2010 have fallen on women.

The
Chancellor must take action in the Budget next week to fund our public
services
and end this discrimination.

In
the place of austerity, Labour want a Budget that
works for women, that invests in jobs for women, funds the services that
women
depend on and advances women's equality and economic independence.

It
is the National Health Service and our social care services that tell us the
most about this government's failures.

It
is essential that the government uses this Budget to give the NHS and social
care the funding they urgently need.

The
present Conservative government has been condemned for its fast-and-loose
approach to NHS spending.

The
Chief Executive of NHS England has dismissed government claims that current
funding is adequate – let alone more than was asked for.

The
Public Accounts Committee has rebuked this government for raiding the NHS
capital budget to meet NHS spending.

The
Health Select Committee has dismissed the government's claims on increased
funding.

The
reality is that this government has consistently failed to provide the
funding
that the NHS needs, and that it will continue to need into the future.

Yet
the rhetoric from the Prime Minister downwards has suggested anything but.

There
is an air of unreality about her claims that more and more patients are being
seen by more and more doctors.

The
experience on the ground of patients, doctors, and nurses is of a treasured
institution already drifting into the greatest crisis in its history.

The
reality is that the Tories are imposing a real-terms cut per head in

healthcare
spending.

Current
plans from the government do not come anywhere close to addressing the scale
of
the crisis.

It
is essential that they now bring forward plans to close the funding gap if we
do not want to lose our NHS.

Labour
will never break from the fundamental principle that our National Health
Service should be free at the point of use.

And
we will reverse Tory privatisation, by renationalising the NHS.

It
will require bolder steps to secure NHS funding where demand pressures are
rising, confidence in government is low, but retaining the NHS' historic
mission of healthcare, free at the point of delivery is a national priority.

Public
trust and confidence must be restored.

Not
only in the government of the day.

But
in governments for the rest of this century and beyond.

Recent
discussions around the long-term future of the NHS have helped clarify some
important issues.

I
want to lay out some of the framework on how Labour will be looking to
develop
its thinking in the future.

The
financing of the NHS has become excessively politicised to the point where
even
supposedly official figures are subject to dispute.

There
needs to be an independent adjudication of both needs, and actual provision,
to
restore public trust and confidence.

The Office for Budget Responsibility has already taken steps to assess the levels of funding needed for the NHS in the longer term.

I have written to Robert Chote to ask about the ability of the OBR to continue to provide these assessments, as part of its overall brief to monitor the government's fiscal position.

To change the OBR's responsibilities and bring in permanent oversight on healthcare funding would require primary legislation from government.

Fair and objective assessments of long-term need are required, along with close monitoring of actual spend being made.

That's a bigger task than Ministers can provide.

We need a political neutral body, modelled on the Office for Budget Responsibility, that can remove the question of long-term funding from the political squabbling.

Only in this way can public confidence in the figures be restored – and essential spending correctly made.

Second, we have to place funding for the NHS on a longer-term basis.

As Lord Macpherson and others have suggested, placing the NHS on a stable five-year financing basis means that certainty of funding can be assured.

But we need to do more than tie funding down for the length of a Parliament and look to ten-year budgets.

The pressures that we know of today will continue to build up over decades.

We need NHS budgets that can assure funding on those timescales.

Third, we must show those expected to pay for the NHS that their tax money is well-spent.

The simple truth is that after the financial crash and years of failed austerity, governments are not trusted.

Creative accounting and stealth taxes have helped chew away public trust in the system.

The fact that the wealthy can seemingly dodge their taxes at will has further undermined public confidence in the tax system.

And politicians, thinking only about the electoral cycle, have too many incentives to game the system.

People need to know that the contribution they make will be spent properly.

Hypothecation, allocating taxes raised to specific purposes, can make absolutely clear where tax money is being spent.

It can help restore the trust and confidence in taxation and government spending that has otherwise started to break down.

But hypothecation for the NHS has to be more than a commitment from a politician or a political party to spend a given amount, however firm that promise.

It needs a clear commitment, over the long term, that specific taxes will be used for specific purposes, and that this spending will be properly monitored.

The government's rhetoric on the economy has changed profoundly over the last year.

They're catching up with some of positions we've staked out.

The Chancellor claims he now accepts the need for government to invest, rather than to slash investment.

He just won't deliver properly on it.

