

# Press release: New crossing to provide transport and jobs stimulus

A new crossing beneath the River Thames will unlock billions of pounds worth of economic benefit and create thousands of jobs, Highways England's Chief Executive said today as he welcomed the Government's announcement of the preferred route for a new Lower Thames Crossing.

Jim O'Sullivan said the new crossing east of Gravesend and Tilbury would improve journey times and dramatically increase capacity for traffic crossing the river east of London.

The existing Dartford Crossing, with the Dartford Tunnel and the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge, are the only way to cross the Thames by road east of London.

Highways England will be responsible for delivering the crossing, which will see a new tunnel constructed, easing pressure on the existing Dartford Crossing – currently the only road crossing of the River Thames east of London

The new crossing will be linked to the road network by a new road north of the river, which will join the M25 between junctions 29 and 30, and a new road south of the river which, will join the A2 east of Gravesend.

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

This route will greatly improve journeys as well as unlocking more than £8 billion of economic benefits and create some 6,000 jobs.

The decision for a new crossing east of Gravesend and Tilbury is underpinned by years of studies, assessments and careful consideration of the record breaking response to our 2016 consultation. As we progress there will be further consultation and opportunities to be part of shaping the detail for the area, now and for future generations.

The Dartford Crossing is already over capacity – the new Lower Thames Crossing will relieve this.

The scheme will cost £4.4 billion and the new 70mph, 13 mile route and crossing will improve journeys for drivers. Capacity for vehicles crossing the Thames east of London will increase by 70 per cent.

Around 55 million journeys are made each year on the Dartford Crossing, six million more than it was designed for, and it suffers from closures due to incidents almost daily. This announcement provides a huge boost for local businesses, of which many agree that the new crossing will help their

business to grow and employ more people.

While the Dart Charge system has helped to relieve congestion, a new Lower Thames Crossing has been needed for some time.

More than 47,000 people responded to a consultation about the proposals last year, to help the Government reach this decision.

### **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.

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## **[Press release: Joint Statement on the recent violence in Libya's south](#)**

Joint Statement by the Ambassadors to Libya of the People's Republic of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America on the recent violence in Libya's south

In light of recent violence in Libya's south, including near the Tamanhint airbase, which risks escalating into renewed conflict.

Recalling relevant UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs), including UNSCRs 2213, 2259 and 2278, and Reiterating our determination to support the implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) in order to alleviate the suffering of the Libyan people, and our grave concern about the terrorist threat in Libya.

We underline the difference between acts against the terrorist threat and acts that can lead to further deterioration of the situation in Libya. We call for full de-escalation on the basis of broad inclusive political dialogue and avoiding provocative actions.

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## News story: Home Secretary commits more support to victims of slavery

The Home Secretary has announced radical reforms to boost support for slavery victims in the UK as a new elite multi-agency intelligence unit starts work to tackle human trafficking.

Amber Rudd revealed more will be done to ensure victims get the help they need as she visited the new £1 million government-funded Joint Slavery Trafficking Analysis Centre. The dedicated unit – made up of analysts from the National Crime Agency, police, Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, HMRC and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority – mirrors a joint working model successfully used to gather vital intelligence on terrorism.

The Home Secretary observed its first days of operation as it brings together a multi-agency team of analytical experts who will be embedded in the National Crime Agency to help tackle cross-border and domestic slavery.

Ms Rudd revealed the first focus of the centre, that will see expert analysts from each partner join forces to maximise results, will be on adult victims of sexual exploitation.

The Home Secretary said:

It is exactly this kind of cooperation between the police, Border Force, the National Crime Agency and others that will be our way of getting at the people traffickers.

The Centre will enable us to have a co-ordinated push against the organised crime groups that are at the heart of the trade in human beings and human misery. Our message to the perpetrators is clear; we are coming after you, and there is nowhere to hide.

The launch comes as new NCA figures reveal the growing scale of the global crisis, with victims referred for help in the UK now coming from 108 different countries in just one year. Many have also been exploited from within this country, with the UK the third most common country of origin.

More victims of slavery than ever before are now receiving help. The Home Secretary welcomed the 17 percent rise as more potential victims are identified and have the confidence to come forward, but acknowledges the need to shake up the current system to ensure they have the support they need.

The Home Secretary added:

In this country alone, there are thousands of poor souls being exploited and abused. Many of them will have come here on the

promise of a better life; those hopes will have been crushed.

New figures this week show that over 3,800 potential victims – from 108 different countries – were referred to support in 2016, through the National Referral Mechanism, which is the system we established for identifying victims.

As a country, I think we are rightly proud of what we have achieved. That's more potential victims than ever being helped. But being proud of what we have done so far isn't the same as being complacent about it. That's why today I am committing us to go further in making sure that we have the right system in place to help those in the trap of modern slavery find a way out of it.

The Home Secretary pledged to transform the National Referral Mechanism system that currently provides a package of support to suspected slavery victims. The findings of an 18 month pilot that examined ways of improving the current system will be published later this year, with the Home Secretary announcing work to identify more victims and streamline the process of helping them.

