

Major rebuilds begin at schools across England

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi, today (23rd September) 'broke ground' on one of the first 100 schools to be rebuilt under the Prime Minister's ten-year School Rebuilding Programme, as he joined workers, pupils and staff at West Coventry Academy.

The School Rebuilding Programme carries out major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at school and sixth form college buildings across England, with all new buildings to be net zero carbon in operation.

The Education Secretary was visiting West Coventry Academy, where new buildings will be designed to reduce energy consumption and support the UK's net zero by 2050 target.

The £38.4 million project is a complete rebuild of the school, and includes a brand new, state of the art sports hall, which will also serve the local community.

The government is currently consulting on how to prioritise which schools will be selected for the School Rebuilding Programme in future.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

Today I broke ground on one of the first 500 schools that the government is rebuilding, which will transform the lives of thousands of children over years to come.

We are revolutionising the school estate to future proof both our children's education and the environment, with new school buildings that are net zero in operation – leading the charge for more sustainable schools and supporting students and teachers to make a positive impact on the environment.

These rebuilds and refurbishments, with the first 100 projects backed by £2bn government funding, will create world-leading education facilities, from classrooms and science labs to sports halls and dining rooms.

The Department for Education will be showcasing work to make school sites more sustainable at COP26 in November.

Measures to be announced at COP will focus on the government championing climate education and skills, making it easier for schools and pupils to support local biodiversity and make a positive impact on the world around them.

The Department is also looking at how it can take school buildings a step further in lowering their carbon footprint, including research into construction and layout of school sites, the creation of more outdoor spaces within schools, and improvements to the way schools are powered.

COP26 will bring education and climate ministers together from across the world to set out the Government's vision and encourage others to make commitments to sustainable education – making schools greener, but also equipping young people with knowledge about their environment and highlighting education and training opportunities in the green economy.

ENDS

Performance update – September 2021

The latest [official monthly statistics](#) details our performance on appeals casework for the 12 month period to the end of August 2021 for cases in England.

The Planning Inspectorate delivers an appeals, examinations and applications service in England and Wales. We support a fair planning system through deciding planning, enforcement and specialist casework appeals; helping communities shape where they live by examining local plans; and help meet future infrastructure needs by reviewing national infrastructure applications.

Our performance statistics currently only cover our appeals casework. In summary:

- we made 18,075 appeal decisions in the last 12 months, an average of over 1,500 per month
- the mean average time to make an appeal decision across all types of casework in the last 12 months was 27 weeks
- at the end of August 2021, we had 12,526 open cases

See [Appeals: how long they take](#)

Local plan examinations

In August, 2 Final Reports were issued, and 1 new plan was submitted for examination. As of 17 September, we have 64 live examinations.

National Infrastructure examinations

See the register of applications on the National Infrastructure Planning website for a list of pre-application, live and decided applications. As of 22 September 2021, there is currently 1 application at the acceptance stage,

9 applications at the pre-examination stage, 5 are currently being examined, 4 have reached recommendation stage and 11 are at the decision stage.

Autumn and Winter casework arrangements

As a result of the national restrictions during the past 18 months to control the pandemic we have decided fewer cases. We now have more cases waiting for a decision than before the pandemic and recognise that some customers are waiting longer for their decision than we would like. We are working hard to decide more cases and reduce the length of time to make decisions. Our current focus is national infrastructure applications, local plans and cases heard by hearing or inquiry.

This focus will reduce the availability of inspectors to decide other casework over the next few months. This is because national infrastructure, local plans and hearing and inquiry cases tend to be more complex and take more inspector time.

Last week the Prime Minister and Health Secretary announced a [Plan A and Plan B for managing the virus in England during the autumn and winter to manage the impact on the NHS](#).