And
the Prime Minister has offered fine words about the “good that government can do”.

And
yet her government actively pursues NHS spending cuts that have contributed to
30,000 excess deaths in a year.

These
are not my figures, but those of the Royal Society of Medicine.

The
disconnect between what Ministers say, and what they do, has reached dramatic proportions.

The
reason for the disconnect is clear.

The
Tory Party know that after years of austerity and sliding living standards, the
sentiment against political elites out there in the country is palpable.

That
mood was a critical factor in driving the vote to Leave the European Union last
year.

This
government have sensed the mood and adapted to circumstances.

They’ve
borrowed the rhetoric of protest and now pose as champions of the workers.

Only
five months ago, the Prime Minister and her Chancellor were giving the
impression that austerity was coming to an end.

But
much of the austerity is yet to come.

In
the end, the Tory leadership are the elite.

So
they can make all the grand promises they wish.

But
they can’t deliver the transformation our economy now needs.

They
don’t have the political will to do it.

Labour
has already begun to lay out its alternative.

We
want a break with the past – not a continuation of its mistakes.

So
the fundamental task of any reforming government in the future will be to
rebuild and reconstruct our economy.

Our
Fiscal Credibility Rule and commitment to invest means the next Labour
government will break with the failures of the past.

We
will bring down the deficit whilst committing real government resources to
increase investment.

By
the end of the next Labour government, the national debt, relative to trend
GDP, will be lower than what we will inherit.

We'll
reverse years of underinvestment across the whole country.

Not
just in the few existing centres for growth and prosperity.

But
delivering the funding needed so that our smaller towns and communities can
share in the prosperity.

The
great divide between London and the rest has to be overcome.

We'll
introduce legislation to correct the bias in investment funding for the
regions.

We'll
commit the funding needed for specific infrastructure investments, like the
£10bn Crossrail for the North or new tidal lagoons.

Labour
is committed to delivering one million new houses, and building a new
generation of council housing.

And
we need a government prepared to give back control to our localities.

So

alongside the National Investment Bank, the next Labour government will create a network of regional development banks that will supply the funding needed on the ground for local businesses to flourish.

We can allow workers and those wishing to set up and run their own businesses the opportunity to take control back away from the boardrooms where short-term decision-making has dominated.

The railways will be renationalised by Labour.

But we'll also introduce a "Right to Own" for workers, giving them first refusal on taking control of companies undergoing a change of ownership.

And we'll use the regional development banks to support a new generation of co-operative businesses, at least doubling the size of our co-operative sector.

Small and new businesses will be properly supported with reforms to business rates, financing from the regional development banks, and support for business hubs in every major town and city, allowing new businesses to work together and collaborate.

We'll support investment by manufacturing firms by removing plant and machinery from business rates.

And we'll reform corporate governance laws to block raiders trashing profitable companies and bankrupting pension funds.

We want our large corporations to work for the public good – not against it.

So we'll also introduce a fair pay ratio to stop top bosses paying themselves excessively.

But to reverse the slide in living standards, we'll need to do more.

Labour's Real Living Wage will be a £10/hour minimum, meaning work will always pay

properly.

The
public sector pay cap will be lifted.

We'll
repeal the Trade Union Act.

And
we've fought to defend the rights of EU migrants here, who contribute so much
to our public services and our economy.

The
Lords have passed Labour's amendment and we urge the government to
immediately
bring forward a guarantee to protect the rights of all EU nationals resident
here.

We'll
be working with our European colleagues to protect the rights of EU citizens
here and UK citizens in the EU.

And
of course we'll halt the austerity cuts to in-work benefits and payments to
people with disabilities.

We
need a clear plan for government to intervene on a major scale, supporting
essential industries, fostering new sectors and above all creating decent,
secure jobs across the whole country.

We'll
use the power of government procurement, backed up by the National Investment
Bank, to deliver a massive expansion of industries like renewables where the
global potential is enormous and our natural resources so significant.

The
next Labour government will break the cartel of the Big 6 energy suppliers,
creating the conditions for local, decentralised, low-carbon energy by
supporting local authorities and co-operatives.

We'll
target 3% of GDP spent on scientific research, from all sources, to deliver
on
the huge potential of our scientific research base.

From
a laggard in research spending, we'll move to being a leader.

We
can't run first rate public services on a second or third rate economy.

