

[Press release: A14 upgrade: bridge foundations, Roman cows and a floating pontoon](#)

Three months in to main construction on the A14's £1.5bn upgrade in Cambridgeshire, Highways England's project manager is giving a sneak peek into progress made so far – including technical innovations and archaeological finds.

Much has been achieved since main construction on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme, Highways England's biggest scheme currently in construction, started at the end of November last year.

progress on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon scheme – River Great Ouse crossing taking shape

Chris Griffin, A14 project manager at Highways England, talks through progress so far:

As yellow diggers have become a familiar sight along the A14 corridor in Cambridgeshire, drivers will have noticed the changes along the existing A14. But there is plenty happening that they might not have noticed.

Traffic management

Chris explains:

The narrow lanes, temporary speed limits, cones and barriers we've installed allow workers to build accesses for construction traffic and carry out vegetation clearance ahead of the bird nesting season while keeping disruption on the road to a minimum and keeping road users safe.

All the trees that have been cut are being used as biomass for energy production locally and more trees will be replanted when the project nears completion.

Chris continues:

We are committed to keeping the main roads at full capacity during the day, so we only use overnight lane or carriageway closures if it is absolutely necessary, like for instance if we need to install signs or barriers, carry out pavement surveys or strengthen the

carriageway where heavy machinery will need to cross on a regular basis.

We've also installed CCTV cameras along the A14 so we can actively manage disruption to road users from a dedicated control room within the scheme's main compound. This helps us to stay aware at all times of conditions on the road and to take measures quickly if things don't go to plan.

the A14 project CCTV control room

But the most interesting activities to date are probably the ones that can't be seen from the road.

Construction of the River Great Ouse Viaduct

Chris explains:

A significant part of the scheme is a new bypass, including a viaduct over the River Great Ouse, which will run south of Huntingdon. This bypass is a brand new road so is being built away from the existing A14, with no disruption to road users other than when plant occasionally cross local roads while travelling along the new construction haul roads.

Work on this section of the project is progressing well and to schedule. Building the 750-metre long River Great Ouse viaduct, which will carry the new A14 across the flood plain and river, is a complex task. The first step has been to install a pontoon which has a 52 tonne capacity, allowing fully laden dump trucks and plant access across the river. This pontoon is allowing us to install a temporary bridge so we can start building the viaduct itself.

the pontoon to help build the Building the River Great Ouse viaduct

Construction of the foundations and columns for the viaduct is also under way, with plans for later this year to start installing the steelwork that supports the bridge deck and start casting the 800 concrete panels needed for the viaduct.

Chris adds:

We have also been building foundations for several of the new bridges.

People may have noticed our construction teams installing giant steel cages along the A1 recently. Once these are in place, concrete will be poured around them to form the bridge foundations and we'll be able to start building the bridges themselves.

Archaeology

The Archaeological team has also made great progress since starting excavations last autumn following extensive surveys and trial trenching. The team identified important archaeological remains dating from the prehistoric period through to the Romano-British and medieval periods.

Chris says:

The trial trenching identified some 350 hectares of land that our archaeologists would need to look at.

Most of the remains show evidence of settlements or industrial activity, including a well-preserved series of Romano-British pottery kilns, some carving tools and even the remains of a cow.

one of the trial trenches on the A14 scheme

Excavations will be taking place across the scheme throughout 2017 and the team is planning on presenting findings to the local community once the archaeological work is finished.

Chris says:

I am pleased with progress so far on the scheme, we have a challenging timetable to deliver the scheme and open the new A14 to traffic by the end of 2020, so it is good to see the speed at which work is progressing as well as the innovative solutions we are using to tackle challenges.

Work achieved to date:

- 3 main compounds have been built at Brampton (just off the A1), Ermine Street (A1198) and Swavesey (near Cambridge Services). A smaller compound has been established within the Girton Interchange and a second compound at Brampton is taking shape
- 3.3km of temporary safety barriers installed along the A14, A428 (near Girton) and A1
- 9 earthworks teams have started stripping topsoil along the offline section of the project
- 128 piles have been installed, using nearly 8,000m³ of concrete to create foundations for 5 bridges with foundations for another 23 bridges still needing to be created
- 42 km of temporary barriers installed along the offline section of the project (away from the current road)
- 6km of offline haul roads have been built to allow construction traffic to move within the site without adding pressure on public roads
- nearly 2km of utility cabling and pipes have been diverted, with another 100km still needing to be diverted

- 13ha of archaeology work completed, revealing a roman cow, arrowheads and carving tools
- building of the local access road between Dry Drayton and Girton has started. Once completed, people driving locally between Dry Drayton or Bar Hill and Cambridge will no longer need to use the A14
- a new habitat for endangered water voles at Alconbury Brook is being completed, with the water voles' planned move-in in mid-spring
- six solar powered light towers are being trialled for night work. They don't require generators so are green as well as quiet

For the latest information about the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme, [visit the scheme website](#), follow @A14C2H on Twitter and like our [Facebook page](#).

