

## **News story: Origin and Bunn must resolve concerns over fertiliser merger**

The CMA has found that Origin's proposed acquisition of Bunn could reduce competition to supply fertilisers in Scotland.

The companies must now offer proposals to address these concerns by 21 July or face an in-depth investigation.

Both companies are national blenders and distributors of fertilisers for use in agriculture.

Through its initial investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has found that Origin and Bunn are two of the three main suppliers of fertilisers in the central/eastern region of Scotland, supplying farmers and farmers' merchants from their sites in Montrose. The CMA is concerned that bringing the two firms together could see prices rise for customers or result in a reduction in the choice of fertilisers available.

The CMA found that there were sufficient alternative suppliers in other areas of Great Britain. The merger will be referred for an in-depth investigation by an independent group of CMA panel members unless Origin can offer undertakings by 21 July which sufficiently address the CMA's competition concerns.

All information relating to the merger is available on the [case page](#).

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## **News story: Acting British High Commissioner celebrates Chevening Alumni achievements in 2017**

An iftar reception for Chevening Alumni was hosted by the Acting British High Commissioner Mr Richard Crowder at his residence on 22nd June 2017.

The reception was attended by Chevening scholars, Chevening South Asia Journalism Programme fellows, members of the elected Chevening Alumni Association of Pakistan as well as senior officials from the British High Commission.

The reception celebrated the achievements of the Chevening Alumni in the first half of 2017 as well as giving an opportunity for networking between members of the British High Commission and the Chevening Alumni.

**Speaking at the iftar reception, Acting British High Commissioner, Mr Richard Crowder, said:**

I am pleased to host this iftar reception which celebrates the achievements of the Chevening Alumni in 2017. This year is historic as it marks the 70th Anniversary of UK-Pakistan relations.

Our Chevening programme and the valuable work of our alumni is an integral part of these celebrations. Earlier this year, our Chevening South Asia Journalism Programme fellows trained over 80 journalists across Pakistan.

Chevening alumni go on in their professional careers to build a more prosperous, stable Pakistan. We look forward to staying in touch with them in the future.

The British High Commission will continue to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of UK-Pakistan relations with a series of events and activities all through the end of 2017. The application window for the Chevening one year master's scholarship will open in early August.

## **Contact**

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## **Notes to editors**

For updates on the British High Commission's 70th Anniversary of UK – Pakistan relations and for more information on the Chevening Programme, please follow our social media channels:

Chevening Scholarships are the UK Government's global scholarship programme. The scholarships support study at UK universities – mostly one year master's degrees – for individuals with demonstrable potential to become future leaders, decision-makers, and opinion formers.

Chevening began in 1983 and has developed into a prestigious international awards scheme. Chevening Scholars come from over 160 countries and territories worldwide (excluding the USA and the EU), and more than 1,500 scholarships were awarded in 2016/2017. There are over 46,000 Chevening Alumni around the world who comprise an influential and highly regarded global network.

The name 'Chevening' comes from Chevening House in Sevenoaks, Kent – currently the joint official residence of the UK's Foreign Secretary.

### **More information**

Visit [Chevening website](#) for detailed information on the Chevening Scholarship Programme.

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## **[News story: Her Majesty The Queen recognises Pakistani British Council staff for outstanding service](#)**

The British High Commissioner, Mr Thomas Drew CMG, presented honorary British awards to Nishat Riaz and Shazia Khawar for their exceptional services in the field of education and cultural relations.

On behalf of Her Majesty The Queen, the British High Commissioner, Mr Thomas Drew CMG, has presented honorary British awards to Nishat Riaz and Shazia Khawar in recognition of their services for the British Council in Pakistan.

Both Nishat and Shazia have been appointed Honorary Members of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE). This honour is awarded to individuals for significant achievements or exceptional service to the UK, which stands out as an example to others.

**Speaking at the ceremony in Islamabad, the British High Commissioner, Mr Thomas Drew CMG, said:**

I am delighted to present Honorary MBE awards to Nishat Riaz and Shazia Khawar in recognition of their services to UK-Pakistan cultural relations and education. These awards reflect not only their significant individual effort over a number of years but also that they are excellent role models and leaders inside and outside of the British Council.

**Head of the British Council Pakistan, Rosemary Hilhorst, said:**

I am pleased to congratulate Nishat Riaz and Shazia Khawar on receiving their well deserved honours. The British Council Pakistan team are delighted that their outstanding contributions have been recognised.

## Contact

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## [News story: Civil news: financial eligibility assessments for Grenfell Tower victims](#)

Financial support provided to victims of Grenfell tower fire to pay for essentials can be disregarded when making financial eligibility assessments.

When making civil eligibility assessments for victims of the Grenfell Tower fire you can disregard any financial support they have received from the Government's Grenfell Tower Resident's Discretionary Fund or charities to pay for essentials such as clothes, food, transport and funeral costs following the fire.

We have urgently amended relevant legislation to ensure that Grenfell Tower fire victims are not disadvantaged in applying for legal aid because of these payments.

Details are in the further guidance – see link below.

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## [Press release: Work gets underway on 'Halton Curve' to boost Liverpool City Region, Cheshire and North Wales rail links](#)

Work has started on the 1.5 miles of rail track, known as the 'Halton Curve', that will unlock leisure and business opportunities between the Liverpool City Region, its airport, Cheshire and North Wales.

Leaders and key officials will today (Friday 14th July) be marking the occasion by going track-side onto the 'Curve'.

The Halton Curve scheme, delivered by Network Rail, is bringing back into full use the section of the line that links the Chester/Warrington line and the Liverpool/Crewe line at Frodsham Junction.

Vital upgrades to track and signalling on the curve will enable a new hourly service, in both directions, between Liverpool and Chester, serving Liverpool Lime Street, Liverpool South Parkway (for Liverpool John Lennon Airport) Runcorn, Frodsham and Helsby.

The services, proposed to start running from December 2018, will generate 250,000 new trips, boosting the economy by £100m.

While the service will be initially one train per hour, it's expected that demand would strengthen the case for increased frequency, especially with plans for services to be extended into North Wales – something currently being considered as part of the forthcoming Wales and Borders franchise.

As journeys between the Liverpool City Region, West Cheshire and North Wales are currently largely car dependent, it's expected that the new service would remove the need for 170,000 road journeys helping reduce demand on key routes such as the M56 and A55.

The upgrade forms part of Network Rail's Great North Rail Project which will see over £1bn invested in the railway across the north, as part of the national Railway Upgrade Plan.

This project, due to cost a maximum £18.75m, is being funded through the UK Government's Growth Deal and the Liverpool City Region. It is being developed by the Liverpool City Region (including Halton Council), Cheshire West and Cheshire Council, the Welsh Government and a consortium of the six county authorities in North Wales.

### **Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:**

This is a significant milestone on the way to making travel between north-west England and north Wales much easier and I am delighted that the UK Government has been able to help make it happen. When completed, the line will improve links between Liverpool and north Wales, providing benefits for businesses, commuters and tourists, and unlocking the potential for economic growth in North Wales

### **Said Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region:**

I welcome the spade being put in the ground on a project that has long been an ambition for many. People shouldn't be constrained in their work or leisure opportunities, as there are so many to be had across our City Region, Cheshire and North Wales. These can start

to be fully realised through this much needed link.

This isn't a project in isolation but part of the overarching vision for connectivity within the Liverpool City Region and the wider North to join up north-south HS2 rail infrastructure with west-east Northern Powerhouse Rail to Liverpool.

### **Northern Powerhouse Minister Jake Berry said:**

Liverpool was home to the world's first passenger railway, and now the city region is reclaiming its status at the forefront of rail connectivity with the Halton Curve.

The government has invested more than £16m in the Halton Curve, as part of our plans to improve transport across the Northern Powerhouse.

Just as the Northern Powerhouse is a long term government priority, this investment will provide lasting benefits with a predicted £100 million boost to the local economy.

### **Notes to Editors**

Halton Curve is part of a £340m railway investment programme by Network Rail and Liverpool City Region from now until 2019. For more information click [here](#)

- Liverpool City Region Growth Deal Funding

The project has been allocated just over £16m of funding from the Growth Deal. In March 2014 the Liverpool City Region LEP secured a total of £232m of Local Growth Fund from the Growth Plan that was submitted to Government. This Plan outlined an ambitious vision of unlocking the region's potential with the long term goal of achieving economic growth and job creation.

For more information on the Growth Fund, click [here](#)