But

we can't pay for first rate public services unless the tax system works fairly and effectively.

There'll be no place to hide for tax avoiders under Labour.

Our Tax Transparency and Enforcement Programme will clamp down on the worst avoiders.

And building on the successful Nordic model, we'll introduce legislation to make public the tax returns of those earning over £1m.

Transparency and fairness is at the heart of building a decent, open society.

This will help restore public trust in the tax system – and help clamp down on any avoidance.

This programme of structural reform should all be taken as fundamental.

This is, in outline so far, the economic programme of the next Labour government.

It represents nothing less than the transformation of this country.

We don't have to settle for the steady management of decline under the Tories.

And we don't have to accept the failings of an elite that have lead us into a decade of falling living standards, insecurity, and failing public services.

There is an enormous potential here, in every part of the country.

We can build a radically fairer, more democratic, and more prosperous society.

We can, together, turn this whole country round.

[Press release: Planned roadworks in the East of England: weekly summary for Monday 27 February to Sunday 5 March 2017](#)

Various roads: routine inspections and maintenance for street lighting

Highways England is carrying out a programme of routine inspections of electrical and structural equipment across the region, which is planned for completion in Spring 2017. In addition there is a programme of maintenance which includes bulk lamp changes. Work will include inspecting equipment on:

- the A47 Wansford to Kings Lynn and Dereham to Acle, with traffic management but no full closures
- the A12 southbound Chapel St Mary to Brentwood for cable testing, with traffic management but no full closures
- A5 underground cable testing with verge works no traffic management

Various roads: barrier repairs

Highways England will continue repairs to barriers throughout the week, using lane closures to keep road users at a safe distance from the work. The work will take place at various locations, between 8pm and 5am. This week we are repairing barriers on the M11 in both directions from Monday 27 February to Friday 3 March overnight, using lane closures while we are working between junctions 6 (M25) and 9 (A11). We are also repairing barriers on the A120 in both directions, between junction 8 with the M11 and Braintree (Marks Farm).

Various roads: litter picking and sweeping

Highways England will continue litter picking throughout the week on the M11. This will be done using a mobile slow-moving hard shoulder or lane closure. Work will also include sweeping the hard shoulder of the M11 during the day while we litter pick between junctions 6 (M25) and 9 (A11).

M1: technology repairs

Highways England will be working to repair and replace faulty power cables for signage technology on the motorway, including overhead sign lighting, on the M1. This will be done using lane and hard shoulder closures while we are working, between 9pm and 5am, from Monday 27 February to Friday 10 March. As part of this work, it will be necessary for slip roads to be closed overnight on some dates. Where slip roads are closed, drivers will be diverted to continue on the M1 to the next junction, exit and return to leave the

junction from the opposite direction.

M11 and A120: structures maintenance

Highways England are carrying out routine maintenance work on bridges crossing the M11 between junctions 6 (M25) and 9 (A11) in both directions. They will also be doing similar work on the A120, between junction 8 with the M11 and Braintree (Marks Farm). These will be done during the day, with the hard shoulder closed while we are working.

M11 and A120 Stansted Airport: pothole filling

Highways England will be filling in potholes on the M11 between junctions 8 (Stansted Airport – Bishop’s Stortford) and 9 (A11) in both directions, and on the A120 between Braintree and junction 8 of the M11. This will be done using lane and hard shoulder closures while we are working, between 8.30pm and 6am, from Monday 27 February to Friday 3 March.

M11: routine maintenance

Highways England will be doing routine maintenance of structures and technology boxes along the M11 during the day. These will be done with a hard shoulder closure, taking place between junctions 6 (M25) and 9 (A11).

A5-M1 Link (Dunstable Northern Bypass), Bedfordshire: major improvements

Highways England is building a new 2.9-mile, two-lane dual carriageway running from north of Dunstable and joining the M1 at a new junction 11a, south of Chalton. Main construction started in March 2015. Work is progressing well. The traffic management, including hard shoulder closures, safety barriers, signs, CCTV and average speed cameras, will stay in place throughout the construction work, which will be carried out in phases and should be finished in spring 2017.

Work on the M1 and A5: there will be M1 lane closures between junctions 10 and 13 from Monday 27 February to Saturday 04 March between 10pm to 6am for overhead gantry works and new sign installation.