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.

Speech: Speech to the Police Education Qualification Framework conference

Many thanks for inviting me to speak today. It is always a really good opportunity to talk about something that is for us an absolutely key priority, which is police professionalisation.

But, just before I do talk about the course and professionalisation, I am just going to comment on the events that took place in Westminster last week.

Much has already been said in tribute to PC Keith Palmer, who you will know from what you have seen or heard and read, he gave so much which is beyond words in terms of bravery and heroism in order to keep others safe. But I also not only want to add my tribute to Keith here today but actually to all police and, indeed, your partners across the emergency services, for the phenomenal work you did to help those who were so tragically affected. It is almost impossible to describe the great debt we owe to Keith for what he did and what he gave up in order to protect our democracy.

In what is perhaps the most painful of circumstances, the police's reactions – along with those of your colleagues across the emergency services – were remarkable.

It is just another phenomenal demonstration of what you know happens in one way or another every single day across this country to keep others safe as they go about their daily lives in their communities. It is something we rely on and something that for our country and our communities actually reminds people just how important that work is.

It is the good work that prevents those problems in the first place that people don't talk about and remember, so I think it is important that we take this opportunity to think about the importance of this for our communities.

It also reinforces something that I would hope all of us in this room this morning are aware of, who are passionate about it – and something I was talking to colleagues from across Europe about over the last couple of days – we have got the best police in the world.

Part of what this is about and what we are talking about today and in the months and years going forward is not only about how we retain that position but actually about how we develop it even further.

Today's event does promote a major element of the reform programme as we strive to recognise the fantastic professionalism that is already in evidence across policing. And it is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of reform, in both scale and scope for the police, going forward.

So, turning to the core of what I want to say today, it is really quite satisfying that radical reform of this type and the ambition that this has got is not being led by ministers – or anyone in Whitehall – but by policing itself under the leadership of your professional body, the College of Policing.

We established the college as the first professional body for policing in 2012 – charged with setting high standards and with making sure we do what we can to help everyone in policing to meet them through the course of their career. And now, in 2017, it is heartening to note that policing has some of the hallmarks of a genuine profession in place:

- a code of ethics has been delivered
- a culture of continual professional development is beginning to be, at the very least, embraced
- the body of professional knowledge is continually growing
- and the final pillar – standards of education – are now being put in place, through the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF)

Now, I hope you don't mind if I refer to this as the PEQF for the next few minutes.

I have to say that it is clear to me as I have been looking at this – and I hope it is increasingly clear to everyone working across the country – and most importantly to those police professionals working at the sharp end – that there is a big role for the college. A role in leading for policing on some of the most critical issues. Providing leadership essentially for the sector: on standards; and on professionalism particularly, which is obviously the subject of today's conference.

Why this is important

Our workforce reform goals are clear. We want to ensure the police force is flexible, capable and professional: agile enough to adapt as crime and society changes. As we know it is changing with the digital world and moving very fast. And this change can only accelerate with increases in interpersonal crimes and those perpetrated at distance across virtual and physical borders. Borders that for criminals are pretty much translucent and yet for us in policing too often become rigid.

Police leaders need to understand what is required to effectively investigate high-harm crimes. They need to ensure that specialist teams have the resource and capability to deal with the complex nature of these investigations and to ensure that front line officers have the ability to look past sometimes what can be the immediate issue, identify potential vulnerability and know the appropriate action to take. So to fully complement the PEQF the college is also consulting on the development of a licence to practise and universal registration in which officers would need a licence to practise in certain crucial areas, including working with the most vulnerable.

Forces need to think actually quite ambitiously about the types of interventions and capabilities needed to transform their response to and for victims. And given that protecting the vulnerable is not the sole responsibility of the police, we also need to make sure we are considering how they can work more effectively with partners to achieve this end.

Tackling cyber-crime and crimes against the vulnerable requires people who can challenge perceptions and support the victims of crime. Without these sorts of skills we would never have discovered the depth and extent of child sexual abuse or, indeed, modern slavery.

