

Press release: Four NI charities for women and girls to receive UK Government funding

Minister Kris Hopkins today visited one of the charities, Autism NI, which supports individuals with Autism and their families and campaigns to raise awareness of Autism within wider society. The other organisations benefiting from the new tranche of money are Mid Ulster Women's Aid, Foyle Women's Aid and HomeStart North Down.

The news of final funding confirmation follows last week's announcement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt. Hon. James Brokenshire MP, that four projects based in Northern Ireland were set to benefit from the Fund. The scheme is set up to help create a fairer, shared society for women across the United Kingdom.

At Autism NI's South Belfast base this morning at the start of Autism Awareness Month, Minister Hopkins donned a blue tie in support of the organisation's 'Wear It Blue' campaign which encourages supporters to wear blue clothing for the day to increase awareness of autism and fund-raise for the charity.

Minister Hopkins said:

"I am delighted to extend my congratulations to Autism NI on their success in the latest round of Tampon Tax funding – and indeed to all four local charities that will benefit from a total of £451,411. The money will support projects that will have a real and vital impact in improving the lives of disadvantaged women and girls throughout Northern Ireland.

"It has been truly inspiring to see first-hand the important work of Autism NI and its impact on the lives of individuals with autism and their families.

"Currently over 6,900 children are diagnosed with Autism in Northern Ireland and this number is increasing steadily. At a time when voluntary and community groups in Northern Ireland face concerns and challenges due to the current political situation, statistics like these – and the real lives of the people and families behind them – vividly underscore the importance of having devolved institutions up and running and serving the whole community."

Autism NI CEO Kerry Boyd added:

"I am delighted that the Tampon Tax Fund has supported such a significant project for the Autism community in Northern Ireland. Many girls with Autism are not diagnosed until later in life and therefore miss out on critical intervention support at an early age. This project aims to bridge that gap through tailored support for females living with Autism so they can fulfil their full potential in life and also give them a voice to advocate their own

needs.”

The money will help Autism NI remove barriers for Autistic girls within the home, school and community environments to support achievement, enjoyment and full participation in a society that respects their rights.

Press release: HS2 launches hunt for station designers and Euston development partner

The winning bidders will work with High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd to develop and refine the detailed plans for three brand new stations, at Birmingham Curzon Street, Birmingham Interchange and London’s Old Oak Common, as well as a major expansion of London Euston.

The stations will welcome tens of thousands of passengers every day from all over the UK, providing easy and accessible onward connections to local transport, airports and connecting rail services as well as step-free access from street to seat. In total more than 170,000 new jobs are expected to be created in the wider development areas surrounding the four stations.

A separate contest, also launched today, will seek a Master Development Partner to advise on, and later take forward, development opportunities for new homes, offices and retail space above and around the revamped London Euston. The winner will work with HS2 Ltd, Network Rail, the station design contract winner and local authorities to deliver a unified plan to unlock the full potential of the area.

This comprehensive approach has the potential to deliver up to 21 hectares of development space as well as improving accessibility and creating new public and green spaces across the wider Euston site.

Welcoming the launch of the competition, Transport Minister Andrew Jones said:

The search for design teams to produce plans for new stations and world-class amenities for London Euston, Old Oak Common, Birmingham Interchange and Birmingham Curzon Street stations is a major step towards making HS2 a catalyst for growth across the country. The winning bidders will need to ensure the stations provide the best possible customer experience. There are also huge opportunities for

development near all the HS2 stations. HS2 Ltd is progressing its search for a partner to deliver new homes, shops and offices around Euston station once the core HS2 work is complete.

HS2 Ltd Commercial Director Beth West said:

We're looking for the brightest and the best from across the industry to help us deliver one of the most tangible legacies of the HS2 project – three brand new stations and a major expansion of London Euston.

All four present unique challenges and opportunities for the winning bidders. Together we will deliver world-class designs that help unlock wider local regeneration opportunities and provide unparalleled levels of accessibility, ease and convenience for the travelling public.