Work on the A5 and local roads: from Monday 27 to Sunday 05 March there will be traffic lights overnight on the A5 and A505 between 8pm and 6am for safety barrier installation and construction of a new footpath works. There will be temporary traffic lights on local roads and A5 between 9.30am and 3.30pm for verge and safety barrier work.

A5 Friars Wash: road surface repair

Highways England will be replacing the road surface on the A5 between Friars Wash and Chad Lane. This will be done on Monday 27 February, working from 8pm to 6am. During the work the A5 will be closed between M1 junction 9 and Chad

Lane. Access to and from the Premier Inn will be under escort by our site personnel for safety of our workforce. Diversion routes for traffic will be clearly signed.

Drivers heading southbound will be diverted to:

- head north on the A5 to the B4540 Luton Road/ Markyate Road, onto Front Street
- take the A1081 Luton Road towards Harpenden
- take the B487 Redbourn Lane, before joining the A5183 Dunstable Road to join the M1 at junction 9 Drivers heading northbound from M1 junction 9 will be diverted to
- take the A5183 Dunstable Road
- take B487 Redbourn Lane
- take the A1081 through Harpenden onto Front Street, north towards to Slip End
- take the B4540 Markyate Road/Luton Road back to join the A5 at Markyate

A12/A47 renumbering

Highways England is renumbering part of the A12 to become the A47. This work is being carried out as part of the improvements to the A47/A12 corridor. We will be replacing road signs that currently show the A12 to now show the A47. The work will last approximately 12 weeks to complete. The section of the A12 that currently runs from Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth will become the A47.

There will be off peak lane closures and two/three way traffic lights during the day and night throughout Lowestoft on the A12 installing sign faces and patches.

A14 Bury St Edmunds: junction improvements

Improvement works are being carried out on the A14 junction 45 Rookery Crossroads/Rougham. Works include construction of new eastbound slip roads, which are being funded by Suffolk County Council as part of the Bury St Edmunds Eastern Relief Road scheme. There is a 24 hour 40mph speed limit in place through the works for safety reasons, works are currently taking place overnight using lane closures in both directions. The works are due to take five months to complete.

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire: major improvements

Early preparatory construction work on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon scheme has been underway for a number of months and main construction has now started. We are currently carrying out a variety of tasks for which we need to close lanes or carriageway on the A1, A14 and some local roads, usually overnight between 8pm and 6 am unless otherwise stated. The work includes:

- creating safe crossing points for plant on a number of local roads

- installing access points to our construction compounds
- taking core samples of the existing A1 and A14 carriageways to help us plan construction
- clearing sites next to the live carriageway of vegetation
- installing CCTV and average speed cameras
- installing information boards

Planned closures this week

Monday 27 February:

- full closure of A14 Eastbound between Junction 26 to Junction 31
- full closure of the A1307 outbound from Cambridge
- full closure of A1 between Buckden and Alconbury

Tuesday 28 February:

- full closure of A14 Eastbound between Junction 26 to Junction 31
- full closure of the A1307 outbound from Cambridge
- full closure of A1 between Buckden and Alconbury

Wednesday 1 March:

- full closure of A14 West bound Junction 31 to Junction 27
- full closure of the A1307 inbound towards Cambridge
- full closure of A1 between Buckden and Alconbury

Thursday 2 March:

- full closure of A14 West bound Junction 31 to Junction 27
- full closure of the A1307 inbound towards Cambridge
- full closure of A1 between Buckden and Alconbury

Friday 3 March:

- full closure of the A1307 inbound towards Cambridge
- full closure of A1 between Buckden and Alconbury
- full closure of A428 eastbound Caxton Gibbet to Girton

Saturday 4 March 08.00 through to Monday 6th March 05.00:

- full road closure of Hilton Road

Lane closures

Monday 27 February:

- A1 NB between Little Paxton to Brampton Lane 2 Closed
- A14 EB between Junction 30 & Junction 31 2 Closed
- A14 EB between Junction 24 & Junction Lane 2 closed

Tuesday 28 February:

- A1 NB between Little Paxton to Brampton Lane 2 Closed

- A1307 Outbound Lane 2 closed
- A14 Eastbound between Junction 30 & Junction 31 Lane 2 Closed
- M11 Northbound between Junction 13 & Junction 14 MP Lane 2 Closed

Wednesday 1 March:

- A1 Northbound between Little Paxton to Brampton Lane 2 Closed
- A14 Eastbound between Junction 30 & Junction 31 MP Lane 2 Closed
- A14 Eastbound between Junction 24 & Junction 26 Lane 2 closed
- A1307 Outbound Lane 2 closed
- M11 Northbound between Junction 13 & Junction 14 Lane 2 Closed

Thursday 2 March:

- A1 Northbound between Little Paxton to Brampton Lane 2 Closed
- A1307 Outbound Lane 2 closed
- A14 Eastbound between Junction 30 & Junction 31 Lane 2 Closed
- M11 NB between Junction 12 & Junction 13 lane 1 Closed
- M11 NB between Junction 13 & Junction 14 Lane 2 Closed

Friday 3 March:

- A1 Northbound between Little Paxton to Brampton Lane 2 Closed
- A1307 Outbound Lane 2 closed
- A14 Eastbound between Junction 30 & Junction 31 Lane 2 Closed
- M11 NB between Junction 12 & Junction 13 lane 1 Closed

A14 Cambridgeshire: drainage repairs

Highways England is undertaking investigations and repairs to the drainage system of the A14 between junctions 35 (Stoke cum Quy) and 32 (Girton – M11 interchange). There will be Westbound lane closures between 8pm and 6am while we are working overnight, with all works on weekdays only.

On Friday evening we are working on the A14 Eastbound direction with the inside lane closed between junctions 34 and 35.

A47 Dogsthorpe: junction improvements (Peterborough City Council)

Peterborough City Council is continuing its junction improvement work at the A47/A15 Dogsthorpe junction, Peterborough. The work will involve some overnight full closure and 24/7 lane closures on the A47. For more information, [visit the scheme website](#).

A47 Acle Straight: safety improvements

Highways England will be working to improve safety along the A47 between Acle and Great Yarmouth. This will be done between Monday 27 February and Saturday 4 March, working from 8pm to 6am on weeknights only. To keep road users at a safe distance from the works, we will close the A47 between the A1064 Acle

Roundabout and the A12/A149 Vauxhall Roundabout. Access to and from the Vauxhall Holiday Park will be under escort by our site personnel for the safety of our workforce.

There will be a clearly signed diversion route in place, whereby drivers heading eastbound on the A47 will be directed to: * exit the A47 at the Acle Roundabout * take the A1064 north-east towards Caister-on-Sea * take the A149 south towards Great Yarmouth * take the A149 Acle New Road to join the A12 at Vauxhall Roundabout

Drivers heading northbound on the A12 past Great Yarmouth will be directed to follow this diversion in reverse.

A120 and A12 Essex: essential maintenance work

We are completing essential maintenance work on the A120 and the A12 in Essex, which will be ongoing until May. This work will include resurfacing, safety barrier repairs, and bridge repairs, with work taking place between Braintree and Marks Tey, near Colchester, at Kelvedon, and at Wix. Unless detailed otherwise, work will be taking place between 8pm and 6am.

This week we are resurfacing the road and footpaths and replacing street lights, fencing and road signs on the A120 between Marks Tey and Marks Farm from Monday 27 February to Friday 3 March, under night time (8pm-6am) temporary traffic signals at Marks Farm, Coggleshall and Marks Tey. In addition there will be full closures between Riverside junction and Blackwater Aggregates junction at Bradwell between Wednesday 1 and Friday 3 March.

We are repairing bridge joints and water proofing, resurfacing of the carriageway. Bridge will be closed to pedestrians from Tuesday 28 February to Sunday 5 March. Pedestrians will be diverted slightly further west over the Halstead road crossing.

A120 Blackwater Bridge Bradwell Village

The footpath will be accessible but reduced in width to 1.2m to allow bridge deck investigative works. The works will only take place on a day time, but the pedestrian management will be in place for safety 24 hours a day. Repairing drainage on the A120 Wix bypass on nights from Monday 27 February to Friday 3 March . There will be night time (9pm-5am) traffic lights in place and a 40mph speed limit while we are working. This work is expected to be complete by late April.

We are replacing the central reservation safety barrier on the A120 between junction 29 of the A12 (Crown Interchange) to Hare Green (between the B1029 and the A133). There will be narrow lanes westbound with a 50mph limit in place in both directions 24/7 throughout the works until mid-March. In addition there will be a lane 2 closure eastbound from Monday 27 February to Friday 3 March overnight. Overnight westbound full closures from Monday 27 February – Great Bromley Junction and A133 link road. Diversion Route via

A131 / A1232 to Junction 29 for Temporary Barrier and narrow lanes to be relocated.

