

News story: Chancellor to meet Metro Mayors and visit key infrastructure in the North

Philip Hammond will today (Monday 4 September) convene the government's first meeting with all three Metro Mayors from the North of England, to discuss boosting growth across the Northern Powerhouse regions.

Boosting productivity in the region will be top of the agenda when he meets Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, and the Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen. These three areas alone have a population of five million and combined economy worth more than £102 billion.

Employment across the Northern Powerhouse is currently at a record high (73.8%), but Ministers believe more needs to be done to tackle the productivity gap. The government will continue to support the region through devolution and investment – including record amounts in transport, alongside support for skills and innovation. Ministers will shortly be announcing further funding to improve roads right across the North.

The Chancellor is clear the Northern Powerhouse will have a key role in the Industrial Strategy and efforts to ensure Britain makes the most of the opportunities ahead as we leave the European Union.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond said:

Boosting productivity in the North is at the very heart of the government's ambition to build an economy that works for everyone.

As we prepare to leave the European Union it is even more important that we support the Northern Powerhouse to reach its full potential.

That's why we are investing record amounts in infrastructure, and working with Metro Mayors to encourage growth and create opportunities throughout the North.

He will also see how work is progressing on a new rail link, Ordsall Chord, which will connect Manchester's three main train stations, and provide new direct-links to Manchester Airport from across the North of England. This will help support jobs and growth across the region, reducing commuting times and speeding up links to foreign markets – all key to helping boost productivity.

He will travel to Leeds to see progress being made to create up to 700 homes at the Seacroft development in the east of the city. This has received support from the government through the Home and Communities Agency's single

land programme. The Chancellor will reveal good progress is being made on a 'housing deal' with Leeds, which could unlock thousands more new homes. These deals will look to increase the supply of housing in areas of high demand.

Communities and Local Government Secretary, Sajid Javid, said:

I want to strike housing deals across the country to support councils' ambitious and innovative plans for new homes, and to help boost supply where it's most needed. We're committed to considering all tools at our disposal, and by using our money more flexibly we can deliver more homes.

We're making good progress with a Leeds housing deal and hope to announce further details at Autumn Budget. As well as increasing housing, this will help grow local economies as part of our commitment to the Northern Powerhouse.

Press release: PM statement on North Korea: 3 September 2017

This latest action by North Korea is reckless and poses an unacceptable further threat to the international community.

I discussed the serious and grave threat these dangerous and illegal actions present with President Abe in Japan this week and reiterate the call we jointly made for tougher action, including increasing the pace of implementation of existing sanctions and looking urgently in the UN Security Council at new measures.

This is now even more pressing. The international community has universally condemned this test and must come together to continue to increase the pressure on North Korea's leaders to stop their destabilising actions.

Press release: Greg Hands to take over responsibility for trade policy as

Lord Price pursues business and writing interests

A new Lords Minister will be appointed to the Department for International Trade, with a particular focus on UK export promotion which is of critical importance to the UK's future to ensure Britain is firmly at the forefront of global trade.

Current Minister of State for Trade and Investment, Greg Hands, will take overall responsibility for the Trade Policy portfolio, taking the Trade Bill through the House of Commons and delivering a trade policy for the UK through the Trade Policy Group.

Mr Hands joined the Department of International Trade when it was established in June 2016 and brings to the role a wealth and depth of knowledge of both parliament and government. He has held several ministerial roles including Chief Secretary to the Treasury which saw him attend Cabinet.

Existing DIT Minister, Mark Garnier, will become the Minister for Investment and have responsibility for foreign direct investments into the UK and UK investments overseas.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, said:

Lord Price's hard work and dedication has played a vital part in developing new and existing trade relationships – meeting with more than 75 ministers from overseas countries and hundreds of business leaders from across the world. I know that everyone at DIT would want to extend their thanks to him and wish him the best for his future endeavours.

I am also delighted that such an experienced senior minister as Greg Hands, will be taking over responsibility for designing an independent trade policy in the UK's national interest.

Greg Hands said:

Over the past twelve months we've helped secure more foreign direct investment projects than ever before, supported thousands of UK businesses on their export journey generating billions of pounds, and continue to promote the UK's trade values across the world.

I'm now looking forward to delivering a trade policy framework for the UK, so that we can take advantage of new trading opportunities with global partners once we leave the EU.

Lord Price said:

It has been an honour to serve as Minister for Trade and Investment and then Trade Policy following the EU referendum.

Having visited 35 countries since then I am certain that there is a huge appetite to build new and develop existing trade agreements with the UK. The Trade Policy team is well prepared for that work and I wish them every success.

I previously said I would be working within government for a time-limited period, and will now be leaving to pursue my wider business and writing interests, while continuing to advocate the UK's global trade ambitions.

DIT is focused on delivering the best international trading framework to support UK prosperity and open trade. This includes:

- bringing together policy, promotion and financial expertise to break down barriers to trade and investment, and help businesses succeed
- delivering a new trade policy framework for the UK as we leave the EU
- promoting British trade and investment across the world
- building the global appetite for British goods and services

Over the last 12 months DIT has grown to a global workforce of over 3,200 people operating in 108 countries. The Trade Policy Group that includes policy and country specialists, as well as expert economic analysts and lawyers, has grown five-fold.

