

£161 million to transform Oxford Station, bringing faster journeys to thousands

- government to fund £161m of upgrades at Oxford Station boosting economic growth and opportunities in the local area
- faster journeys, increased capacity and new platform, cycling paths and entrance
- this is one of the inaugural projects under the Rail SPEED scheme which aims to deliver rail projects quicker at lower costs

Oxford station is set for a £161m revamp, which will deliver quicker journeys, increased freight and passenger services and a brand new fully accessible entrance.

Announced today (17th August), by Rail Minister Wendy Morton, the upgrades will be completed by 2024 and have been specifically designed to improve passenger experience, better integrate the station into the local road networks and boost economic growth by supporting the creation of almost 10,000 jobs in the area.

Among the upgrades will be the creation of a brand new track, platform and fully accessible entrance on the west side of the station, making travel far easier for all passengers. As one of the busiest stations in the South of England, managing 8.7 million passenger journeys a year pre-pandemic, the new track and platform will significantly improve capacity at the station, which will boost connections, the economy and job opportunities in the area with almost 10,000 new roles being supported as a result of the project, drawing talent and investment to both the City of Oxford and the numerous sciences, innovation, technology and business parks located across the county.

Funding will also be used to renovate the existing road bridge on Botley Road to create a four metre wide cycling and walking path and allowing standard height double-decker buses to pass underneath for the first time ever. It will also fund three new high-speed crossovers to be created, which will enable trains to turn around in the station, increasing services and reducing journey times.

Rail Minister, Wendy Morton said:

While union bosses continue on their campaign to inflict maximum disruption to the lives of everyday people with strikes, I am busy getting on with the job at the hand, modernising our railways to create one which is fit for the 21st Century and meets the needs of the modern day passenger.

This £161 million will truly transform the region, increasing the number of services for passengers, boosting economic growth by connecting people to new opportunities and increasing freight services between the South and Midlands.

The upgrades will play a central role in boosting economic growth and opportunities in the local and surrounding areas and increasing freight services to the equivalent of about 500 lorries per day between Southampton Ports container hub, the Midlands and North West – increasing supply chain resilience while supporting the environment.

Oxford Station is one of the first projects delivered through the government's new scheme SPEED (Swift, Pragmatic and Efficient Enhancement Delivery) which aims to halve the time it takes to complete a rail infrastructure project and slash the cost of project delivery – helping local areas to build back better through investment.

Mike Gallop, Network Rail's Western route and strategic operations director, said:

We are delighted to have been awarded this significant amount of funding from the Department for Transport, which will enable us make positive substantial improvements to Oxford station and railway for the benefit of our passengers and freight customers.

A new entrance, new additional track and platform, and improved accessibility will transform this station so that is fit for the 21st century and significantly enhance its capacity for increases in passenger numbers and future services such as East West Rail.

Work at the station will begin later this year, with the Botley Road improvements expected to be completed by the end of 2023 followed by the new platform and entrance which is set to open in 2024.

[Priti Patel signs landmark returns deal with Pakistan](#)

Press release

New agreement to remove Pakistani nationals with no legal right to remain in the UK, including criminals, failed asylum seekers and immigration offenders.



Home Secretary Priti Patel and Interior Secretary Yousaf Naseem Khokhar

Home Secretary Priti Patel has signed a major new agreement which will return foreign criminals and immigration offenders from the UK to Pakistan.

This is the fifth returns agreement the Home Secretary has signed in 15 months delivering for the British public through the New Plan for Immigration.

Today (Wednesday 17 August) Priti Patel met with the Interior Secretary, Yousaf Naseem Khokhar and the Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK, Moazzam Ahmad Khan, to sign the reciprocal agreement.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I make no apology for removing dangerous foreign criminals and immigration offenders who have no right to remain in the UK. The British public have quite rightly had enough of people abusing our laws and gaming the system so we can't remove them.

This agreement, which I am proud to have signed with our Pakistani friends, shows the New Plan for Immigration in action and the government delivering.

Our new Borders Act will go further and help end the cycle of last-minute claims and appeals that can delay removals.

Pakistan nationals make up the seventh largest number of foreign criminals in prisons in England and Wales totalling nearly 3% of the foreign national offender population.