Commenting on the development at Euston, HS2 Ltd Commercial Development Director Tom Venner said:

Euston has been the gateway to the nation and the nation's capital for over a century. HS2 provides the opportunity for it to continue that role into the next century – and for the local community to be proud of that role. Together with our development partner, we aim to redevelop Euston in a way that will make it not just the nation's hub, but London's as well, the heartbeat of both the nation and the capital, fit for the 21st century and beyond.

David Biggs, Managing Director, Network Rail Property said:

Network Rail welcomes the opportunity to create a new London destination at Euston mirroring its neighbour King's Cross and St Pancras where our investment in the station acted as a catalyst, bringing inward investment and regenerating the whole area into a thriving new London quarter.

The HS2 terminal at Euston will have a similar effect, it will become the initial focus for the wider regeneration of the station and surrounding area with an opportunity to create a new vibrant commercial and residential district in the heart of London with fantastic connectivity to the rest of the UK and Europe.

Bidders for the station designs and the Euston Master Development Partner are expected to be shortlisted in the summer, with contracts signed early next year. The station design work will be split into four packages.

Press release: Minister Ellwood statement on death sentences in Gaza

I strongly condemn the three death sentences carried out in Gaza on 6 April. This decision reflects a worrying trend of increasing use of the death penalty in Gaza.

It is the long-standing position of the UK to oppose the death penalty in all circumstances. We have repeatedly called for the de facto authorities in Gaza to respect the Palestinian Authority's moratorium on implementation of the death penalty.

News story: Fuel for thought as motorists head off on Easter getaway

Almost 98 per cent of motorways and strategic A roads will be roadworks-free over the bank holiday, meaning motorists and their passengers can enjoy journeys with as little disruption as possible.

We are also reminding drivers to check their vehicles before they set off as it was revealed around 20 motorists break down every day because they have run out of fuel.

Latest statistics show almost half of all breakdowns are caused by simple mechanical problems which could be avoided with simple checks. Nearly a quarter are caused by tyre problems.

Highways England Chief Executive, Jim O'Sullivan said:

I want all drivers to arrive at their destinations safely. We are removing almost all of our roadworks across the country to make people's journeys easier for people this Easter and we are urging drivers to make sure they are ready by checking their fuel, tyres, and lights. Anyone who runs out of fuel is putting themselves and other road users, including their own passengers at risk. With a few simple checks that risk can be overcome and everyone will be safer.

The government is investing £15 billion to improve the strategic road

network. The improvements will keep traffic moving even in the busiest periods, cutting congestion – and we are taking action to reduce delays over the bank holiday break. We are completing 190 and suspending 119 miles of roadworks by 6am on 13 April until 12.01am on 18 April to help people get away this Easter with as little disruption as possible.

Schemes completed in time for the Easter getaway include:

- A556 – the £192m Knutsford to Bowdon dual carriageway linking junction 19 of the M6 to junction 7 of the M56 was completed on time and on budget after a 28 month build programme
- A590 – our £1m project to realign and raise the carriageway at Lindal near Ulverston, removing a the long-running Lindal ‘Dip’ issue which led to carriageway closures during flooding was completed
- £191 million improvement scheme at Catthorpe Junction 19 of the M1 – which will revolutionise the journeys made by more than 142,000 vehicles through the area every day

And before they set off we are urging drivers to:

- check fuel: make sure you have enough to get to your destination
- check tyres: before setting off on a long/significant journey, check your tyre pressure and the condition of your tyres, including the spare; look out for cuts or wear and make sure the tyres have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm, which is the legal limit
- check engine oil: use your dipstick to check oil before any long journey, and top up if needed; take your car back to the garage if you’re topping up more than usual
- check water: to ensure you have good visibility, always keep your screenwash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen
- check your lights: If your indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights or brake lights are not functioning properly, you are putting yourself at risk; in addition, light malfunctions can be a reason for your vehicle to fail its MOT

You can [view a map showing the locations of lifted and completed schemes](#).

