

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack responds to June 2021 GDP

News story

Our main aim is to build back better and stronger from the pandemic, says the Secretary of State for Scotland.



Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

While today's figures show some resilience, we still face challenges. A strong, sustainable recovery remains our priority.

The UK Government put unprecedented measures in place from the very beginning of the pandemic to protect lives and livelihoods. That's included supporting the jobs of nearly a million people in Scotland through furlough and with unprecedented financial help for the self-employed. More than 90,000 businesses have benefited from business loans and VAT cuts have kept firms in the hardest hit sectors afloat.

We've provided the Scottish Government with more than £14.5 billion in additional funding, £1.5 billion has been invested in growth deals across Scotland and our new Levelling Up and Community Renewal Funds will benefit communities right across the UK.

In driving our economy into recovery, our Plan for Jobs will help more people get back into work and the success of the UK Government-funded vaccine programme is paving the way for us to build back better and stronger.

Background:

- The UK Government's furlough scheme has been extended until the end of September 2021, paying up to 80 percent of wages. The self-employed

support scheme has also been extended to the end of September 2021. The furlough scheme in Scotland supported cumulative more than 900,000 jobs alone.

- More than 100,000 businesses in Scotland have been supported from UK Government business loans worth £4 billion.
- The UK Government has provided billions in extra funding for the welfare system for those unable to access other forms of support.
- This direct support is on top of the additional £14.5 billion provided to the Government since the start of the pandemic.
- The UK Government is investing billions to help people of all ages back into work, including our £2 billion Kickstart scheme for young people, sector work programmes and recruitment of thousands of additional Work Coaches.
- The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of Covid testing in Scotland and has moved quickly to buy vaccines, securing more than 500 million doses from seven vaccine developers for distribution across all parts of the UK. The UK Government is providing all covid testing in Scotland outside of the NHS.

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[Short university courses to provide flexible training](#)

People looking to study or train throughout their lives will have access to short university or college courses, in a major shake-up of traditional higher education.

Universities and further education colleges have been [invited to bid](#) for a share of £2million to create new 'short courses' across five important subject areas; STEM, healthcare, digital innovation, education, and supporting Net Zero. Providers will be tasked with developing courses under these topics which could be as short as six weeks – or as long as a year if studied part-time – and which will deliver learners with a certificate they can use to build towards future training and employment.

The plans aim to put an end to the perception that traditional three- and four-year degree courses are the only route for those who want to pursue further education or training. Students will be able to space out their studies and learn at a pace that is right for them, including opting to build up their qualifications over time, within both colleges and universities. The first short courses will be available from September 2022.

Delivered by the Office for Students, the Higher Education Short Course Challenge Competition will fund up to 20 successful bids from HE providers to trial short courses aimed at boosting skills and getting more people into work.

The trial is the next major step in the Government's Lifelong Learning Entitlement which will allow adult learners to study more flexibly through short courses, allowing them to upskill, retrain, and work towards a full qualification as both their circumstances and the economy change .

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

Ensuring everyone is given the opportunity to reach their full potential, no matter their age or life stage, is a vital part of our mission to level up this country.

By trialling university short courses – backed up by new, flexible student loans – we are giving people the chance to learn at a pace that is right for them.

Learning is a lifelong journey, and this competition is a critical step in creating courses which meet the needs of learners, employers and our wider economy.

The Lifelong Learning Entitlement is a key part of the Prime Minister's Lifetime Skills Guarantee, which will offer tens of thousands of adults the chance to retrain in later life, gain in-demand skills and open further job opportunities.

Through this trial, government will work with universities and colleges to pilot a range of high-quality courses which support sectors vital to our economy, such as healthcare, education and STEM.

The trial will also see the first ever 'flexible' student loan arrangements – in which students will have access to a bespoke loan to support them for the duration of their short course. More flexible student finance is at the heart of the Government's plan for lifelong learning, which will see a 'Lifelong Loan Entitlement' giving learners access to financial support for different courses throughout their lifetime.

Chair of the Office for Students, Lord Wharton said:

Higher education plays a vital role in our country's economic and

social prosperity. These new short courses will enable students to study in a way which works for them, rather than committing to a three or four year degree which isn't for everyone.

It is important to break down existing barriers around access to higher education, and these courses help to further add to the diversity of England's well regarded higher education system. I encourage all universities and colleges to consider applying for this important funding which will help ensure the doors of our universities are open to anyone with the ability to succeed.