The agreement underlines both countries' ongoing commitment to tackling the issue of illegal migration and the significant threats it poses to both nations. The agreement also includes ongoing work to improve and expand UK-Pakistani law enforcement cooperation.

Since January 2019 the UK has removed 10,741 foreign national offenders globally (to year ending December 2021).

[jHub Fellowship Scheme: “Work hard – play hard”](#)

We’ve all heard the saying “work hard – play hard” before but its relevance in the workplace can sometimes be called into question. This is not the case, at the jHub as Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Catalyst Team, Alex, explained:

It’s definitely one of the most dynamic, energetic, fun places I’ve worked. The work you do is tangible and impactful. You’re really empowered and it’s a lovely group of people.

Alex’s journey to the jHub began as a Civil Servant. Having experienced a number of positions through the Fast Stream programme Alex arrived at Defence Digital and it was here, she says, that the jHub came into focus:

I was working in Defence Digital and heard about the jHub and thought it sounded amazing. I began working with the team as part of a loan before transferring it into a full-time job.

Now COO of the Catalyst Team, Alex is responsible for spreading the benefits of the jHub across Defence. This includes sharing information, as well as lessons learned, tools, and understanding across Defence.

However, such a big task requires a cohesive team effort according to Alex:

The leadership put a particular emphasis on being a team and investing in team dynamics. We have social events, and when we work together we bring our ideas and projects into open forums.

The jHub’s collective approach to work not only encourages participation, but also inspires discussion and challenges employees to ask questions. It promotes empowerment among employees and this, Alex says, comes down to the approach of the organisation:

We work more as a principle-based organisation rather than a rules-based organisation. Whilst there’s a lot of respect, there is definitely open forum for challenge. Everyone is viewed as equally

valuable, and their input is equally important.

So, what is Alex's favourite thing about working at jHub?

The people. They genuinely all care for each other and don't just want the best for the jHub but for everyone working in it.

Alex finished our interview with a simple message for anyone thinking about pursuing a career in the jHub – Apply.

It's probably one of the most interesting and empowered places you can work in Defence, and one where you're given the opportunity to make the biggest impact in any area you care about.

You can find more information about working for the jHub and their new Innovation Fellowship by reading the [Innovation Fellowship Launches](#) article.

[Chancellor sees government support for families in action at school holiday club](#)

- The Chancellor sees positive impacts of healthy food and activities on children during the summer, at a visit to a government-funded Holiday Activities and Food club.
- Visit comes alongside a further series of cost of living deals announced to provide extra support to families as kids return to school.
- Following the release of July's inflation statistics, Nadhim Zahawi also reaffirms his commitment to get inflation under control through strong, independent monetary policy, responsible tax and spending decisions, and reforms to boost productivity and growth.

Nadhim Zahawi met a number of young people on Wednesday 17 August taking part in sports and dance activities and discussed how the scheme at Sydenham School, funded through the Government's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) club, was improving wellbeing, behaviour and social skills.

In response to the latest ONS statistics, which show inflation reached 10.1% in the 12 months to July, up from 9.4% in June, the Chancellor reaffirmed that working alongside the independent Bank of England to get inflation under control was his "top priority".

The visit comes as a further series of cost of living deals have been secured by Cost of Living Business Tsar David Buttress, to provide extra support to families as kids return to school, as part of the Government's Help for Households campaign.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Nadhim Zahawi said:

It's fantastic to be here at Sydenham School to meet young people who are benefiting from our Holiday Activities and Food programme. Holiday clubs like this not only provide a nutritious meal but also the chance to take part in activities they may not otherwise have exposure to, such as music lessons, cookery classes or the arts.

I know times are tough and people are concerned about rising prices. That's why we have continually taken action to help households including £1,200 of extra support for eight million of the most vulnerable households and £400 off energy bills for everyone over the winter.

We are doing all we can to support families and I am delighted that more retailers have got on board with our Help for Households campaign, offering some brilliant discounts on back to school essentials.