By suspending or completing roadworks, more lanes will be open and many speed restrictions will be lifted. Those wishing to find out more about driving on smart motorways can find further information on our [smart motorways guidance page](#).

Drivers planning to use the Dartford Crossing are reminded to pay Dart Charge in advance or by midnight the day after crossing.

More information can be found [on our website](#) or by calling our information line (0300 123 5000) to keep up to date with conditions on the roads.

For more detailed information on how to carry out your vehicle checks, [view the Think! website](#).

[View our vehicle checks video](#)

Roadworks lifted

A38 Glynn Valley (near Dobwalls) Slope stabilisation 4.75mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

M1 Jct 20 to 21 (near Leicester) Carriageway resurfacing 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

M69 M1 (Jct 21) to Jct1 (near Hinckley) Drainage works 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A1 Colsterworth to Barrowby (near Grantham) Drainage works 10mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A1 Harlaxton to Barrowby (near Grantham) Drainage works 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A1 Tinwell to Colsterworth (near Stamford) Drainage works 10mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A1 Elkesley (near Retford) Electrical works 4.25mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A1 Barrowby to Long Bennington (near Grantham) Drainage works 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A5 Gibbets Hill to Crick (near Rugby) Drainage works 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A5 Old Stratford to Tove Roundabout (near Towcester) Carriageway resurfacing and drainage works 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A14 Jct 3 to 10 (near Kettering) Horticultural works 10mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A14 M1 (Jct 19) to Jct 1 (near Rugby) Horticultural works 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A14 Jct 10 to 13 (near Kettering) Horticultural works 10mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A14 Jct 1 to 3 (near Market Harborough) Horticultural works 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A38 Palm Court to Kingsway (near Derby) Horticultural works 2.5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A38 Markeaton (near Derby) Horticultural works 2.5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A43 Abthorpe (near Towcester) Carriageway improvement 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A45 Billing to Wilby Way (near Northampton) Carriageway repair works 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A52 Bardills to Priory Roundabouts (near Nottingham) Horticultural works 5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A52 Radliffe on Trent (near Nottingham) Carriageway improvement 1mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A52 Radliffe on Trent (near Nottingham) Carriageway improvement 0.5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A453 Farnborough Road to Silverdale Roundabout (near Nottingham) Horticultural works 0.5mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A5 Gledrid Roundabout (near Chirk) Widening the carriageway on the approaches and exit of the roundabout 1mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

M18 Jct 4 (near Doncaster) Bridge waterproofing 0.4mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

M621 Jct 1 to 5 (near Leeds) Electrical scheme 6.2mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

Roadworks completed

M32 Jct 2 to 3 (near Bristol) Installation of bus only lane 1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M4 Jct 16 (near Swindon) Structures maintenance 0.65 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M23 Jct 9 to 8 (near Crawley) The scheme addresses verge cracking along the embankment crest. Works involve removal/replacement of safety barrier, earthworks, ducting works and other maintenance activities. 7 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M20 Jct 4 to 10 (near Kent) Electrical works 3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M2 Jct 1 to 7 (near Kent) Electrical works 3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M20 Jct 5 to 6 (near Maidstone, Kent) Resurfacing 3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A2 (near Dunkirk, Kent) Resurfacing 12 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A2 (near Gravesend) Resurfacing 4 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A13 Slip road closure, southbound (near Essex) Carriageway –

