

Press release: Foreign Secretary to announce £10 million commitment to build digital skills in the Western Balkans

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson will today (9 July) announce that the UK will commit £10 million to help build digital skills and employment prospects for young people in the Western Balkans.

The Foreign Secretary will make the announcement at the first day of the Western Balkans Summit, joined by European and Western Balkans Foreign Ministers.

The funding will see the British Council provide training to children in over 4,500 schools, to bolster digital literacy and core skills across the region. By providing access to a digital education, this funding will help foster the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs, both in the Western Balkans and UK.

The Foreign Secretary will reiterate the UK's commitment to the Western Balkans by announcing an additional £1 million to help the region address difficult legacy issues of the past, this includes working to find and identify the 12,000 victims still missing from the conflicts of the 1990s.

Speaking ahead of the Summit, the Foreign Secretary said:

This new funding demonstrates the UK's enduring commitment to the Western Balkans region.

We are working internationally to provide young people, particularly young women, with the digital skills necessary to participate in the future economy and fulfil their potential.

Importantly it also shows our desire to help the region overcome some of the most difficult chapters in their history and pave the way to an even more prosperous future.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- This £10 million project will run over three years. It expands the British Council 21st Century Schools pilot, enabling primary school age children to develop critical thinking, problem-solving and digital literacy skills. It will run in each of the six Western Balkan countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – reaching 4,500 primary schools and up to one million children.

It will help foster the next generation of digital innovators and entrepreneurs by providing computer programming and coding training.

- The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It works with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year it reached over 65 million people directly and 731 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. It makes a positive contribution to the countries it works with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 it is a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. It receives 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. britishcouncil.org

Further information

[Press release: Hive of activity to raise awareness of Bees' Needs](#)

The Environment Secretary Michael Gove will attend the launch of [Bees' Needs Week](#) today on Carnaby Street, which has been renamed '[Carnabee Street](#)' to raise awareness of the campaign.

Defra has partnered with [Carnaby London](#), the leading West End shopping and dining destination to kick off the week of bee and pollinator action from government, conservation groups, industry and retailers to raise awareness of the campaign and the ways people can help save the bees.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Bees and other pollinators are vital contributors to the beauty of our landscapes, our economy and our £100 billion food industry.

It is inspiring to see such a wide range of organisations celebrating these essential creatures for this unique Bees' Needs campaign – showing us that all of us can play a part and help pollinators to thrive.

Recent actions Government has taken to protect bees include:

- The Government is developing a Nature Recovery Network in England to provide 500,000 hectares of additional wildlife habitat, more effectively linking existing protected sites and landscapes, thereby

improving access to habitat for pollinating insects;

- In November 2017, the Environment Secretary announced that the Government supported further restrictions on the use of three neonicotinoids due to their harmful effects on bees and other pollinators, and the UK voted in favour of the EU Commission's proposal in April 2018;
- Since 2015, nearly half (47%) of new Countryside Stewardship agreements included the Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife Package. The package ensures that a minimum of 3% of the farm is converted to habitat for farm wildlife including pollinators;
- Defra has funded new research by the University of Exeter which has found a way to track the invasive Asian hornet back to the nest. The hornets prey on honeybees so tracking the predator back to the nest will enable inspectors to take swift action and destroy them;
- Defra has provided a home for the rare Black Bee to the hives on the roof of the department's London building. This particular species was on the verge of extinction a few years ago.

Two schools, St Albans School in Hampshire and Trythall in Cornwall, will receive the Pollinator Champion Award from Lord Gardiner, which recognises their invaluable work in helping pollinators thrive.

Defra Minister for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity, Lord Gardiner, said:

It is my pleasure to award the Pollinator Champion Award to St Albans Primary School in Havant and the Trythall Community Primary School from Penzance. I would like to thank these young people and their teachers for their exceptional work in helping to protect these vital pollinators and their dedication in raising awareness of bees' needs.