David Wallace, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Customer Officer for the Student Loans Company said:

SLC exists to enable people to invest in their futures through further and higher education, as such we're delighted to be supporting the Department for Education and the Office for Students in the delivery of this trial.

[National Highways wants your views on future road investment](#)

Press release

National Highways has launched an online feedback tool for road users and those who live near to England's motorways and major A roads to give their views on where investment is needed the most.



M6 National Parks Corridor

The strategic road network managed by National Highways (formerly Highways

England) stretches over 4,300 miles and connects the UK's major towns and cities and represents the core of our national transport system.

Our roads are vital in enabling businesses to transport products and services, providing access to jobs and suppliers, and facilitating trade and investment across the country as well as providing essential links for leisure and connecting people and places.

The [online tool](#) has been developed as part of our engagement process for Route Strategies which is one activity used to inform the government's decisions on future road investment. As well as capturing public feedback the database will be used to record engagement with local government and transport authorities, as well as other interested parties.

Elliot Shaw, Executive Director, Strategy and Planning, said:

At National Highways we are constantly challenging ourselves to seek out ways to improve the experience of those who use our roads and the communities who live nearby.

The new easy-to-use online tool provides everyone from commuters, professional road users, nearby residents and community groups to comment.

I urge you to provide feedback on what is important to you – a specific location on England's motorways or major A roads, a longer route or general feedback about our road network. This is your opportunity to help inform the long-term vision for the future of our roads.

Together with input from a wide range of other stakeholders feedback will be used to inform recommendations and investment plans going forward for the Department for Transport's next Road Investment Strategies (RIS3 2025 – 2030).

The online tool is open for feedback until 30 November 2021.

See [Route Strategies – Planning for the future of our roads](#) for further information

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.

[UK reaffirms security commitment to Ukraine](#)

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin spoke at the International Crimea Platform (ICP) in Kyiv and attended celebrations to mark the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence to reaffirm the UK's commitment to Ukraine's security and territorial integrity.

The UK continues to work with NATO allies and partners to support Ukraine in reducing threats to the region and improving stability and prosperity in support of the rules based international system.

Minister Quin also represented the UK at the independence celebrations and military parade in Independence Square in Kyiv. This included a marching contingent from the Royal Lancers, and Colchester Band, and a flypast of RAF Typhoon fighter jets.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

It is an honour to represent the UK at such illustrious events to restate our support for Ukraine and celebrate 30 years of the country's independence.

I was proud to watch the Royal Lancers, Colchester Band and RAF Typhoons supporting the military parade to mark this historic occasion.

The launch of the International Crimea Platform signifies the global community's recognition of the hugely important need to keep pressing for

the reintegration of Crimea as part of Ukraine which the UK fully supports.

The aim of the ICP is to integrate Crimea back into Ukraine. Heads of State from Poland and the Baltic countries, and Foreign Ministers from countries, including France, Germany, Spain, Italy and the UK attended. The ICP helped the global community coordinate on Crimea, increase the effectiveness of the international response, enhance pressure on Russia and step up efforts on ending the illegal annexation.

The UK and NATO are committed to Black Sea regional security, stability and prosperity alongside Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We have demonstrated that ambition with action, conducting joint maritime and land exercises, such as SEA BREEZE and COSSACK MACE with Ukraine, allies and partners this summer.

The UK enjoys a strong bilateral relationship with Ukraine and is committed to securing its security. Since 2015, the UK has trained over 21,000 Ukrainian military personnel in medical skills, logistics, counter improvised explosive devices, leadership, planning and infantry tactics as part of Operation ORBITAL and the UK-led Maritime Training Initiative.

[Charity Commission statement on Dot Com Children's Foundation](#)

Government response

The charity regulator has opened a regulatory compliance case into the charity



The Charity Commission has recently been alerted to potential concerns about the governance of the [Dot Com Children's Foundation](#). It has opened a

regulatory compliance case to assess the information provided. It cannot comment further at this time.

Important background information

- This is not a statutory inquiry.
- We have made no finding of wrongdoing at this time.
- The Commission does not investigate allegations of criminality (e.g. fraud), that is for law enforcement agencies.
- In line with our usual processes, the potential concerns are currently being assessed by our compliance team as part of a regulatory compliance case.
- We assess all concerns in line with our [risk and regulatory framework](#).

Ends

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