The back to school offers include a bespoke new deal with the publishing firm Scholastic, who are offering 20% off children's books and a curated set of Back to School deals from Amazon, including up to 30% off Clarks School Shoes and deals on stationary. Amazon Fresh is also offering savings, from lunchbox essentials to laundry detergent.

A number of other Help for Households partners, including Marks & Spencer, Primark, Shoezone, ZSL and Go-ahead have also agreed to promote their existing support schemes under the Help for Households campaign to raise awareness.

Anyone can visit the Help for Households [website](#) to access the full range deals.

The Government is also supporting working parents as their children go back to school this autumn with up to £2,000 a year towards their child's wraparound care.

In June 2022, approximately 391,000 working families benefitted from Tax-Free Childcare, receiving a share of £41.6 million in government top-up payments – but thousands more could be missing out.

Families can find out [what childcare support is best for them via Childcare Choices](#).

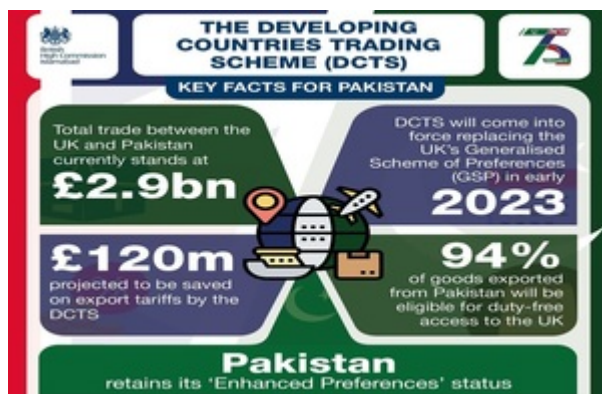
Further information

- The HAF scheme is backed by over £200 million each year and runs in the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays. It was extended to become a national programme in 2021, to provide free activities and meals for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, with flexibility for councils about how they can best serve the needs of children and families in their area.

New UK trade scheme paves the way for an increase in Pakistani exports

World news story

On Tuesday, the UK's International Trade Secretary, The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, launched the Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS), providing tariff reductions and simpler terms of trade to 65 countries, including Pakistan, which will be implemented early next year.



New UK trade scheme paves the way for an increase in Pakistani exports

The scheme will help these countries grow and prosper, and in turn tackle poverty by harnessing the power of trade. The DCTS replaces the UK's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), a preferential trading system that provides tariff removals and reductions on various products.

Under the DCTS, Pakistan will continue to benefit from duty-free exports to the UK. In addition, the DCTS will remove tariffs on over 156 additional products. It will also simplify some seasonal tariffs, meaning additional and simpler access for Pakistan's exports to the UK.

Total trade (goods and services) between the UK and Pakistan each year currently stands £2.9bn. In total, 94% of goods exported from Pakistan will be eligible for duty-free access to the UK. Pakistan will save £120m in

tariffs on exports to the UK under the scheme.

Pakistan, and other DCTS countries, will also be supported to participate in the international trading system through the UK's Trade Centre of Excellence, which will provide specialist support so that they can fully participate in the global trading system. This will include support on meeting trade standards, and participating in multilateral trade fora.

UK's Trade Director for Pakistan and British Deputy High Commissioner, Karachi, Sarah Mooney, said:

A prosperous UK-Pakistan relationship matters. As we celebrate 75 years of our bilateral relations, we want to further cement our strong ties and double bilateral trade by 2025. The newly announced DCTS Scheme will be pivotal in achieving this.

Notes to editors:

1. DCTS is a major milestone in growing free and fair trade with 65 developing nations that are home to more than 3.3 billion people. It is one of the most generous trade preferences schemes in the world, providing preferential trade access to 65 developing countries which collectively export over £21bn in goods to the UK.
2. The DCTS retains and strengthens the government's powers to suspend countries from the scheme if they systematically violate human rights and labour rights. It grounds all suspension decisions in the principles and obligations of international conventions and extends these to include climate change and environment related obligations. This signals UK's commitment to tackling climate change and reducing trade that is harmful to the environment.
3. Some of the specific goods which benefit most from the DCTS in Pakistan include over £250m of average annual exports to the UK of bedlinen and almost £100 million of jeans which will each receive a 12 percent reduction in import duty.

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