

Press release: Newark residents among 40,000 benefitting from quieter roads

Highways England has pledged to reduce noise levels for people living in over 1,000 areas close to motorways and major A roads by spring 2020 by installing noise barriers, providing free double glazing and laying new quieter road surfaces.

A 600-metre-long noise barrier close to the village of North Muskham, near Newark, is the latest structure to be installed as part of the scheme. The three-metre-high barrier has been adopted by the local community after villagers decided to plant 150 shrubs in front of it.

North Muskham Parish Council Chair, Ian Harrison said:

The residents in North Muskham have been pressing for this for some years. The completion provides a real difference to the volume of A1 traffic noise experienced especially by nearby residents.

Some residents also requested that foliage be replanted to provide better aesthetic views and an environment for birds and other wildlife so the parish council made the request and we are grateful for the positive response.

Highways England has a £39 million special fund to reduce noise levels for people living close to motorways and major A roads, which includes installing noise barriers in areas where they are likely to have a significant benefit for local communities.

The organisation has also installed free double glazing at more than 600 homes, and laid quieter surfacing on over 6,000 miles of lanes on motorways and major A roads since 2015 – equivalent to resurfacing the entire M6 three times over.

Quieter surfacing is now installed as standard wherever possible on the roads managed by Highways England. The smoother and thinner top layer can help make roads significantly quieter than traditional road surfaces.

Ian Holmes, Principal Noise Advisor at Highways England, said:

Around four million drivers travel on our roads every day but they impact many millions more – whether that's businesses relying on long-distance deliveries or families in opposite ends of the country being able to get together for special occasions.

Our roads also have an impact on the people who live near them and

I'm pleased we've been able to reduce traffic noise levels for over 40,000 roadside residents since 2015 as part of our noise reduction schemes.

It's great to see that the new noise barrier we've installed in North Muskham in Nottinghamshire is proving popular with residents, and I'm sure the new shrubs they've planted will help make it pretty as well as practical.

Last year Highways England won the 'Silent Approach' category at the Noise Abatement Society's annual awards ceremony in London for its work to reduce noise levels for over 40,000 roadside residents since 2015.

The awards recognise organisations which are judged to have been outstanding in their efforts to both reduce the impact of noise and seek to pioneer practical and innovative solutions.

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: LGA Finance Conference 2019: keynote speech](#)

Thank you so much for the kind introduction John [Councillor John Fuller, Vice-Chair, Resources Board, Local Government Association].

It's a genuine pleasure to be with you on my birthday – there's nowhere I'd rather be. And you will recall that a year ago I had to step down from my role to fight lung cancer, so it's great to be here with you, and in good health.

As you highlighted, in many ways I feel as if I grew up with local government and certainly one of the favourite parts of my job is the chance to find out more about the work of your great councillors – our great councillors.

You live and breathe the issues affecting your areas. You make the places you live in better and improve lives as a consequence of that. That's why I certainly couldn't be prouder to be working alongside you.

But I'm under no illusion about the changes in local government. Challenging finances, shifting demographics and changing lifestyles can sometimes make it all feel like, just when you think you've got the answers, the questions then change again.

And through all this, I've been impressed with how you continue to deliver quality public services and satisfaction remains high. I know that that is no small task.

Local Government Finance Settlement

But I have been determined you get the support you deserve, and the resources you need to grow your economies and ensure opportunity for all – where no one is left behind.

It's why, at last month's [provisional local government finance settlement](#), we provided a cash-increase of 2.8%: from £45.1 billion this year, to £46.4 billion next year.

It's a real-terms increase in resources and I'm pleased the settlement has been broadly welcomed. And in that context I'm very grateful to my colleague, Rishi Sunak, the Minister for Local Government, for his tireless efforts on this work which will continue into the coming weeks, and we look forward setting out the final settlement in early February.

And today is another important part of that conversation.

A conversation that addresses the immediate pressures we face, yes. But equally, it's a conversation about a longer-term vision for a resilient, self-sufficient and innovative local government.

A discussion that transcends numbers and duties, and reaches directly into the heart of communities.