reconstruction/repair 0.16 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A1(M) Jct 3 to 4 (near Hertfordshire) Carriageway – reconstruction/repair 1.59 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A282 Jct 31 to 1A (near Essex / Kent) Carriageway – reconstruction/repair 2.11 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct10 anti-clockwise entry slip (near Surrey) Carriageway – reconstruction/repair 0.23 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 10 anti-clockwise off slip (near Surrey) Carriageway – reconstruction/repair 0.21 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 11 anti-clockwise entry slip (near Surrey) Carriageway – reconstruction/repair 0.18 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 28 anticlockwise exit slip (near Essex) Carriageway – reconstruction/repair 0.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct10 to 11 (near Surrey) Carriageway – reconstruction/repair 1.11 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 11 to 10 (near Surrey) Carriageway – reconstruction/repair 2.51 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 11 to 9 (near Surrey) Carriageway – reconstruction/repair 2.7 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 12 to 10 (near Surrey) Carriageway – reconstruction/repair 1.52 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M20 Jct 2 to 1 (near Kent) Communications 1.44 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M4 Jct 3 to 1 (near Hillingdon / Hounslow) Construction – improvement/upgrading 6.29 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 4 to 3 (near Kent) Drainage 0.99 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 4 to 3 (near Kent) Electrical works 0.57 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 16 to 15 (near S. Bucks) Electrical works 0.65 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 9 to 8 (near Surrey) Electrical works 0.44 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M20 Jct 1 to 2 (near Kent) Horticulture (cutting & planting) 2.45 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 JA244 to JA245 (near Surrey) Inspection/survey 0.65 mile(s) of roadworks

completed for Easter period.

A3 southbound (on slip) at Esher Common Junction (near Surrey)
Inspection/survey 0.41 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A40 Denham Roundabout eastern quadrant (near Buckinghamshire)
Inspection/survey 0.06 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A40 Denham Roundabout western quadrant (near Buckinghamshire)
Inspection/survey 0.65 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct10 to 9 (near Surrey) Inspection/survey 0.42 mile(s) of roadworks
completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 15 to 16 (near S. Bucks) Safety barrier/fence Repairs 0.59 mile(s) of
roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 22 to 21A (near Hertfordshire) Safety barrier/fence Repairs 0.14
mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M1 boundary to Jct 6 (near Hertfordshire) Signs – maintenance 0.22 mile(s) of
roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 10 to 11 (near Surrey) Signs – maintenance 1.41 mile(s) of roadworks
completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 12 to 11 (near Surrey) Signs – maintenance 2.31 mile(s) of roadworks
completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 15 to 16 (near S. Bucks) Signs – maintenance 1.51 mile(s) of
roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 15 to 16 (near S. Bucks) Signs – maintenance 1.43 mile(s) of
roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 16 to 15 (near S. Bucks) Signs – maintenance 2.42 mile(s) of
roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 17 to 16 (near S. Bucks) Signs – maintenance 1.32 mile(s) of
roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 21 to 21A (near Hertfordshire) Signs – maintenance 0.78 mile(s) of
roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 21 to 22 (near Hertfordshire) Signs – maintenance 1.59 mile(s) of
roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 Jct 6 to 5 (near Kent) Signs – maintenance 2.91 mile(s) of roadworks
completed for Easter period

M25 Jct 11 exit slip.(clockwise) (near Surrey) Signs – maintenance 0.2
mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M3 Jct 1 to 2 (near Surrey) Signs – maintenance 0.6 mile(s) of roadworks

completed for Easter period

M3 Jct 3 to 2 (near Surrey) Signs – maintenance 0.68 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M3 west to M25 anti-clockwise link road (near Surrey) Signs – maintenance 0.27 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M4 Jct 3 to 2 (near Hounslow) Signs – maintenance 0.62 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A282 Dartford east tunnel (near Kent) Structure – new/reconstruction 0.33 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A282 Dartford east tunnel (near Kent) Tunnel maintenance 1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A282 Dartford west tunnel (near Kent) Tunnel maintenance 0.97 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A120 Jct 29 (near Hare Green) Central reserve vehicle restraint system replacement 2.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A120 Jct 29 (near Hare Green) Central reserve vehicle restraint system replacement 2.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M1 Jct 21 to 21a (near Leicester) Electrical works 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M1 Jct 26 (near Nottingham) Electrical works 0.75 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M1 Jct 28 to 27 (near Sutton-in-Ashfield) Sign repairs 1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M1 Jct 26 (near Nottingham) Sign repairs 1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A1 Blyth (near Retford) Bridge repairs 2.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A1 Little Ponton (near Grantham) Surveys 1.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A1 Barrowby-Newark on Trent (near Newark On Trent) Drainage works 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A1 Tickencote to Little Ponton (near Melton Mowbray) Drainage works 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A1 Newark on Trent to Tuxford (near Newark On Trent) Drainage works 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A1 Apleyhead to Blyth (near Retford) Drainage works 5 mile(s) of roadworks