The reforms, [revealed by the Home Secretary in an article today](#) (PDF, 87.6KB, 2 pages) , will encourage more professionals to refer potential victims and ensure they receive the support they need to exit slavery for good.

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## [News story: Civil/crime news: logging-in to LAA Portal after upgrade work](#)

Essential improvements to the LAA Portal are being made in May 2017 and you will need to reset your password once the upgrade has been completed.

It is vital that that you know your password for the current Portal in order to do this.

If you cannot recall your current password you will need to use the 'Password Resets' link below. We recommend that this is done by 26 April 2017.

If you know your password you will not need to reset it at this stage.

The upgrade means that the Portal will have to be taken down at off-peak periods. Once the work has been completed you should see the following improvements:

- increased stability
- quicker log-in times
- more user-friendly password reset process

- status bar for all applications, providing up-to-date information on any issues affecting performance

## **When is this happening?**

We will contact users in advance to confirm when this is happening and provide more detail on what can be expected.

The work will be carried out in stages to minimise the disruption. But it will mean occasional 'outages' i.e. the Portal will be taken down. As a result, all applications accessed through the Portal will not be available.

The work will take place outside peak submission periods wherever possible. So, we recommend working on the submission of bills or applications before scheduled 'outages'.

Otherwise, you will need to delay submissions until the Portal is back online.

## **Offline applications**

If you need to complete a criminal application while the Portal is unavailable you should use the offline CRM14 eForm – see link below.

## **CCLF user roles**

When you log in you may notice an additional Crown Court Litigator Fee Online user role in your Contracted Work and Administration navigator page. You do not need to take any action, and will not receive any notifications or emails about this.

## **Further information**

[Crime eForm](#) – see 'CRM14 eForm offline user guide' on what to do if the Portal is down

[Password Resets](#) – use this link and select the password reset video from the list of options

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# **[Press release: April Labour Market Statistics for Scotland](#)**

The Scottish unemployment rate has fallen to 4.5 per cent, which is below the rate of 4.7 per cent for the whole of the UK.

The labour market statistics also show that employment in Scotland fell by

8,000 over the three months to February 2017. The number of those in employment in Scotland now stands at 2,596,000.

Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell said:

While there is some good news for Scotland in these figures, the falling employment numbers and rising inactivity statistics are a real cause for concern. They also come on the back of worrying GDP figures last week.

The UK Government is supporting the Scottish economy with over £1 billion new investment through the autumn statement and spring budget, on top of UK-wide investment in science, R&D and connectivity. We are also building an Industrial Strategy that will address long term economic challenges and drive growth across Scotland and the rest of the UK.

The Scottish Government now need to act urgently to secure the Scottish economy and help more people into work. Holyrood has new powers over tax and welfare, with the tools to shape Scotland's economy. Rather than obsess about the constitution, Scottish ministers need to focus all their efforts on strengthening the economy and backing business to create jobs for people across Scotland.

Headline statistics for the December 2016 to February 2017 quarter:

- Employment in Scotland fell by 8,000 over the quarter, and fell by 12,000 over the year, to stand at 2,596,000.
- The Scots employment rate decreased by 0.1 percentage points over the quarter to 73.4 per cent. The rate is below the UK average of 74.6 per cent.
- Unemployment in Scotland fell by 15,000 over the quarter and is down 47,000 over the year. The level now stands at 123,000.
- At 4.5 per cent, the Scottish unemployment rate is below that of the UK at 4.7 per cent.
- Economic activity fell by 24,000 over the quarter and now stands at 2,719,000. Also, the economic activity rate decreased over the year to stand at 77.0 per cent.
- In March 2017, the number of people out of work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance was 47,600 and claimant count, including Universal Credit was 77,000.

## **Employment**

The Labour Force Survey indicates that the number of people in employment in Scotland from December 2016 to February 2017 was 2,596,000. Employment was

down by 8,000 compared to the previous three months, and down by 12,000 compared to the same quarter last year. The employment rate was down 0.1 percentage points on the previous quarter, and down by 0.4 percentage points compared to the same quarter last year. By comparison, the Scottish employment rate is 73.4 per cent below the UK average of 74.6 per cent.

## **Unemployment**

Unemployment in Scotland was down by 15,000 over the quarter December 2016 to February 2017 at 123,000. The level was down 47,000 on the same quarter last year. The unemployment rate was down 0.5 percentage points on the previous quarter at 4.5 per cent, which is down 1.6 percentage points over the year.

## **Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit**

The number of people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) fell by 100 to 47,600 in March 2017. The level is down by 10,400 on March 2016. The claimant count level (JSA and Universal Credit) is up 2,300 over the month at 77,000 and the rate is up 0.1 percentage points over the month and up 0.1 percentage points over the year to 2.7 per cent.

## **Economic Activity**

The number of economically active (defined as those in employment or ILO unemployed, and seasonally adjusted) in Scotland in the December 2016 to February 2017 quarter was 2,719,000. This was down 24,000 on the previous quarter, and down by 60,000 on prior year levels. Among those aged 16-64 the economic activity rate was 77.0 per cent, down 0.5 percentage points on the previous quarter, and down 1.8 percentage points over the year.