Or in other words: we need to explain 'why place matters'.

Meeting today's pressures

But there's no hiding from the pressures that you face. Our additional funding will support some of our most vulnerable groups, with £650 million for social care in 2019-20.

We've allocated £240 million of that to ease winter pressures – and that's in addition to the £240 million we announced in October to alleviate winter pressures this year.

The remaining £410 million can be used flexibly – either on adult or children's social care and, where necessary, to relieve the demands on our NHS.

As you know too well, adult social care is a complex issue. It's something we need to get right.

But I don't think it should simply be seen as some sort of problem; it's also very firmly an opportunity. An opportunity to reaffirm our commitment as a society to those who need our support.

It's why the [NHS long-term plan](#) which was announced yesterday I think will be a real game changer – giving us more flexibility to treat more patients at home or in their communities.

Because better integration of the health and care systems remains the key, and the upcoming green paper on the future of adult social care will chart how we can do this.

The [Better Care Fund](#) is already showing us how this might be done, for instance by improving patient inflow and freeing up nearly 2000 hospital beds. It's a testament to the excellent work councils have been doing with their NHS partners.

In addition, at the latest Budget the Chancellor pledged an extra £84 million over the next 5 years to expand our Children's Social Care programmes. This will support more councils with high or rising numbers of children in care.

It builds on the excellent work my department has already been doing to improve all services for families with complex problems, through our Troubled Families programme.

Brexit

But as we meet today and as we look to those pressures, we must also rise to tomorrow's challenges.

Brexit will generate a number of opportunities for local government. I'm grateful for how you've worked to prepare, to ensure we can be confident about our departure from the European Union.

But I know that many of you, like me, have heard the same message on the doorstep – get on with the job and deliver Brexit.

And looking ahead to next week's vote – I'm clear that the deal we have on offer is a fair one.

It meets the objectives the Prime Minister set out at the start of negotiations, and involves significant concessions from the EU.

It delivers on the referendum result. It takes back control of our borders, our money and our laws. It protects jobs, security and the union.

And the alternatives simply take us back to square one. More division and more uncertainty.

We all have a duty to ensure every community can benefit from a modern, outward-looking Britain after Brexit.

And no one is better placed to deliver that than you, and local authorities

will be, I think, at the heart of our success.

I am committed to ensuring local government and local leaders are adequately prepared to respond to any Brexit scenario.

I have set up a delivery board to support the implementation of changes linked to Brexit within local government – and the work of this group will expand in the coming weeks and months.

And I will shortly be announcing the allocation of £35 million to fund local authorities to support with their work on Brexit preparations.

Self-sufficient local government

But I'm mindful that our long-term thinking does require long-term funding – and I know you have called for greater certainty as we reach the end of the current multi-year deal.

Next year we will finalise the new formula. A formula that makes the link between funding and local circumstances much clearer.

And I'm encouraged by the strong consensus on the principles of our [review of relative needs and resources](#). Because it doesn't matter if you're north or south, rural or urban, large or small – it simply has to work for everyone.

Our [business rates retention reform consultation](#) will build on my department's existing work with the sector to improve the way local government finance works.

Because business rates retention will be at the heart of this change – the engine of a self-sufficient growth-led local government of the future.

Under today's system, local authorities estimate they will retain around £2.4 billion in business rates growth in 2018-19 – a significant revenue stream on top of the core settlement funding.

And I recognise business rates appeals are an issue – and our consultation will address this too.

Ultimately, we want to give local authorities – give you – more control over the money you raise. Our plans to increase business rates retention from 75% from 2020 does that and more.

As well as continuing our existing pilots, at the draft settlement, I announced plans for a further 15 new pilots for 2019-20 and will also be piloting the 75% retentions rates in London.

21st century local government

Every authority stands to reap the rewards of increased growth in business rates income. And as we look ahead to the really important Spending Review, we have a unique chance to rethink and recast what local government in the

21st century can do.

The days of people passively accepting what's offered, I think, are long gone. In our digital age, the ability to feed-back, interact with and shape services is the new norm and government – central and local – needs to reflect that.