completed for Easter period

A1 Wothorpe to Tinwell (near Stamford) Horticultural works 1.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A5 Hinckley to Nuneaton (near Hinckley) Surveys 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A5 Litchborough (near Daventry) Drainage works 1.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A5 Towcester (near Towcester) Carriageway improvement works 1.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A5 Weedon to Kilsby (near Daventry) Horticultural works 2.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A14 Jct 7 to 13 (near Kettering) Communication works 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A14 M1 (Jct 19) to Jct 1 (near Rugby) Horticultural works 1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A14 Jct 1 to 3 (near Market Harborough) Horticultural works 1.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A45 Wellingborough (near Wellingborough) Road marking 0.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A46 Cossington to Six Hills (near Loughborough) Horticultural works 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M6 Jct 37 to 38 (near Tebay) Parapet connection and barrier upgrade 1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A66 (near Embleton) Contraflow 2.7 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A66 (near Thornthwaite) Traffic signals 1.4 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A66 (near Thornthwaite) Full closure 1.4 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A585 (near Thornton) Traffic signals 1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A1 Jct 73 (near Newcastle upon Tyne) Electrical work 0.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M18 Jct 5 to J6 (near Doncaster) Barrier renewal 0.6 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A1T Ferrybridge to Barnsdale Bar (near Pontefract/Doncaster) Resurfacing

works 13.7 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A64 Scampston (near Malton) Barrier renewal 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A64 Rillington (near Malton) Footway improvements 6.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A64 Hopgrove to Stockton (near York) Resurfacing works 4.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M18 Jct 1 to 2 (near Doncaster) Carriageway repairs 6.4 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A19 northbound & southbound A684 Osmotherley (near Northallerton) Construction of central reserve crossover to facilitate contraflow system 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

M5 J4a to J5 (Phase 1) (near Droitwich) Constructing the infrastructure for Smart Motorways (ALR) 4.8 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

A180 & A160 Brocklesby Interchange (near Immingham) Carriageway improvement works 3.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period

[News story: New Quality and Assurance framework open now](#)

Crown Commercial Service is helping the public sector to test the quality of IT services with a new framework agreement, developed in partnership with the Home Office.

Quality and Assurance Testing is [live now](#), and gives central government and the wider public sector access to pre-evaluated suppliers of IT testing services.

Of the 42 suppliers on the framework, 26 (62%) are small and medium-sized enterprises.

What is the framework for?

If you're designing and/or building a digital requirement or cloud service integration, you may need independent, specialist quality assurance and/or testing before you go live to ensure a smooth implementation.

The new agreement complements other [digital agreements](#) such as:

- Digital Outcomes and Specialists (DOS)
- G-Cloud
- Cyber Security Services
- Crown Hosting

The services available will support testing functionality, usability and performance using independent specialist service expertise.

What is on offer?

Buyers can choose from one of four flexible mini competition options, to select their supplier to deliver a wide range of testing and quality assurance services.

Services available under the new agreement are:

- Lot 1: Quality Assurance and Testing Specialists
- Lot 2: Automation, Agile and Development Opportunities
- Lot 3: Load and Performance Testing
- Lot 4: Functional Testing
- Lot 5: Infrastructure Testing and Environments
- Lot 6: Operational Acceptance Testing and Disaster Recovery
- Lot 7: Quality Assurance and Testing Management
- Lot 8: Strategic Quality Assurance Consultancy

Buyer Confidence

Only Suppliers who have passed the Home Office's robust evaluation will be able to bid for work under the agreement, giving you an extra level of reassurance.

All Suppliers on this agreement have signed up to government terms and conditions, making tendering simple and effective.

Want to know more?

[Complete the online form](#) to register your interest in the Quality Assurance and Testing for IT Systems agreement.