

Britain's first 'smart' prison to drive down crime

• Deputy Prime Minister officially opens Britain's newest jail • First prison to be built with education, training and jobs at its heart

Britain's first 'smart' prison has opened today (4 March 2022) – where an unprecedented array of workshops will drive more offenders than ever into jobs and away from crime in a boost to public protection.

The new Category C prison in Northamptonshire is the first jail to have been designed with education, training and jobs for prisoners on release as its main purposes – factors proven to cut crime and reduce reoffending.

There will be a new presumption that prisoners at HMP Five Wells should spend their time behind bars learning new skills and getting trained in vital industries so they can find work immediately when back in the community and plug local labour shortages.

With 24 workshops and a large number of classrooms, prisoners will take part in formal learning, courses, qualifications and on-the-job training in areas including coding, car maintenance, fork-lift-truck maintenance, plumbing and engineering.

The prison will also be smart in how it supports prisoners with drug addictions into clean living, with two special drug recovery wings with a focus on abstinence-based methods. Here, up to 200 offenders with substance misuse issues will take part in a 16-week programme to help them get off drugs and into permanent recovery.

Designed throughout with cutting-edge technology, HMP Five Wells is also Britain's first 'smart' prison – utilising the latest designs and innovations to protect the public and rehabilitate offenders:

- Smart design to phase out crime behind bars – offenders will be housed in X-shaped blocks, with wider, shorter corridors and fewer prisoners on each wing so frontline staff can see all cells and offenders quickly at any one time. Cells will have ultra-secure, bar-less windows to put an end to drones bringing illegal drugs, phones and weapons into jails
- Smart technology to rehabilitate offenders – prisoners will have in-cell tablets to access education and learning from inside their cell, kitted out with stringent and robust security to ensure they are not abused, and cutting-edge body scanners will prevent contraband from wreaking havoc on the wings
- Smart in its approach to getting offenders into jobs – working in direct partnership with local employers to offer 500 on-the-job training places through release on temporary license, leading to ready-made jobs for ex-offenders once back in the community. Over 25 ex-offenders and prisoners

on temporary release were also employed in the construction of the jail, learning skills such as bricklaying, carpentry, plastering and roofing.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary, Dominic Raab said:

HMP Five Wells is a flagship example of this Government's plan to create secure and modern prisons that cut crime and protect the public.

From drug-recovery centres that employ abstinence-based treatment to world-class prisoner training courses, this smart prison is designed to tackle the key obstacles to cutting reoffending and making our streets safer.

At HMP Five Wells, the Deputy Prime Minister met with frontline prison staff to see first-hand the cutting-edge new technologies and workshops that will keep the public safe while supporting prisoners to turn their backs on crime for good.

The prison will hold around 1700 offenders when at full capacity in December and will boost local employment with over 600 new jobs for the community. Around 200 prisoners are already there.

The opening of HMP Five Wells is a major milestone in the government's commitment to create 20,000 modern, innovative places by the mid-2020s.

The new jail, on the site of the old HMP Wellingborough, is the first of 6 new prisons to be completed, with construction at Glen Parva, Leicestershire, well underway. The 1,700 place prison, recently named HMP Fosse Way by the local community, will be operated by Serco following a recent tendering competition.

The next new prison will be built next to HMP Full Sutton, East Yorkshire, and locations are being identified for a further three across the country. Of the four final builds, one will be run by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and three by private operators.

Together, this £4 billion investment will create thousands of jobs for local communities and see millions invested in local roads and infrastructure, while rehabilitating thousands of offenders and keeping the public safe.

Notes to editors

- Construction of HMP Five Wells began in May 2019 and G4S began preparations to open the prison in November last year. The first prisoner arrived on 4 February 2022.
- The prison's name was chosen by the local community after the five historic wells surrounding Wellingborough.
- The name of the new prison in Glen Parva, HMP Fosse Way, was selected by the local community and reflects the history of the local area – the

Fosse Way is a Roman road that runs through Leicestershire.