We are repairing bridge joints on the A12 Ewell Bridge near Kelvedon. Bridge closed to pedestrians 24/7 until scheme is completed April 2017. Pedestrians who cross over Ewell Bridge westbound from its connection with Windmill Hill will be diverted head south on Windmill Hill to its junction with Highfields Lane, then along Highfields Lane, heading towards Kelvedon, before crossing Maldon Road Bridge to the junction with Ewell Hall Chase, and finally join Ewell Hall Chase to meet with the public right of way in the vicinity of Ewell Hall Farm. Pedestrians wishing to cross eastbound, the diversion is the reverse of the above.

Porter Park Bridge A12 north of junction 19

We are repairing bridge joints and water proofing, resurfacing of the carriageway and footpath. Closed to all vehicles. Diversion, (Southbound) B1137, A130, Essex Regiment way, Wheelers Hill, Leigh's Road, Drakes Lane, Boreham Road, Waltham Road, B1137. The northbound diversion is the reverse of the southbound. Pedestrian access is maintained.

A421: Technology Installation (automatic traffic counting sites)

Highways England will be cutting new traffic detector loops cutting in the carriageway and slip road surfaces and installing associated equipment in the verges on the A421 between Marsh Leys Interchange and Elstow Interchange, the works will be carried out using slip road closure and carriageway closure overnight between 21:00 and 06:00 from 1 March to 4 March. There will be lane 2 closures on the slip road at Marsh Ley Interchange during the day from the 1 March and 6 March between 8:00 and 17:00.

During the slip road closures traffic wishing to enter or leave the A421 will be diverted on or off the trunk road at the nearest open slip road and return to the original junction via the opposite carriageway in order to continue their journey.

A428 Eltisley: street lighting and road markings

Highways England will be improving street lighting and road markings on the A428 through Eltisley. This will be done between Monday 27 February and Friday 31 March. During the works we will have traffic lights in place while we are working. As part of this work, it will be necessary for road to be closed overnight on some dates. Where the A428 is closed westbound, drivers will be diverted to take the A1198 northbound at Caxton Gibbet roundabout, then at Godmanchester follow the A14 westbound to junction 21 at Brampton Hut, then take the A1 southbound and follow the A1 southbound to Wyboston junction roundabout, where the diversion ends. Drivers heading eastbound will follow this diversion in reverse.

A120 Panners Interchange: road repairs

Highways England will be resurfacing the A120 at the Panners Interchange which will include the reinstatement of the permanent lining and anti-skid surfacing. This will be done overnight on the Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 February. During the work the A120 westbound entry slip will be closed with the traffic being diverted eastbound along the A120 to Galleys Corner Roundabout and return westbound to Panners Interchange.

A1 Biggleswade North Roundabout: road repairs

Highways England will be repairing the road surface on the A1 roundabout to the north of Biggleswade in both directions. This will be done overnight between Monday 27 February and Wednesday 1 March, working between 8pm and 6am. During the works the A1 will be closed in two phases. The first phase will involve closing the A1 northbound between the Biggleswade south and north roundabouts. There will be a clearly signed diversion route in place, whereby drivers will be diverted at the:

- A507 westbound towards Clophill
- take the A6 northbound to Elstow
- take the A421 eastbound
- re-join the A1 at the Black Cat roundabout

The second phase will involve closing the A1 southbound between Black Cat roundabout and the Biggleswade south roundabout. Again there will be a clearly signed diversion route in place, whereby drivers will be diverted to:

- take the A421 westbound towards to Elstow
- take the A6 southbound towards Clophill
- take the A507 towards Henlow, B659 and then the A6001 towards Langford onto Biggleswade

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.

[News story: Business Minister hosts](#)

diversity and the industrial strategy roundtable

Employers, community groups and small business owners from across the North East today met Business Minister Margot James to discuss how diversity and inclusion can strengthen the Government's Industrial Strategy.

As part of the ministerial country-wide engagement tour, Margot James hosted a roundtable event at Stockton Council to find out directly from business how the Industrial Strategy can support diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In its green paper, 'Building our Industrial Strategy', the Government outlines 10 key pillars of focus to be discussed as part of a 12-week consultation, inviting contributions from industry, businesses, community groups and workers across the North East and the rest of the UK.