Bees' Needs Week is about celebrating the fact that everyone can get involved by growing more flowers, leaving patches of garden to grow wild, cutting grass less, not disturbing insect nests, and thinking carefully about using pesticides.

The campaign also celebrates the efforts of a wide-range of organisations that will be present in The Hive – a discovery center dedicated to pollinators on Carnaby Street, London:

- The Royal Horticultural Society are handing out pollinator-friendly seed: [Blooms for Bees](#);
- [The London Honey Company](#) are offering free honey tasting;
- [Reading University](#) are showcasing their leading research and a Bumblearium has been installed offering people a window into the secret lives of bees;
- Last year's Pollinator Champion, [Rebecca Twigg](#), will be in the Hive with her fascinating augmented reality bee trail;
- [Wildflower Turf](#) – the company behind creating the idyllic countryside landscape for the opening ceremony of the London Olympics – have stepped

in to decorate the Hive and showcase some of the most beneficial native wildflower habitats for pollinators.

Simon Quayle, Director, Shaftesbury, said:

Shaftesbury is delighted to support the launch of Bees' Needs Week, on our very own 'Carnabee' Street, which is also being backed by many of our occupants in the area. There has been an alarming decline in the pollinators across the UK, which play a vital role and are the unsung heroes in our ecosystem.

We can all play our part in helping to boost the population, even in urban environments. If you take a closer look around our areas of London's West End you can see we've introduced pockets of pollinator friendly plants wherever possible. With hanging baskets and window boxes, green walls and roofs, and even the introduction of rooftop beehives adorning parts of the area, it offers a much-needed oasis for our pollinating friends.

A swarm of activity is taking place in the world-famous shopping destination to raise awareness of Bees' Needs including:

- Carnaby Street has been renamed 'Carnabee Street' and the iconic arch has undergone a bee-themed makeover;
- A pop-up 'Hive' will open at 3 Carnaby Street which will host educational and fun games, installations and talks in partnership with Defra alongside charities, universities, businesses and landowners;
- Visitors to Carnaby will be able to follow an art trail around the area's 14 streets, with illustrated bees by London based artist Lizzie King on the windows of participating shops and restaurants;
- Shops and restaurants located in the world-famous shopping destination have created bespoke bee themed products, menus, cocktails and offers to raise awareness of the Bees' Needs campaign.

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[Press release: Lord Bourne: “Our Welsh culture is at the heart of Swansea’s top tourist attractions”](#)

Made famous by its actors, poets and Mumbles seafront, UK Government Minister Lord Bourne will visit some of the top-rated TripAdvisor destinations in Swansea later today (Monday 9 July).

The Minister will visit the famous Dylan Thomas Centre, which chronicles the life and work of one of the most famous Welsh poets, as the schools are set to break up for summer and tourism figures expected to soar across the area.

Lord Bourne will also tour a new exhibition called *ACING* by N.S Harsha, one of India’s leading artists, which draws together details of everyday life in his native India with world events and images we see on the news. The visit comes as the latest tourism figures reveal there were 909,000 overseas visits to Wales from January to September last year, up 6% compared to the same time in 2016. Visitors to Wales also spent £337 million, boosting the Welsh economy.

Lord Bourne said:

Swansea’s rich creative history and culture has made its attractions some of the best in the world to visit. It’s no wonder that so many tourists come from far and wide to learn more about some of our world-renowned arts and literature figures.

Tourism is big business in this part of Wales, and one of the UK’s most valuable export industries. The latest figures demonstrate Wales’ continued ability to punch above its weight in this field, driving economic growth across the country.

ENDS

[Press release: Home Secretary’s statement on the death of Dawn](#)

Sturgess

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The death of Dawn Sturgess is shocking and tragic news and I want to express my sincere condolences to her family and friends. This has now become a murder investigation and police and security officials are working around the clock to establish the full facts of the incident.

This desperately sad news only strengthens our resolve to find out exactly what has happened.

As I said earlier today when I visited Amesbury and Salisbury, the Government will continue to provide the local community all the support it needs.