A more flexible, capable and professional police service

So, policing needs to be prepared to meet the challenges of the future and the PEQF aims to give officers access to the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in doing just that.

Graduate level skills and attributes are already demonstrated on a daily basis by members of the service and will become increasingly important in policing.

I am really pleased to see that, through the PEQF, the college is seeking to accredit those skills where they are already held in the policing, as well as to ensure that future joiners to the police will have them at the start of

their career and then just develop them further as they go through.

But I also want to be very clear that this doesn't mean that we only want to see one kind of person working in policing. Far from it. We all benefit from diversity of thought as well as individual. That is why it is great to see a variety of entry routes to a policing career, whether through a pre-join policing degree, as a graduate recruit, or upon the completion of a degree apprenticeship.

I am just going to focus on the degree apprenticeship for moment.

The government is committed to delivering some 3 million new apprenticeship starts by the end of this parliament; to increase productivity in the economy and raise the standards of workplace training more generally. Let's not forget that until very recently there was no such thing as a degree apprenticeship in policing at all. But building on the work of early pioneers the college's work to develop a degree apprenticeship at pace, and to ensure its accreditation, shows what a 'can-do' attitude can deliver and it is one that policing is famous and which is to be applauded.

This new apprenticeship route is a really attractive option for people who want to take the first step in a really rich and varied profession. And because you can earn while you learn with an apprenticeship, I am hopeful that using the positive action tools which the college has pioneered, forces will be able to encourage and maintain access to policing from people from all communities and backgrounds.

Professionalism

As I said a few moments ago, this focus on recognising and developing professionalism across policing is one which I care passionately about and we should all want to see develop in policing.

Because policing in the 21st century, by its very unique nature, should be one of the most exciting and attractive careers available. It should attract the most talented and skilled recruits from all backgrounds and all areas.

Workforce reform is improving the attractiveness of policing as a profession and new recruitment initiatives like Direct Entry and Police Now are widening the talent pool and the range of prior experience available to policing.

Both these schemes are expanding. Police Now, having started in the Met, will be recruiting in 19 forces this year. And Direct Entry, which closed for applications earlier this month, has seen a massive 68% boost in applications. Again, this shows what can be achieved when we are focused on delivering and challenging what we have done before.

But while policing is becoming a more open profession, attracting applicants from different walks of life I think we all need to be very clear that there is already excellent police work going on up and down the country. And one of the most important things that the PEQF can be used for is to recognise the fantastic, professional work of those already working in policing.

To not just ensure that people realise how valued they are as part of their teams, but to give them recognition that other organisations also value, outside policing.

So that the drive for professionalisation is not just about new recruits, as important as that is, but must also be about raising standards across all ranks and roles.

Focus on the individual

So we must make sure that those working in policing can access the best skills, support, and qualifications available. In essence, we want policing to recognise its status as a profession and its people as the professionals – holding them to clear ethical and performance standards, as you would see in the other professional disciplines.

We need to see frontline professionals truly empowered to make their own decisions, knowing that they will be supported by excellent management at all levels.

This means I want officers and staff to feel confident about challenging their superiors. And those leaders, receiving that challenge, need to be open to it and confident about working with it because that is when we get real change and the best decisions be made.

But no organisation can achieve this kind of change without professional support. So I think the College of Policing have a pivotal place in driving reform. They will ensure the right framework is in place on which to build a modern, flexible and effective policing profession.

And the college cannot do this alone. Higher education institutions are bringing expertise to the table and it is great to see so many of you in the room today, all with an interest in professionalising policing for the future and how we make that better and take that further.

A big challenge for policing

Let me be very straight about this – I recognise this is a really big challenge. It is a bold reform programme. But I know the college is going into this with its eyes open. If national standards are being set, then they need to be transferable across all police forces in England and Wales, and it is vital that all officers have access to training that equips them to deliver the high standard of service that the public expects.

And, to those who say that policing isn't and shouldn't be a graduate job, I would ask you to just pause for a moment and encourage you to challenge that thought. Because policing needs to be prepared to meet the challenges of the future and the PEQF aims to give officers access to the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a fast changing environment.

The anomaly is often pointed out that, at any given partnership table, the police officer is likely to be the only person whose profession does not

expect degree level qualification. And yet, the police officer is – more often than not – chairing that partnership meeting and at the very least the authority figure that people will look to for guidance.

And as Alex Marshall himself has said on several occasions, an educational qualification should not, cannot and will not replace the empathy, compassion and common sense already in policing. But what it will do is to allow police professionals to get the recognition they deserve for the complexity of the job they do everyday.

And yes, the college recognises that the PEQF and associated graduate entry routes would mean the financial burden of initial training would be passed onto some individuals. But this mirrors the approach that is also taken in other professions. Meanwhile the degree apprenticeship offers new entrants to policing the opportunity to earn a wage while becoming a police constable, with successful candidates acquiring a degree qualification at the end of the learning programme.

Introducing a degree apprenticeship tackles concerns that the costs of obtaining qualifications might affect policing's ability to secure the representative workforce it needs and that is important.

So let's be very clear. Changes of this magnitude can only really succeed and become embedded if everyone is on board. The PEQF will help accelerate the pace of change across all forces but there are significant cultural barriers to change here and forces need practical advice and support to see them through.

That's why the college has been very clear that these proposals will only be implemented fully at a pace with which forces themselves are comfortable.

Now I do welcome your attendance today and applying your collective knowledge and experience to this crucial reform. I urge everyone to take the discussions that you have today back with you to prompt debate where you work and develop this further.

Conclusion

It is clear to me that the scale of reform underway – reform that is being driven by policing in fact – is a result of us reaching a situation where the system genuinely recognises the fact that we at the Home Office do not run policing. We want to make sure that the framework is there for the sector to run and develop and reform itself. The college has an important part of play in that as in fact does every single person sitting here today.

I won't deny there are high expectations and this is a challenging agenda. And I am delighted that the college has been able to step and meet this challenge, fulfilling its role as the professional body you need. One that can support everyone working in policing to raise standards and deliver a better service for the public.

The benefits of succeeding on this programme are actually very clear. It will

make sure we are able to deliver the very best services to local communities provided by a skilled, professional and representative workforce.

I think professionalism needs to be absolutely at the heart of modern policing. This means recognising the high level skills already in policing, as well as raising the bar for new recruits to ensure that we continue to have the very best police forces in the world.

We need to have forces that are fit for the future and the college's new Policing Education Qualifications Framework is an important step in meeting this challenge.

Thank you.

[News story: Crime news: updates to Crown Court fee guidance](#)

We're making updates to Crown Court fee guidance which include:

1. Change to claiming process so new advocates in retrial cases can submit payment claims directly to the Legal Aid Agency.
2. New content to reflect costs judge decision in R v Gravette (2016). When the trial concludes, if the judge allows a QC for the hearing for mitigation of sentence, a fixed fee will be payable.
3. Clarification of funding for post-conviction Proceeds of Crime work can be found in a new 'Appendix R' in the guidance.
4. Introduction of 20p bicycle mileage rate where mileage is payable.
5. Pages of Prosecution Evidence (PPE) guidance updated to reflect that where there is a first stage streamlined forensic report this will now be treated as PPE.
6. Clarification that the whole of the LAA Report from the Digital Case System must be provided when the advocate is using it in a claim as evidence of PPE.
7. Ground Rules Hearings will be used as an admissibility of evidence fixed fee to reflect R v Gravette (2016).

Further information

[Crown Court fee guidance](#) – to download updated 'Crown Court fee guidance' document

Press release: 'Left Behind Britain': narrowing the social mobility divide

Education Secretary Justine Greening will today (Thursday 30 March) open a major conference in Westminster aimed at improving social mobility and building a shared agenda for action.

The 'Left Behind Britain' conference, which is hosted by the Social Mobility Commission and University of Bath, brings together 200 political leaders, policy makers, academics, charities, think tanks, civil servants and business leaders to increase understanding, share knowledge and explore new solutions to one of the greatest challenges facing our country today.

The Social Mobility Commission's recent ['State of the Nation' report](#) to Parliament found that there is a new geography of disadvantage in Britain today which goes beyond a crude north-south divide.

It found that low levels of social mobility are not just impeding the poorest in society, but are holding back whole tranches of middle, as well as low-income families, the so-called 'treadmill families', who are running harder and harder but standing still.

From the early years through to education and the labour market, the 1-day conference examines the causes and consequences of declining social mobility in many parts of Britain today.

It will focus on the growing geographical divide which has seen many parts of Britain 'left behind' in terms of social mobility. 65 parts of Britain are identified by the Social Mobility Commission as being social mobility cold spots – those with the poorest education and employment prospects.

Drawing on lessons for research and policy from international evidence, the conference will also look at how government, councils, employers, universities, colleges, schools and communities can work together with one core purpose: a more level playing field of opportunity in Britain. It will assess the influence that policy has had on social mobility trends and consider how policy makers might now respond to declining mobility.

Speaking ahead of the event, the Rt Hon Alan Milburn, chair of the Social Mobility Commission, said:

Social mobility is arguably the most important and challenging issue facing British society today. How to make our country one where aspiration and ability, not background or birth, determine where people get to in their lives.

Tinkering with change will not turn it around. A new and far bigger national effort will be needed if progress is to be made on reducing poverty and improving mobility. That will mean long-term

and fundamental reforms to our country's education system and local economies and in the labour and housing markets.

Today's conference is aimed at developing a shared agenda for social progress to create a more level playing field of opportunity. One that can unite educators and employers – indeed the whole nation – to action.

Professor Paul Gregg of the University of Bath, Department of Social and Policy Sciences added:

For children educated in the 1980s, Britain had an unenviable record of being a society where a person's origin determined their destiny. Being among the least socially mobile countries in Europe and performing less well than it has had in previous generations, this has made social mobility a key issue for social policy in the UK.

The policy challenge now is how all actors in society – from government to schools to employers – can best contribute to turning this around for the current generation of school aged children.

1) The Social Mobility Commission is an advisory, non-departmental public body established under the Life Chances Act 2010 as modified by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It has a duty to assess progress in improving social mobility in the United Kingdom and to promote social mobility in England. It currently consists of four commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.

2) The commission board currently comprises:

- Alan Milburn (chair)
- Baroness Gillian Shephard (deputy chair)
- Paul Gregg, Professor of Economic and Social Policy, University of Bath
- David Johnston, Chief Executive of the Social Mobility Foundation

3) The functions of the commission include:

- Monitoring progress on improving social mobility
- Providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social mobility
- Undertaking social mobility advocacy

For further information

Please contact Kirsty Walker on 020 7227 5371 / 07768 446167 or kirsty.walker@education.gov.uk

[Press release: Alok Sharma celebrates 45 years of UK-China ambassadorial relations](#)

Over 300 guests attended the event at Lancaster House, including the Chinese Ambassador to the UK, Mr Liu Xiaoming, and a wealth of British and Chinese business representatives, government officials, parliamentarians and China Chevening Scholars.

The guests at Lancaster House were treated to a series of performances and displays from Weli Creative's 'Magical Lantern' exhibition, a string ensemble from the Guildhall School of Music, and a collection of Chinese and British manuscripts from the British Library. Also on display was ClothCat Animations' new children's series Luo Bai Bei, which is due to be screened in China and the UK later this year. Other exhibitors included the Victoria & Albert Museum, the British Museum and B&H Fashion.

Mr Sharma and the Chinese Ambassador each delivered a speech at the event, which followed the official anniversary on 13 March, before the London Symphony Orchestra performed a recital for the attendees.

UK Minister for Asia, Mr Alok Sharma MP, said:

Throughout the last 45 years, the UK-China relationship has been steadily strengthening. Today we see cooperation at an all-time high and a global partnership that is delivering real benefits for both nations.

Personal ties and mutual understanding are at the heart of any successful relationship. That is why promoting business, cultural and educational links is so important to us. Forty-five years ago, there were 200 Chinese students in the UK and today we welcome over 150,000 Chinese students at universities, colleges and schools across the UK. Through our Generation UK programme, we are working to increase the number of British students studying in China from 5000 currently to 20,000 by 2020.

As we look ahead to the future for the UK and China, it is important to reflect on what our two countries have achieved over the last 45 years. Trade between our two countries has increased 200-fold. We want to do even more. We are working together to address some of the significant challenges facing the world today, such as conflict in the Middle East and international terrorism. Our Infrastructure Alliance will allow us to work together to build the capacity of third countries, and we are tackling global health

issues such as anti-microbial resistance.

Since our countries established full Ambassadorial relations, the pace and scope of what we have achieved, individually and together, is extraordinary. We want to continue to build the links between our two countries into the future. I strongly believe that we have a great deal to look forward to.

The Minister personally thanked the sponsors for the event: The Bank of China; Ernst & Young; HSBC; and Huawei.

The UK has more dialogues with China than any other European country. Chinese visitors to Britain have doubled in five years, with around 150,000 Chinese students now studying across the UK. Last year, the UK Government funded 98 China Chevening Scholars and 15 China Chevening Fellows from 18 different provinces and municipalities to attend postgraduate study at UK universities.

Mr Sharma has visited Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Fuzhou and Xiamen, as well as Hong Kong, since his appointment as Minister for Asia last year. Prime Minister Theresa May attended the G20 Summit last September in Hangzhou and will visit China again later this year.

Further information