It's something my colleague Rishi Sunak has been looking at with his [digital declaration](#): exploring how to apply new technology and new thinking to old problems, and transforming the ways we think about essential services.

But the future of local government isn't just in the cloud – it's also on our high streets and in our communities.

It's why we provided a £1.5 billion support package for our high streets, with a further £420 million to repair and improve our roads and highways.

And the lifting of the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) cap will put local government back on the front line of house building – local authorities can now borrow more to build more.

And at the provisional settlement, I committed a further £20 million to maintain the New Homes Bonus baseline in 2019-20, to ensure we continue to reward councils for delivering the homes our country needs.

Since it began in 2011, we've allocated £7.9 billion to reward 1.6 million additional homes.

Because the success of our communities very much depends on all parts of our community having a decent, affordable, secure home – the challenge of a generation.

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, I'm pleased to be celebrating my 51st birthday with you.

It's a turning point for me personally after a challenging year – and equally I know the different challenges that you have faced too.

But I am full of admiration for how you have responded – showing what world-class local government looks like.

And while the year ahead could inevitably provide some new challenges, perhaps new surprises, there's no question that we're all better placed to face it – and thrive.

And I look forward to working with you: to meet the challenges and to use the opportunities that lie ahead.

To build the homes our country needs.

To strengthen our communities.

To encourage growth, helping ensure every part of our country can prosper.

It's the reason why we're all here and why I'm genuinely so proud and privileged to work alongside you.

Thank you.

News story: Rock fall at Oxwich beach in Wales

Milford Haven coastguard operations centre received a call from South Wales police at 3pm today reporting a substantial rock fall at Oxwich Bay beach, along the coastline towards Oxwich Point. Police and Oxwich and Rhossili coastguard rescue teams attended to keep nearby members of the public safe and to cordon the area off to prevent anyone unknowingly putting themselves in danger.

The photograph taken by Oxwich and Rhossili coastguard rescue teams, shows one part of the fall which has slid down the cliff as a block, with trees remaining on the top.

The size of the fall is estimated to cover an area of 30 metres by 30 metres and is reportedly larger than a previous significant rock fall in 2009 in the same area. The local council, natural resources Wales and the landowners have also been informed.

News story: Two cases of resistant gonorrhoea diagnosed in the UK

Public Health England (PHE) is investigating 2 cases of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in heterosexual females with similar resistance patterns to the antibiotics (ceftriaxone and azithromycin) that are used as the first line treatment for gonorrhoea. While this type of resistance is unusual, there have been cases in other countries. Both cases were successfully treated and we are following up sexual contacts to minimise the risk of any onward transmission.

One of these cases appears to have been acquired in Europe and the other has links to Europe but was acquired in the UK.

Finding this sort of extensively drug resistant gonorrhoea in the UK serves

as an important reminder of the need to practice safer sex. This includes using condoms consistently and correctly with all new and casual sexual partners. Anyone with symptoms of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) or who is concerned they may have an STI should seek advice from their sexual health clinic.

Investigations are actively looking for any links between these 2 cases to determine if they may be connected.

A case of resistant gonorrhoea was acquired in South East Asia by a UK national in 2018. The type of resistance seen in these 2 cases is different and therefore unrelated.

PHE actively monitors, and acts on, the spread of antibiotic resistance in gonorrhoea and potential treatment failures, and has introduced enhanced surveillance to identify and manage resistant strains of infection promptly to help reduce further spread.

Dr Nick Phin, Deputy Director of the National Infection Service at Public Health England, said:

Although these 2 cases of extensively resistant gonorrhoea have been successfully treated, contact tracing is underway to ensure there is no onward spread. This is a timely reminder of the importance of avoiding getting or passing on gonorrhoea.

Everyone can substantially reduce their risk by using condoms consistently and correctly with all new and casual partners. Anyone who thinks they may have been at risk of getting an STI should seek an STI screen at a sexual health clinic.

Background

About gonorrhoea

You can read more about gonorrhoea on the [NHS website](#).

Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by bacteria called *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* or gonococcus. The bacteria are mainly found in discharge from the penis (1 in 10 infected men do not have a discharge) and in vaginal fluid but can also infect the rectum and throat.

Gonorrhoea is easily passed between people through unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex or sharing vibrators or other sex toys that have not been washed or covered with a new condom each time they're used.

Typical symptoms of gonorrhoea include a thick green or yellow discharge from the vagina or penis, pain when urinating, pain and discomfort in the rectum and, in women, lower abdominal pain and bleeding between periods. However, around 1 in 10 infected men and almost half of infected women do not experience any symptoms.

If you have any of the symptoms of gonorrhoea, or you're worried you may have an STI, you should visit your local sexual health clinic for a sexual health test.

Gonorrhoea can be easily diagnosed in both men and women, either from a vaginal swab in women or a sample of urine from men. All of these tests can be self-administered.

Treating gonorrhoea as soon as possible is very important because gonorrhoea can lead to serious long-term health problems including pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women (infection of the womb) that may result in infertility and infection in the testicles in men.

Gonorrhoea and other STIs can be successfully prevented by:

- using male or female condoms every time you have vaginal sex or male condoms during anal sex
- using a condom to cover the penis if you have oral sex
- not sharing sex toys, or washing them and covering them with a new condom before anyone else uses them

[News story: New strategy for a measles and rubella free future](#)

The new [measles and rubella elimination strategy](#) maps out how the UK can achieve a future that is free of measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).

The strategy, developed by Public Health England (PHE) and supported by partners across the NHS and the devolved administrations, builds on the experience and success of 50 years of measles vaccination and 30 years of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) immunisation programme.

Since the introduction of the measles vaccine, an estimated 20 million cases and 4,500 deaths have been prevented in the UK. In addition, it is estimated that rubella vaccination has prevented an estimated 1.4 million cases of rubella, 1,300 CRS births, and averted 25,000 terminations. CRS is caused when rubella disrupts the development of an unborn baby, leading to serious birth defects.

However, new analysis conducted by PHE also shows that immunity levels within some age groups across the UK – especially young people aged 15 to 20 years – are well below the levels needed to prevent measles from spreading. Measles is one of the most infectious known diseases, so it can take only one infected person in an area with lower vaccination rates to cause an outbreak. Anyone who has not received 2 doses of MMR vaccine is at risk.

The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that the UK eliminated rubella in 2015 and measles in 2016. Elimination means that measles and rubella are no longer native to the UK. It does not mean that these diseases have been completely wiped out. Measles and rubella remain endemic in many countries around the world and with recent large measles outbreaks across Europe, imported infections pose a very real threat to the UK's achievements.

In 2016 and 2017, uptake of the first dose of the MMR vaccine in 5 year olds in the UK exceeded 95% for the first time. However, 2 doses of MMR vaccine are required, to ensure full protection from measles. Uptake of the second dose of MMR in 5 year old children is currently 88% and well below the 95% WHO target required to sustain elimination going forward.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at PHE, said:

Our achievements to date are a testament to the hard work of health professionals in the NHS. But, if we wish to build on our successes, and sustain measles and rubella elimination for future generations action needs to be taken now.

A future free of measles and rubella is within reach if we continue to focus our efforts on reaching 95% uptake with 2 doses of MMR for all children and catch up teenagers and young adults who missed out.

The new strategy is clear that partners in the local health economy need to work together to continue to increase uptake of the MMR vaccine in all children, and address immunity gaps across the population by catching up teenagers and young adults who missed out on the vaccine when they were younger.

It includes a number of recommendations to maintain measles and rubella elimination going forward which cover 4 main areas:

1. Achieve and sustain over 95% coverage with 2 doses of MMR vaccine in the routine childhood immunisation programme.
2. Achieve over 95% coverage with 2 doses of MMR vaccine in older age groups.
3. Strengthen measles and rubella monitoring.
4. Ensure easy access to high-quality, evidence-based information for health professionals and the public.

The UK National Verification Committee (NVC) and all of the UK nations have independently assessed and endorsed the strategy, and have committed to implementing the recommendations.