Last month internationally recognised expert Crawford Falconer was appointed as Chief Trade Negotiation Adviser to act as head of profession for trade negotiators, bringing over 25 years of public service in trade and foreign affairs.

Further information

Contact the DIT Media Team on 0207 215 2000

[News story: Six areas to pilot UK's fastest broadband as part of £200 million project](#)

The first stage of a £200 million scheme to help bring the UK's fastest and most reliable broadband to businesses, schools and hospitals kicks off today

(Sunday 3 September) with the launch of six local pilots.

The projects will get around £10 million to test innovative ways of connecting offices and public sector buildings with the next generation of broadband – full fibre networks that run fibre connections straight to the doors of customers' homes or businesses.

The result is an incredibly reliable connection that can offer speeds of 1 Gigabit or 1,000 Mb/Sec. The multimillion-pound investment means test projects will now go ahead in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, West Sussex, Coventry and Warwickshire, Bristol and Bath & North East Somerset, West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester.

Today's announcement is the first step in a £200 million programme. Unveiled by the Chancellor, Philip Hammond, at [Spring Budget](#), it is part of the government's four-year plan to stimulate the market and encourage the growth of full fibre up and down the country.

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Andrew Jones MP, said:

How we live and work today is directly affected by how good our broadband connection is. Reliable connections enable new industries to flourish, help create jobs and give people flexibility in how and where they work.

For our economy to thrive, it is vital we make smart investments to ensure our digital infrastructure is world class and fit for the future.

Full fibre connections are the gold standard and we are proud to announce today the next step to get Britain better connected.

Minister of State for Digital, Matt Hancock MP, said:

We want to see more commercial investment in the gold standard connectivity that full fibre provides, and these innovative pilots will help create the right environment for this to happen. To keep Britain as the digital world leader that it is, we need to have the right infrastructure in place to allow us to keep up with the rapid advances in technology now and in the future.

The cutting-edge technology will make internet access more secure and enable more people to work remotely without disruption, as well as equipping the UK's homes, businesses and public services for applications of the future.

Full fibre broadband could potentially allow:

- hospitals to share HD quality graphics of medical scans in seconds to improve diagnosis speeds

- businesses to reach ever more customers online, increasing transactions by uploading even the largest files quickly and easily
- school classrooms to see a vast increase the number of pupils who can stream educational videos at the same time

This comes hot on the heels of the [Digital Infrastructure Investment Fund](#) announced in July, as well as new legislation to enable business rates relief for new fibre. Unlocking more than £1 billion for full fibre broadband, the fund has ignited interest from private finance to invest in the sector.

Notes to editors:

The remaining £190 million will be spent by 2020-21.

This programme comes as part of the government's £23 billion [National Productivity Investment Fund](#) aimed at improving productivity, which is key to raising living standards. This fund has already earmarked £740 million specifically for improving Britain's digital infrastructure, ensuring the UK is match-fit for the future.

Further information

[Press release: Domestic Abuse survivors given a voice to vote.](#)

Under existing legislation, domestic abuse survivors must provide a court order or have their application supported by a senior independent witness, such as a police superintendent, in order to appear anonymously on the electoral register.

These strict requirements have deterred many from registering at all – prompting a campaign by charities and survivors to make it more accessible.

The Government's changes will increase the number of people who can act as witnesses, including medical and healthcare professionals and refuge workers, and expand the type of evidence which can be put forward.

Chris Skidmore, Minister for the Constitution, said:

Ensuring every eligible person is able to vote is a matter of social justice. Every voice matters and this Government will continue to encourage our record levels of democratic participation by ensuring we have a democracy that works for everyone.

Women's Aid estimates that up to 12,000 women are receiving support in their refuges at any one time.

The changes are expected to be of particular benefit to these women or those who have left a refuge but continue to be in hiding from their perpetrators.

Welcoming the move, Katie Ghose, Chief Executive of Women's Aid, said:

The changes announced today will help survivors of domestic abuse to regain their voices. For too long these women have been silenced because it was too dangerous for them to sign up to an electoral register, which would reveal their location, and too difficult for them to register anonymously.

We are proud to have worked in partnership with the courageous Mehala Osborne and other partners to bring this issue onto the political agenda. We also want to thank the Government for their decisive action on this. The new measures send out a clear message to all survivors of domestic abuse: that their voices matter, and their right to vote should never be taken away.

To complement the legislative changes, the Cabinet Office will launch further research to identify and explain other barriers to electoral registration faced by survivors of domestic abuse. This research will be critical in shaping new policies, projects and future engagement.

It forms part of ongoing work across Government to tackle domestic violence and abuse and violence against women and girls.

Sarah Newton, Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability said:

Domestic abuse has a devastating and often lifelong impact on victims, their children, family and friends.

These changes come at a time when the Government is bringing forward a landmark Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill which will protect and support victims, recognise the devastating impact domestic abuse can have on young people, and ensure agencies respond effectively.