Our position on [casework arrangements](#) remains unchanged. In summary:

- hearings and inquiries are again being arranged by local authorities, as they were before the pandemic
- hearings and inquiries are entirely in-person, entirely virtual or a mix of the two
- where in-person elements are planned, the local authority needs to be prepared for the event to be held fully virtually in case pandemic restrictions change

See the [guidance for further details](#).

Looking further beyond to 2022, we are assessing options for longer term, sustained ways of working. This is both on how and where we work as an organisation but also specifically on how we run our events.

Over the summer and into autumn we have been conducting research with our customers, stakeholders and our employees (including inspectors) on the best way to run events in future for the benefit of everyone involved. We expect both blended (which include in-person elements) and virtual events to be part of our future operating model. The events being run by local authorities from 13 September will provide us with valuable evidence to help shape our thinking.

We expect to be able to share more on the future operating model for events in early 2022.

Planning Inspectorate Wales transition to new service in Wales

On 1 October 2021 the staff and functions of Planning Inspectorate Wales will transfer to the Welsh Government and be known as Planning and Environment Decisions Wales – Penderfyniadau Cynllunio ac Amgylchedd Cymru.

In summary:

- planning appeals and other casework handled by the Planning Inspectorate Wales will transfer to the new service
- nationally significant infrastructure projects under the Planning Act 2008 that include locations in Wales will continue under the Planning Inspectorate (England)
- from 16 September, we paused any new submissions of Wales-based cases and evidence online via the Appeals Casework Portal. However, you can still submit cases and evidence by email and post

See [Planning Inspectorate Wales transition to new service news article](#) for further information.

[Change of Her Majesty's High Commissioner to Solomon Islands and Nauru: Thomas Edward Coward](#)

Press release

Mr Thomas has been appointed High Commissioner to Solomon Islands and non-resident High Commissioner to the Republic of Nauru in succession to Dr Brian Jones who will be transferring to another Diplomatic service appointment.



Full name: Thomas Edward Coward

Married to: Gillian Elizabeth Cook

Children: Joshua Keith Coward

| Dates | Role |
|-----------------|---|
| 2017 to present | British Embassy Yangon (Myanmar), Team Leader, Inclusive Growth and Livelihoods Team |
| 2014 to 2017 | DFID Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo), Country Economist |
| 2013 to 2014 | DFID, Economist, Multilateral Effectiveness Department |
| 2012 to 2013 | DFID, Economist, Policy Division – Growth Team |
| 2011 | The International Growth Centre, Economist for Sierra Leone |
| 2010 | United Nations Development Programme, Country Coordinator to Solomon Islands, Pacific Financial Inclusion Program |
| 2008 to 2010 | Central Bank of Solomon Islands, Senior Research Analyst, Overseas Development Institute Fellowship Scheme |

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[Triple recognition for Sellafield's supply chain approach](#)

In front of over 800 fellow supply chain professionals, the company was highly commended in the Best Supplier Relationship Management Initiative category alongside supply chain partner State of Flux at the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) ceremony, and shortlisted for two other awards.

Susan Lussem, Sellafield Ltd supply chain director said:

These nominations are fantastic recognition for the company.

CIPS is the professional body for the procurement and supply profession, and these awards are the gold standard for our industry. The incredible diversity and quality of other shortlisted organisations is testament to that.

I'd like to thank everyone who contributed, particularly my fantastic Sellafield supply chain colleagues. This success would not be possible without them. Recognition also to our excellent supply chain who help us to deliver our mission.

Sellafield Ltd was highly commended as recognition for its collaboration with supplier management specialists State of Flux.

Launched in January 2018, the programme has grown into a market leader and now manages 19 relationships, accounting for projects worth approximately £900m.

Meanwhile, Sellafield Ltd's Coronavirus (COVID-19) response was nominated in the category 'Best Response to Supply Chain Resilience in a Crisis'.

Susan said:

During the pandemic, we were able to ensure all of our supply lines were maintained, which allowed our internationally important mission to progress safely and securely. Additionally, we supported the local response in Cumbria and Warrington which included personal protective equipment donations and release of personnel to volunteer in their communities.

