

News story: Twenty three universities join student visa pilot

A pilot which is looking at streamlining the process for international Masters students wanting to study in the UK has been extended to an additional 23 universities, the Immigration Minister announced today.

Currently in its 2nd year with the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Bath and Imperial College London, the pilot will streamline the process for international students looking to study on a Masters course of 13 months or less in the UK.

It also provides greater support for students who wish to switch to a work visa and take up a graduate role, by allowing them to remain in the UK for 6 months after they have finished their course.

Responsibility

Universities taking part are given responsibility for eligibility checks, meaning that students can submit fewer documents than required in the current process alongside their visa applications.

Applicants that do not meet immigration rules will be refused. All students will continue to require Home Office security and identity checks.

The additional 23 universities to benefit from the pilot include 2 in Scotland, 2 in Wales and 1 in Northern Ireland as well as universities from across England.

Immigration Minister Brandon Lewis said:

I am delighted to announce the expansion of this pilot which is part of our ongoing activity to ensure that our world-leading institutions remain highly competitive.

The UK continues to be the 2nd most popular destination for international students and the number coming to study at our universities has increased by 24% since 2010.

This is a clear indication that genuine students are welcome and there is no limit on the number who can come to study in the UK.

Increase

The most recent Home Office statistics show that the number of students applying for visas increased by 8% over the past year, and there has been a 9% increase in the number of students applying to Russell Group universities.

The 23 additional universities will be able to apply the pilot to their 2018/19 intake. The universities were selected as their visa refusal rates are consistently the lowest in their area or region.

The 23 universities to be added to the pilot are:

- Cardiff University
- Goldsmiths University of London
- Harper Adams University
- Newcastle University
- Queen's University Belfast
- The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
- University of Bristol
- Durham University
- University of East Anglia
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Essex
- University of Exeter
- University of Glasgow
- University of Leicester
- University of Liverpool
- University of Manchester
- University of Nottingham
- University of Reading
- University of Sheffield
- University of Southampton
- University of Wales Trinity St. David (Swansea Campus)
- University of Warwick
- University of York

Press release: Highways England is 'gearing up' to remove miles of roadworks in time for Christmas

Almost 400 miles of roadworks across England will be lifted and completed in December, leaving almost 99 per cent of motorways and strategic A roads roadworks-free in time for Christmas.

All roadworks will be lifted or completed by 6am on 22 December until 12.01am on 2 January to help people get away this Christmas with as little disruption as possible.

With the festive countdown well and truly underway, the UK's largest coach operator National Express, has praised Highways England for its role in helping people get to their destination on time.

Chris Hardy, National Express Coach Managing Director, said:

We'll be moving hundreds of thousands of passengers around the UK during the festive period, including on Christmas and Boxing Day when there are no rail services; and New Year's Day.

We work with Highways England round the year to support them in maintaining and improving the road network so that we can offer our customers a reliable and convenient service.

It's great that they've lifted road works during a busy time for travel, helping us to make sure we can get passengers where they want to be for Christmas.

And with thoughts turning to the all-important getaway, Highways England is also calling on motorists to do their bit before getting behind the wheel.

Highways England's customer service director, Melanie Clarke, said:

We're doing everything we can to make journeys as smooth as possible this Christmas and that's why we're keeping 99 per cent of the road network we manage, free from roadworks.

Safety is our top imperative and we know from experience that almost half of breakdowns are avoidable and these can easily be avoided with simple checks. Christmas is always a busy period on the road network and we'd urge all motorists to make sure they do their bit to check their vehicle is roadworthy before setting off over the festive period.

Highways England has also launched a special [festive animation](#) which shows Santa carrying out vital checks to his sleigh before embarking on the most important journey of the year – and he's got a little help from his festive friends including Rudolph!

Some of Santa's pre-flight checks include:

- checking that there is plenty of grip on his sledge – motorists should check their tyre tread to make sure it is within the legal limit
- making sure Rudolph's nose is shining bright – always make sure lights on the vehicle are working correctly before setting off
- making sure the reindeer are full of fuel before travelling – make sure that you always keep your tank at least one quarter full to avoid running out of fuel on your journey

The animation can be found online at the Highways England YouTube channel. Latest statistics from Highways England show almost half of all breakdowns are caused by basic mechanical problems which could be avoided with simple checks.

Furthermore, nearly a quarter are caused by tyre problems; with more than 7,000 cases nationwide of vehicle breakdowns on the strategic road network due to lack of fuel over the course of a year.

Motorists can head online to the Think website where they can watch bespoke videos showing how to carry out basic vehicle checks.

Those wishing to find out more about driving on smart motorways can [go to our webpage](#) for further information.

Drivers planning to use the Dartford Crossing are reminded to pay Dart Charge in advance or by midnight the day after crossing.

More information can be found on our website or by calling our information line (0300 123 5000) they can keep up to date with conditions on the roads.

For more detailed information on how to carry out your vehicle checks, search Think!

