

Press release: Secretary of State announces £144m to support major education campus in Northern Ireland

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, has announced the allocation of £140m of UK Government funding to support the development of the new Strule Shared Education Campus Project.

The Secretary of State made the announcement during a visit to the Strule Shared Education Campus (SSEC) site in Omagh today. Stressing the pressing need for the re-establishment of an Executive to build on this and other positive developments for the people of Northern Ireland, she also called for the redoubling of efforts to recommence talks between the political parties.

The Strule Project will be the largest shared educational campus in Northern Ireland, bringing together over 4,000 pupils, from all backgrounds, in a vibrant and unique campus environment. This will offer collaborative education opportunities and experiences to students across the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) area of the curriculum.

The sharing of facilities, skills and resources will enable a more flexible approach to learning with enhanced curriculum choices, encouraging and supporting young people to flourish and to become the best that they can be.

The UK Government is committed to shared and integrated education in Northern Ireland. This includes previous commitments in the Economic Pact in June 2013 and the recent commitments in the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements to provide up to £500 million of new funding to support shared and integrated education projects.

The Secretary of State was welcomed to the Strule Campus, a vast building site, by John Smith, Deputy Secretary at the Department of Education and SRO for the Strule Shared Education Campus Programme, and Jennifer Morgan, Strule Construction Director, for a tour of the site, during which she heard about the scale and ambition of the project.

At Arvalee School and Resource Centre, a special needs school on the edge of the site and the first school to move to the new shared location, the Secretary of State was greeted by the Principal, Jonathan Gray, and John Hall MBE, Chair of the School's Board of Governors, for a tour of the school and grounds. She also took the opportunity to meet the principals of the other five schools involved in the project, as well as a number of pupils from all six schools.

Strule is the only campus in Northern Ireland where students with moderate and severe learning difficulties will be educated alongside mainstream schools, presenting a unique opportunity to share learning and cultivate

meaningful partnerships which benefit the pupils and staff of all six schools.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt. Hon. Karen Bradley MP, said:

I am delighted to announce the allocation of £140m to support the development of the world-class Strule Project which will bring together six schools and 4,200 pupils.

UK Government funding will help support integrated and shared education in Northern Ireland and break down barriers through cohesion to give young people the valuable skills they need to succeed.

Our strong commitment has been demonstrated in recent years in the 2013 Economic Pact with the Executive and in both the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements.

It is our ambition that we ensure all young people can benefit from a high-class education and fulfil their potential, irrespective of their background.

The children that I have met today and throughout my time as Secretary of State have made a huge impression on me. They are the future of Northern Ireland and they deserve the best they can possibly have.

The Strule project demonstrates the huge importance of devolved Government in Northern Ireland to drive forward projects like this for the benefit of the whole community.

It is clear that people in Northern Ireland want local politicians in place working hard to deliver and drive transformation across the education sector and wider public services to create a Northern Ireland fit for the future. A restored Executive is also urgently needed to give Northern Ireland the best possible chance of building on further opportunities such as the devolution of corporation tax rates.

This is my priority too, and this is why my focus is on redoubling

efforts to get the political parties back into talks to restore an Executive at the earliest possibility.