Finally, Sellafield's Programme and Project Partners (PPP) was named a finalist in the 'Public Procurement Project of the Year' award.

The model was one of the biggest procurements in Europe, developed by Sellafield Ltd to deliver up to £7 billion of critical national infrastructure differently over a 20-year partnership.

Head of commercial in the project delivery directorate, Richard Lennard said:

Developing and awarding the PPP contract successfully was a significant achievement and testament to the teams involved. We now take great pride in the vision for the PPP model, as the collaborative partnership matures and starts to realise the benefits.

[Free glasses to tackle poor eyesight and boost literacy](#)

Thousands of pupils will benefit from an expanded programme that provides two free pairs of glasses to improve reading and writing by tackling poor eyesight.

[Data](#) shows that 30 per cent of pupils who need glasses have not been to an optician, alongside disadvantaged children being less likely to get, or wear, the glasses they need. This can hold children back.

The 'Glasses in Classes' scheme aims to level up outcomes and will be adapted

for five disadvantaged areas in England, under the [Opportunity Area](#) programme. This will reach more than 9,000 pupils in at least 225 schools.

Children identified as needing glasses will receive one pair for home and one for school, helping them concentrate in the classroom and improve their literacy skills.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

As a young boy shortly after arriving in this country, I sat at the back of the classroom with poor language skills and low confidence, struggling to engage with my lessons.

Back then, I could never have dreamt of the opportunities this country would give me and I am determined to help every young person overcome obstacles, just as I was supported.

Too many children still struggle with the literacy skills they need to make the most of their education. Simple steps like providing free glasses to those that need them so they can clearly see words on a page, for example, can help close the literacy gap and foster a love of learning.

Children and their families will receive support from a vision co-ordinator, usually a teaching assistant, to attend follow-up eye examinations, get their prescription glasses and wear them regularly. Training will be available for support staff.

Marking National Eye Health Week (20 to 26 September), the scheme is backed by Opportunity Area funding and will now be available for pupils in Doncaster, Derby, Durham, Norwich and Breckland, and North Yorkshire Coast.

The 'Glasses in Classes' project was developed by the Centre for Applied Education Research (CAER), a partnership created by Bradford Opportunity Area to remove health barriers to learning.

It was expanded across the city in 2019 using Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) funding to include 100 primary schools, of which half received the intervention, to further investigate the effect on literacy attainment of providing additional glasses for use in school.

This latest expansion aims to support other areas facing similar challenges and to close the attainment gap that persists between some children and their more affluent peers, despite it narrowing at every stage of education since 2011 up until the pandemic.

It builds on the Government's ambitious, long-term education recovery plan, including investment of more than £3 billion to date, and the extension of the Opportunity Area programme to a fifth year.

Schools do not usually get the results of vision screenings that pupils take

in reception class but, during the pilot, these results were shared with staff in schools so they knew which pupils and families to support. Children are already entitled to free NHS sight tests and vouchers to help with the cost of glasses, but this trial gives them two pairs for free.

At the start of the Opportunity Area programme in 2017, pupils in Bradford were 6.2 percentage points behind the national average in reading at Key Stage 2. That gap narrowed almost a third to 4.6 percentage points in 2018 and halved to 3.1 percentage points in 2019.

Other studies have shown that vision improved for children who wear their glasses compared to those who do not and there is a link between poor eyesight and reduced literacy scores.

Local partners will work together to adapt the 'Glasses in Classes' approach to meet local need in the five areas as part of the Opportunity Area's place-based approach to levelling up.

'Glasses in Classes' features in the Opportunity Area's health and education [insight guide](#) showcasing a selection of interventions covering mental health and wellbeing and early identification of autism.

The CAER partnership includes the Department for Education, Bradford Teaching Hospital NHS Trust, the Universities of Leeds, Bradford and York, the City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, and the Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF).