

Press release: £120 million funding boost for incoming NI Executive

The Chancellor Philip Hammond has today set out his plans to make the most of the opportunities ahead by laying the foundations for a stronger, fairer, better United Kingdom outside the European Union – a country that works for everyone.

Included in his first Budget were numerous measures to ensure that economic growth is shared across every part of the country, including additional funding for Northern Ireland.

Employment in Northern Ireland is at a record high, and average wages have grown faster than in any other part of the UK since 2010.

Decisions to invest in social care, skills, schools and health will bring a £120 million funding boost for an incoming Northern Ireland Executive, following last week's Assembly election.

This means that a new Executive's resource budget will be boosted by £90 million through to 2019-20 and its capital budget by £30 million through to 2020-21. It can spend that funding on its own priorities to help create a brighter, more secure future for the country.

Researchers in Northern Ireland could benefit from a new £270 million Industrial Strategy challenge fund which brings together business and academia to focus on productivity-boosting solutions for industries of the future. The first challenges set by the Chancellor today – are artificial intelligence and robots, electric vehicle batteries and speeding up the process of making new medicines. The country will also benefit from the new UK-wide National 5G Innovation Network, as part of the digital infrastructure package.

Northern Ireland will also benefit from recent action taken more widely, including:

- The rolling out of Tax-Free Childcare for working families with children under twelve, providing up to £2,000 a year per child to help with childcare costs and up to £4,000 for disabled children under seventeen.
- The freezing of fuel duty for the seventh successive year, saving the average driver in Northern Ireland nearly £10 every time they fill up their car.
- The raising of the National Living Wage from £7.20 to £7.50, giving people in Northern Ireland a well-deserved pay rise.
- Confirmation that the personal allowance and higher rate threshold will increase to £12,500 by 2020-21, which will reduce the income tax bill for 800,000 individuals in NI in 2017-18, and take 35,000 individuals out of income tax altogether.

Chancellor Philip Hammond said:

The Government's focus at this time is working with the parties in discussions aimed at forming a new Northern Ireland Executive. We want to see a new Executive setting a budget for 2017-18 as one of its early priorities – and it will have the opportunity to incorporate the new funding being made available today into its planning, when it does so. My Budget offers a further boost in ensuring that people across Northern Ireland can share the benefits of economic growth across the country.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

I welcome the Chancellor's budget that underlines the Government's determination to build a country that works for everyone. The Budget reinforces this Government's commitment to strengthening the economy right across the UK. Northern Ireland will continue to benefit from the stability of being part of a strong UK economy.

We are committed to strengthening the economy through investing in skills and increasing prosperity right across the UK. Since 2010, there are record numbers of people in employment in Northern Ireland and this Budget builds on that success.

The £120 million increase in funding for Northern Ireland in this Budget will give an incoming Northern Ireland Executive the freedom to invest in its priorities. This underlines the need for a functioning Executive in Northern Ireland, which can make the right decisions for Northern Ireland's economy. I am determined to continue working intensively with the parties to ensure the resumption of a strong, stable and inclusive Executive in Northern Ireland.

[Press release: Directors who manipulated accounts disqualified](#)

An Insolvency Service investigation found that Mr Dhillon caused, and Ms Dhillon allowed, the companies to operate in manner which lacked probity, as a result of which a bank suffered a loss totalling £31.767m.

Mr and Ms Dhillon were directors of Dhillon hotels Limited, Liongate Hotel Limited, Crown Hotel (Amersham) Limited, which entered administration on 20 September 2012 and PHB Realisations 2013 Limited (formerly Paragon Hotel (Birmingham) Limited) and Paragon Birmingham Limited which entered administration on 21 September 2012. The companies had operated the following hotels:

- The Olde Bell Coaching Inn, High Street, Hurley-on-Thames
- The Lionsgate Hotel, Hampton Court Road, Kingston-upon-Thames
- The Crown Inn, High Street, Amersham
- The Paragon Hotel, Alcester Road, Birmingham
- with Paragon Hotel (Birmingham) Limited being a holding company

Mr and Ms Dhillon operated a group of hotels, all of which were subject to the same bank lending facility and cross guarantees. The investigation found the Dhillon's utilised the various companies for personal expenditures which were attributed by the group accounting department to director loans, these directors being Mr and Ms Dhillon.

The lending facility was subject to strict covenants regarding the ratio of turnover to lending/interest. The bank was provided with regular management accounts which showed that the covenants were being met. These were inaccurate constructions solely for that purpose. Accounts were then filed at Companies House which were consistent with management accounts presented to the bank (in the form of year-end adjustments within the accounting system). These adjustments had the effect of obscuring personal expenditure and inflating the value of assets, thereby inverting and obscuring the true position.

In tandem with these erroneous adjustments, a large property (Paragon Hotel in Birmingham) was presented, from 2009, as being about to be sold to an unconnected third party. This sale was asserted to be subject to delays, during which time nearly £13m more was loaned against the security it was purported to provide. The truth was the supposed purchaser had entered Administration in 2009. The property was ultimately sold for £3m by the office holders in 2013.

The Insolvency Service investigation also found, and Mr and Ms Dhillon accepted, that:

- the bank was knowingly provided with management accounts which presented an inaccurate picture of the true financial and trading position of each company and the Companies together
- the accounting system used by the companies was knowingly manipulated through the use of year end adjustments to have the appearance of consistency with management accounts presented to the Bank in relation to each company and the Companies together
- the bank was falsely informed that Paragon Birmingham Limited was continuing the process of selling the Paragon Hotel at a price of circa £18m when the proposed purchaser had entered Administration on 7 December 2009 and no such sale was possible, probable or likely
- the overdraft increased from £5.5m on 24 March 2009 to £18.29m on 8 May

2012

- the bank continued to provide moneys to the Companies by way of extended overdraft facilities on the basis of the proposed sale of The Paragon Hotel
- the accounting records maintained on behalf each company were not accurate and complete
- the financial statements lodged at Companies House therefore could not be accurate

At Administration the bank was owed £48.304m with secured assets being realised/valued at £16,537m, resulting in an estimated shortfall of £31.767m

Commenting on the disqualification, Cheryl Lambert, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service, said:

Directors have a duty to ensure that the procedures they construct and oversee comply with the law. Directors who do not comply with this basic obligation can expect to be investigated by the Insolvency Service and enforcement action taken to remove them from the market place.

In this case, Mr Dhillon was responsible for the construction of a long term and complex web of lies, by manipulating the internal financial systems of a group of companies. Additionally, the sale of a very large asset was claimed to be occurring resulting in almost £13m of further lending being made, which were then used within their empire of companies and which allowed the Dhillons to continue to benefit from their continued operation.

In court proceedings relating to Mr Dhillon's business affairs a judge branded him as a man who "regards truth as a merely optional extra when doing business." Following the Insolvency Service's investigation I can only agree with that conclusion.

Ms Dhillon took no action to prevent the long term implementation of that deceit, whilst benefiting from the continued operation of the companies and the increased funds overdraft extensions.

This activity goes to the very core and basis of the economic system, with Mr Dhillon knowingly creating a scheme to obscure his activities and the real position in relation to the company's trading and solvency.

Taking action against Ms Dhillon is a warning to all directors to seriously consider, and ensure they perform their duties and obligations and not hide behind the corporate veil or claim ignorance of acts, whilst accepting the rewards and benefits of corporate trading.

Notes to editors

Dhillon Hotels Ltd (CR0 02368567) was incorporated on 5 April 1989. Its registered office was 118 Piccadilly, Mayfair, London, W1J 7NW and traded The Olde Bell Coaching Inn, High Street, Hurley-on-Thames.

Lionsgate Hotel (Amersham) Ltd (CR0 04173719) was incorporated on 6 March 2001. Its registered office was 118 Piccadilly, Mayfair, London, W1J 7NW and traded The Lionsgate Hotel, Hampton Court Road, Kingston-upon-Thames.

Crown Hotel (Amersham) Ltd (CR0 05195352) was incorporated on 2 August 2004. Its registered office was 118 Piccadilly, Mayfair, London, W1J 7NW and traded The Crown Inn, High Street, Amersham.

PHB Realisations 2013 Ltd (CR0 05834739) was incorporated on 1 June 2006 as Paragon Hotel Birmingham Ltd and changed its name on 17 May 2013. Its registered office was 118 Piccadilly, Mayfair, London, W1J 7NW and traded The Paragon Hotel, Alcester Road, Birmingham.

Paragon Birmingham Ltd (CR0 05880199) was incorporated on 18 July 2006. Its registered office was 118 Piccadilly, Mayfair, London, W1J 7NW. Paragon Birmingham Limited operated as holding company.

Dhillon Hotels Ltd, Lionsgate Hotel Ltd and Crown Hotel (Amersham) Ltd were placed into Administration on 20 September 2012.

PHB Realisation 2013 Ltd (formerly Paragon Hotel (Birmingham) Ltd and Paragon Birmingham Ltd were placed into Administration on 21 September 2012.

Sarah Megan Rayment and Anthony David Nygate, BDO LLP, 55 Baker Street, London W1U 7EU were appointed joint Administrators of all five companies.

Sarina Thiara Dhillon is of 19A Warrington Crescent London W9 1ED.

Novtej Singh Dhillon now resides 8b Albert Palace, Kensington, London W8 5PD and was formerly of the 16e Portland Road London W11 4LA.

The Secretary of State accepted an undertaking from Samina Thiara Dhillon on 23 December 2016. The disqualification commences on 13 January 2017.

The Secretary of State accepted an undertaking from Novtej Singh Dhillon on 24 January 2017. The disqualification commenced on 14 February 2017

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences, primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies.

The agency also authorises and regulates the insolvency profession, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

All public enquiries concerning the affairs of the company should be made to: Cheryl Lambert, Chief Investigator, Investigations and Enforcement Services, The Insolvency Service, 3rd Floor, Abbey Orchard Street, London SW1P 2HT. Tel: 0207 596 6117. Email: Cheryl.Lambert@insolvency.gsi.gov.uk.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7674 6910 or 020 7596 6187

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Press release: M5 travel advice in](#)

Gloucestershire as Cheltenham Festival gets under starter's orders

Highways England has advised drivers using the M5 in Gloucestershire to plan ahead and allow extra travelling time during next week's world famous Cheltenham Festival.

The popular event runs from Tuesday, 14 March until Friday, 17 March with more than 200,000 people expected to attend throughout the week.

The Festival concludes with Friday's Gold Cup which can see more than 65,000 people attend on a single day. The busiest times on the roads are expected to be between 9.30am until 12.30pm each day. Queues are likely on the approach to M5 junction 10 southbound, and on all approaches to M5 junction 11.

Gareth Price, Highways England emergency planning officer for the South West, said:

Junctions 10 and 11 of the M5 are like to be busy on these days, particularly Friday, 17 March.

Our aim is to keep the Highways England network running whilst keeping road users safe and informed. We advise all drivers to check our traffic and travel information channels, set off early and allow plenty of time for their journeys.

Highways England provides up-to-date traffic information [via its website](#), via Twitter @highwaysSWE, local and national radio travel bulletins, electronic road signs and mobile platforms.

Press release: Public exhibitions for A500 Etruria widening

Drivers, business owners and residents are invited to find out more about plans to widen a section of the road that connects the M6 with the city of Stoke-on-Trent.

Highways England is developing a scheme to widen the A500 from two to three lanes between Porthill (A5271) and Wolstanton (A527), helping to reduce congestion and improve journey times.

Highways England will be working in collaboration with Stoke-on-Trent City

Council to ensure the scheme will tie in with the local authority's proposed improvements at the A500 Wolstanton junction and the associated access into the Etruria Valley site.

Highways England project manager, Malcolm Mitson, said:

This scheme will improve journeys for people using the A500 by easing the flow of traffic and reducing congestion, making journey times more reliable. And increasing capacity with a third lane will support the growth of the local economy as well as improve safety.

It is proposed the speed limit will be lowered from 70mph to 50mph, for safety and consistency with other parts of the route in urban areas.

It's also proposed to close the public footpaths that run alongside the A500, instead providing an alternative footpath/cycle way at a safer distance from the main carriageway, as well as safe pedestrian access to cross the road at Porthill junction.

The scheme, part of the government's £15.2bn road investment strategy, will take approximately 18 months to complete, with construction starting by spring 2020 and opening to traffic autumn 2021.

People attending the exhibitions will be able to see plans of the proposals, find out more about the scheme and ask questions of the project team.

Highways England will be attending events being run in conjunction with Stoke-on-Trent City Council on:

- Wednesday 15 March, 9am to 3pm, at Middleport Medical Centre, Newport Lane, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 3NP
- Thursday 16 March, 2pm to 8pm, at Bradwell Lodge Community Centre, Bradwell Lane, Porthill, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 8PS

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: Work completed early as part of the A12 becomes the A47

The change sees what was the A12 between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft now become a part of the A47. This ensures that the A47 is a continuous trunk road from Peterborough to Lowestoft, while the A12 is a continuous trunk road between Ipswich and London.

Work started in mid-January and was expected to be completed tomorrow (Wednesday 8 March), but was actually completed last Wednesday (1 March). Most of the affected signage has had patches stuck on detailing that the road is now the A47 rather than A12, while signage that needed replacing now displays the new road name.

This has delivered on one of the commitments in the Government's Road Investment Strategy, which will see a record £15 billion invested in England's motorways and trunk roads, with £3 billion of that in the East of England.

Highways England project sponsor Steve Cox said:

Highways England is committed to ensuring that our work causes minimal disruption for drivers across the East of England, and we are pleased to have been able to complete this work early to ensure that is the case. This work now ensures that both the A47 and A12 are continuous trunk roads connecting our important towns and cities.

The renumbering follows recent improvement work to the A47 Acle Straight as the road passes through The Broads, which saw improvements to traffic signs and road markings at the A1064 roundabout, Wherryman's Way and the Halvergate junction.

It also comes ahead of consultations into major upgrades elsewhere on the A47 that will be start in 2020, with a series of consultations into these set for the public to share their views at to be launched shortly. These works will include:

- dualling of the A47 between Norwich and Dereham
- improving the A11 and A47 Thickthorn junction
- dualling the A47 between Norwich and the Acle Straight
- improving two junctions at Great Yarmouth, including reconstructing the Vauxhall roundabout

Martin Wilby, chairman of the Norfolk County Council's Environment, Transport and Development Committee, said:

We support the work that Highways England has recently been carrying out in the east of the county and, like many people in Norfolk, are looking forward to their forthcoming consultation on the major improvements they intend to make to the A47. These upgrades to the A47 will make a huge difference to the county and its prosperity, and we'll be working with Highways England to do all we can to ensure they can get underway as soon as possible.

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