General enquiries

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

Media enquiries

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

[Press release: New floating moorings on River Great Ouse to last 50-plus years](#)

The floating moorings replace ones on the relief channels at Stowbridge, Wighenhall St Mary and the Denver Complex, all in Norfolk.

Expected to last at least 50 years, the new platforms feature non-slip mesh decking and galvanised steel frames.

Andy Bennison, Anglian Waterways engineer, who has managed the project said:

The existing landing stages have been taken away to be refurbished and re-used elsewhere on the River Great Ouse. The new frames and decking will improve safety, as well as look better and reduce maintenance costs.

It's all part of our ongoing efforts to protect and improve our cherished waterways.

The work to replace the landing stages is part of the Environment Agency's [£1.4m Capital Investment Programme](#). Announced in November, the programme sets out the investments being made into [Anglian Waterways'](#) 353-mile network.

Projects in the pipeline include improvements to eight locks, and take place from November to March – avoiding the peak boating season to minimise disruption for those on the river.

The Environment Agency cares for more than 353 miles of navigable waterways in the Anglian region, as well as a vast network of associated facilities such as bridges, locks, moorings and toilets.

[Press release: Joint Nature Conservation Committee appointed three new independent members](#)

The Government has appointed Professor Melanie Austen, Charles Banner and Professor Marian Scott as Independent Members of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. The appointments took effect from 15 December 2017 for three years.

All appointments to the JNCC are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. The appointment complies with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. There is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if significant) to be declared. The appointees have not declared any significant political activity during the past five years.

The JNCC was established in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) as a non-departmental public body. The JNCC advises the UK Government and Devolved Administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales on UK-wide and international nature conservation.

Remuneration is £9,836 per annum based on a time commitment of 2½ days per month.

Professor Melanie Austen

Melanie is a marine ecologist and interdisciplinary marine researcher who is Head of Science for the 'Sea and Society' science area at Plymouth Marine Laboratory. She has recently completed a 3 year term as the Chief Scientific

Advisor to the UK's Marine Management Organisation. For the last fifteen years she has been developing and leading UK and EU funded collaborative marine research. Through her interdisciplinary research she has examined and quantified the societal consequences and policy relevance of changes to the marine environment and its ecosystems. She has been an Honorary Professor at the University of Exeter medical school since 2014. Melanie is currently a member of UK JNCC's South Atlantic Natural Capital Assessment Technical Advisory Group. She has previously been a member of other Expert Advisory Groups and has chaired an EU Marine Board ecosystem valuation working group.

Charles Banner

Charles is a barrister at Landmark Chambers. He was called to the Bar in England and Wales in 2004, then to Northern Ireland in 2010. He practices across both jurisdictions and internationally specialising in environment and planning law and government and regulation. In 2015 Charles became Co-founder of Landmark International establishing a bespoke platform for barristers offering their services to the international legal market. In 2016 Charles became a trustee and council member of the UK Environmental Law Association which aims to make the law work for a better environment and to improve the understanding and awareness of environmental law. He has recently been announced as 'Environment & Planning Junior of the Year' at the Chambers Bar Awards 2017.

Professor Marian Scott

Marian is Professor of Environmental Statistics in the School of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Glasgow; an elected member of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) and a chartered statistician of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS). Marian's research interests include model uncertainty and sensitivity analysis; modelling the dispersal of pollutants in the environment, radiocarbon dating and assessment of animal welfare. She was awarded an OBE in 2009 for services to social science.

[News story: Sellafield contract win for UK firm](#)

Cavendish Nuclear will design, manufacture and test glove box systems in two new plants which will treat and manage nuclear materials.

Glove boxes are sealed containers designed so objects can be manipulated in an enclosed atmosphere.

The contract is worth up to £95m over 10 years.

Martin Chown, Sellafield Ltd supply chain director, said:

Safe and secure clean-up of the nuclear legacy at Sellafield is our number one priority.

Treatment and management of nuclear materials in the appropriate environment is vital.

Placing this contract with Cavendish Nuclear – a highly respected nuclear services provider – is an important step in our mission.

The company has pledged to deliver a positive social impact for our local community during the contract. I look forward to working with them to ensure this delivers the maximum possible value.

Cavendish Nuclear will now work with Sellafield Ltd to finalise details of its social impact investment.

This is expected to include a commitment to placing a significant percentage of work with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and holding school workshops in Cumbria on science, technology, engineering and maths.

Ron Gorham, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) supply chain lead said:

"The expertise in the UK's nuclear supply chain is unrivalled around the world and remains vital to delivering the NDA's mission of cleaning up the UK's nuclear legacy.

"The NDA is committed to working with SMEs and ensuring the benefit of every pound spent decommissioning our sites is felt within our communities."

Paul Smith, managing director of nuclear services at Cavendish Nuclear, said:

"We are delighted to continue to support Sellafield Ltd in the delivery of this strategically important programme.

"We believe our collaborative approach to delivery is what differentiates our offer.

"Our team offers significant manufacturing capacity to meet the demands of the programme whilst also providing opportunities to share best practice across suppliers."