The Government's commitment to create an economy that works for everyone and today Margot James urged employers at the event to take seriously their responsibilities to create diverse and inclusive workplaces, giving everyone the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Business Minister Margot James said:

"Diversity and inclusion are key to the UK economy maximising its potential. Through our modern Industrial Strategy and investment in the Northern Powerhouse, we are building an economy that works for everyone and I enjoyed talking to employers in the North East about how we can work together to build on the regions strengths, raise living standards and create new, well-paid jobs in other industries and sectors."

The roundtable follows this week's publication of the Baroness McGregor-Smith review on black and minority ethnic (BME) labour market progression, which found the economy could receive a £24bn-a-year boost if people from ethnic minority backgrounds progressed in work at the same rate as their white counterparts.

As part of the Government's response to the findings, Margot James announced she will chair the new Business Diversity and Inclusion Group. It will bring together business leaders and organisations to coordinate action to remove barriers in the workplace and monitor employers' progress.

The group will meet every quarter at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and will also bring together the leaders of three industry-led diversity reviews:

- Baroness McGregor-Smith
- Sir Philip Hampton and Dame Helen Alexander, who are leading a review

aimed at increasing female leadership in FTSE companies

- Sir John Parker, who today concludes a consultation on recommendations to increase BME representation in the boardroom, to participate in the group

The Government has issued an open invitation to all industries, businesses, workers and local groups in the North East to visit the GOV.UK website and help set the priorities for a modern Industrial Strategy.

The consultation is open until 17 April, after which the Government will consider responses before publishing a white paper later in the year.

Notes to editors:

. Among those in attendance at the roundtable were:

- ARC Stockton
- Association of Colleges
- Catalyst
- Cultures
- Daisy Chain
- EDF Energy
- Education Development Trust
- Groundwork NE & Cumbria
- Mencap
- Morrison Trust
- New Walk
- Nifco Ltd
- Recognition Marketing & PR LLP
- Shaw Trust
- Stockton Inclusion & Training Group, Cultures
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Teeside University

[News story: £15 million boost for UK lamb exports](#)

UK lamb will soon be back on dinner plates across Kuwait following a new deal worth up to £15 million, Food Minister George Eustice announced today.

The re-opened trade route was announced during the minister's visit to the Gulf to promote British food and drink and strengthen the UK's trading relationship with this rapidly growing market.

Three major UK suppliers are already set to benefit from the five-year deal – with shipments prepped to leave soon.

The UK exported £625 million worth of food and drink to the region last year, including £80 million of cereal and £22 million of cheese.

Food Minister George Eustice said:

British lamb has a fantastic reputation around the world for its taste and quality and I'm delighted this export success will now be available for diners in Kuwait.

This move to re-open the market for UK-produced lamb is another example of how we are working hard to tap into international markets and build stronger relationships with trading partners around the world.

Total lamb exports from the UK reached £330 million in 2016, up from £300m the previous year, and this latest deal is a further boost to government's commitment to open more international markets.

The trade mission included a visit to Gulfood in Dubai, where cereal brand Mornflake from Cheshire and a mozzarella producer from Durham were among around 100 UK food and drink companies exhibiting at the world's largest annual trade show.

Jean-Pierre Garnier, head of export trade development at the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) said:

We have found for some time a high level of appetite from Kuwaiti importers and distributors for British lamb and are delighted to be able at last to supply this market.

We are committed to expanding sales of meat and dairy products in the Gulf region and support the Government's export work. Our presence at the important Gulfood exhibition with meat and dairy stands testifies our willingness to grow sales and open new markets.

As part of the minister's visit he witnessed the signing of two Memorandums of Understanding allowing greater collaboration between the UK government and Gulf on projects in aquaculture, fisheries, climate change and marine environments. The first was with the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment and the second was with the Gulf-wide Regional Organisation for Protection of the Marine Environment.

To find out how to export click [here](#)

You can read the full International Action Plan for Food and Drink on [here](#)

The ban on UK lamb was introduced by Kuwait due to concerns around scrapie – a degenerative disease that affects the nervous systems of sheep and goats. Government vets provided the necessary evidence to allay concerns and demonstrate the world-leading approach we take to protecting animal health in the UK.