

News story: Central booking system for NI women seeking an abortion in England

The Department of Health and Social Care has established a central booking service that will be run by the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). Women from Northern Ireland can call a single telephone number to make an appointment with the most appropriate provider, based on:

- the woman's requirements
- her medical condition
- provider availability

The number is 0333 234 2184.

In June 2017, the Minister for Women and Equalities announced that women who are residents of Northern Ireland would be able access abortion procedures in England free of any charge. The package of care available includes:

- a consultation with an abortion provider in England, including an assessment of whether the legal grounds for an abortion are met
- an abortion procedure
- HIV or sexually transmitted infection tests
- choice of contraception from the abortion provider
- support with travel costs if women face financial hardship

The new booking system does not include the provision of any services in Northern Ireland and does not change the arrangements announced in 2017.

The central booking system will be funded through a grant from the Department of Health and Social Care, with support from the Government Equalities Office and HM Treasury.

The government has also finalised grant agreements with the 3 main abortion service providers to fund procedures for women from Northern Ireland. These are:

- BPAS
- Marie Stopes International
- NUPAS Ireland

The Department of Health and Social Care will also be reimbursing providers for all procedures they have undertaken on Northern Ireland residents since 29 June 2017.

Press release: PM meeting with Guy Verhofstadt: 6 March

This morning the Prime Minister met Guy Verhofstadt MEP at Downing Street, as part of ongoing engagement with representatives from the European Parliament.

The Prime Minister and Mr Verhofstadt discussed the importance of citizens' rights, including the proposals the UK put forward last week regarding EU citizens arriving during the implementation period. The Prime Minister reiterated that the expectations of those moving to the UK in this period will not be the same as those who arrived before our withdrawal.

The Prime Minister restated her commitment to avoiding a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland and noted the importance of officials from the Irish government, the European Commission and the UK meeting to discuss practical solutions.

They discussed the European Parliament's proposals for an institutional framework to support a close future relationship between the UK and the EU and the Prime Minister explained the vision for the future economic partnership set out in her Mansion House speech.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster David Lidington and the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU David Davis attended the meeting. Mr Verhofstadt also met the Home Secretary Amber Rudd after the meeting.

Press release: Sandwell Valley Park remains open during construction works

Access preparation for the construction of phase 2 of the Environment Agency's Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme started late January and will continue for the next couple of months. The main construction for the scheme will begin late spring/early summer and will reduce the risk of flooding to 1,400 properties in the area.

Over the next few weeks park visitors will see tree felling operations and some movement of HGVs through the access routes by Forge Mill Farm and the railway bridge by the RSPB centre. Any HGV movement will be carried out within normal working hours Monday to Friday. Priority will be given to park users, to keep disruption to a minimum. Both Forge Mill Farm and the RSPB will remain open during construction, and a path between the 2 buildings will remain available throughout the construction of the scheme. Handsworth Golf Course will be modified to support the scheme, but it will remain open as

usual.

Recent Environment Agency drop-in sessions updated the public about progress of works, and received valuable feedback from local community members and representatives of user groups in the park. Another drop-in session is being planned in the near future. Staff will be on hand to answer questions and confirm information such as timescales, footpath closures and traffic management. Attendees will also be able to view the plans and get an overview of the programme as a whole.

Rachel Kelly, Environment Agency project lead for the scheme said:

This is a very exciting scheme that is going to reduce the risk of flooding for 1,400 properties in the area. We have been working closely with our partners and the local community to ensure that we minimise disruption to the park users and keep the community informed as we progress through the construction phase.

Councillor David Hosell, cabinet member for highways and the environment, said:

Council officers have worked hard with the Environment Agency to ensure that the scheme has minimal effect on visitors to the Valley.

We are delighted that part of the scheme and work in the Country Park will include new fencing for improved animal pens at Forge Mill Farm, extending it as a visitor attraction. There will also be improvements to the entrance into the park for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders entering from the Old Newton Road.

More information about the Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme is available [online](#). Alternatively contact the Environment Agency project team at witton.frms@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Along with flood defences and flood management schemes, knowing your flood risk is also important when protecting your family and property from flooding. People can check their risk and register to receive free flood warnings by visiting the Environment Agency's [flood information pages](#) or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

[Press release: Hertfordshire](#)

[paedophile will spend longer in jail](#)

A man who was part of a paedophile ring has had his sentence increased after the Solicitor General Robert Buckland QC MP, appealed it for being too low.

Robert Lindsay, 39, was originally sentenced in December at Luton Crown Court. He was sentenced to 5 years and 3 months in prison with a 3 year licence extension for offences including conspiracy to rape a child, conspiracy to commit sexual activity with a child, making indecent images of a child.

Today, the Court of Appeal increased his sentence to 7 years and 6 months, with a 3 year license extension.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

This man exploited children for his own sexual gratification. His actions will have had a devastating and lasting effect on their victims. Lindsay's crimes are truly despicable and deserved tougher punishment. Crimes of this nature will not be tolerated, and I hope the increased sentence sends a strong message that perpetrators will be brought to justice.

[Press release: Record road investment in the Midlands to step up in 2018](#)

Work is soon to start on two smart motorway upgrades on the M6 at junctions 2 near Coventry to junctions 4 near Coleshill and on the M6 between junctions 13 at Stafford to 15 near Stoke on Trent.

Once complete they will add over 30 miles of new lanes to the strategic road network, increasing capacity by a third, and introducing new technology to tackle congestion and keep drivers informed.

These schemes are part of six schemes in the Midlands reaching major milestones between January and June this year.

Other key milestones on schemes in the Midlands include:

- the Preferred Route Announcement to ease three bottlenecks on the A38 in Derbyshire
- a consultation on the improvement of the M42 junction 6 near Birmingham Airport and the National Exhibition Centre (NEC)

- a public information event about the A45/A6 Chowns Mill roundabout upgrade
- the Preferred Route Announcement to upgrade the A46/ A428 at Binley, Coventry

The upgrades are funded by the Government's £15bn investment in motorways and main A roads and being delivered by Highways England.

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

These upgrades in the Midlands, will improve millions of journeys. Each of these milestones in the Midlands is evidence of Highways England delivering major infrastructure upgrades for the whole country.

April will mark three years since Highways England embarked on delivering the Government's [Road Investment Strategy](#), the biggest investment in the country's major roads since the 1970s.

Nationwide, almost 40 projects will hit key milestones in the first half of this year, joining the 18 major projects that have already opened to traffic since April 2015 and 16 others currently under construction.

Completed schemes in the Midlands include the opening last year of the strategically important Catthorpe Interchange at the M1/M6/A14.

This interchange is providing direct access between these roads and removing the queuing associated with the two very small local roundabouts, previously used by over 45,000 vehicles per day.

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.