

# Prime Minister hails levelling up in action as government unveils raft of new policies

Press release

Plans for better high streets, stronger schools and more jobs outside of London will be unveiled by the government.



- Government sets out new initiatives to level up the country backed by up to £860 million
- Better high streets, stronger schools and more public sector jobs to move outside of London
- PM hails 'levelling up in action' and vows to drive forward his agenda to transform lives and livelihoods by spreading opportunity equally across the UK

Plans for better high streets, stronger schools and more jobs outside of London will be unveiled by the government today as part of its plan to level up opportunities for people and communities across the UK.

As we recover from the pandemic, the Prime Minister has committed to delivering an ambitious set of policies that will reduce long-standing inequalities, which have been further exacerbated by Covid-19.

His levelling up agenda will focus on improving living standards, investing in our essential public services and increasing access to opportunities so people can thrive no matter where they live.

Government departments will today set out a range of new policies which focus on better access to high-quality education, improved infrastructure in our town centres, and more public sector jobs outside of London – all of which are at the heart of levelling up.

They include:

- 57 local areas have been confirmed as recipients of our £830 million investment to transform high streets across the country into vibrant places to live, work and shop. As a result of the funding, Grimsby will create a new cinema and market food hall to boost visitor numbers, Taunton will build a new outdoor performance venue and Sutton-in-Ashfield will repurpose vacant retail space into offices and hospitality venues.
- More support for four local authorities – Plymouth, Ashfield & Mansfield, South Sefton & North Liverpool, and North Durham & City – to improve the quality of their teaching, backed by £10 million. These areas have lower than average numbers of pupils in good or outstanding schools. They will also be encouraged to join multi-academy trusts so pupils can benefit from being part of a strong group of schools that provide the best possible education.
- An £18 million expansion of the Opportunity Areas programme for the fifth year running, which helps vulnerable young people from the most disadvantaged areas in the country. Funding will go to areas including Blackpool, Derby, Oldham and West Somerset and could be used to help children improve in key subjects such as maths and English, support pupils who are at risk of falling out of education or give older students the confidence and skills to make the leap from school into work.
- More than 3,000 civil service jobs across the Home Office and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will be relocated to hubs in Stoke-on-Trent, Edinburgh and Belfast by 2025, creating more opportunities to work in the public sector outside of London. This is part of the government's commitment to move 22,000 civil service roles outside of London and the South East by 2030, ensuring more policy makers reflect the communities they serve.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

As the country gets back on its feet, the government has renewed its commitment to levelling up and tackling the issues that really matter to people.

Making sure our children get the best possible education, transforming our town centres and correcting the regional imbalance of public sector roles – this is levelling up in action.

Not only will we beat the pandemic and recover from its impact, I am determined to seize the opportunity it presents to create a fairer society, improve lives and build back better once and for all.

The new policies deliver directly on the government's commitment to transform lives and livelihoods and drive growth across the country by spreading opportunity equally, which is at the forefront of the Prime Minister's vision for the UK.

He has also committed to publishing a Levelling Up White Paper later this year, which will set out further policy interventions to improve lives as we recover from the pandemic.

A new No. 10/Cabinet Office Unit has recently been set up to drive forward work on the White Paper, with the Prime Minister appointing Neil O'Brien as his Levelling Up Adviser.

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## Accelerating Cities' Net Zero Action

In partnership with Boston University Institute of Sustainable Energy, the British Embassy Washington and its US network released the Accelerating Cities' Net Zero Action report, highlighting key takeaways from partnership and innovative financing visioning labs.

The goal of the report is to increase the ambition of cities in the UK and the U.S. to set and achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions targets, to encourage more cities to commit to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) "Race to Zero" in advance of COP26 in Glasgow November 2021, and to promote cross learning and collaboration between U.S. and UK cities. The visioning labs convened a total of 51 stakeholders including representatives of 28 cities.

To support this, the Boston University Institute for Sustainable Energy (BU ISE) worked with the FCD0 to deliver two virtual roundtables, branded as visioning labs to emphasize the interactivity, which convened stakeholders from city government, academia, and net zero experts from North America and the UK.

The participants included representatives of cities who have already set a net zero target as well as representatives of cities who are considering a net zero target. The participation of academics and net zero experts from nonprofit groups – C40, PCAN, UK100, Climate and Urban Systems Partnerships (CUSP), Climate Mayors, and MetroLab Networks – served to illuminate for cities that networks can support them and provide additional capacity to develop net zero roadmaps.

"Getting towards the green economy of the future will not be a drag on our overall economic development," said Peter Abbott OBE, British Consul General

to New England. “Studies suggest that for every dollar spent on climate action \$3-\$8 are returned to the economy. This Net Zero Action Report is a road map for our regional partners to help take their first steps towards making that green economy future a reality.”

“City-university partnerships can be a powerful accelerant to our decarbonization transition, supporting the crucial effort to achieve dramatic emissions mitigation in the coming decade to maintain a sustainable future,” Dr. Jacquie Ashmore, Executive Director, Boston University Institute for Sustainable Energy.

For more information on the UNFCCC “Race to Zero” visit:  
<https://unfccc.int/climate-action/race-to-zero-campaign>.

For more information on COP26 visit: [ukcop26.org/](https://ukcop26.org/).

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## **Panama Call for Bids 2021-22**

The British Embassy in Panama is now accepting applications from not-for-profit, civil society and multilateral organisations for project proposals that directly support the following thematic areas:

1. Open societies (democracy, human rights, media freedom)
2. COVID-19, vaccines, recovery and health security
3. Climate and Biodiversity

## **Background**

The International Programme (IP) of the United Kingdom was launched in 2015 as a responsive and agile fund to support Strategic Objectives of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The IP facilitates adaptive, short-term projects that respond to specific policy outcomes, influence policies and create networks that open opportunities for further engagement and diplomacy.

We are particularly interested in short-term interventions in the following specific areas:

### **1. Open societies (democracy, human rights, media freedom):**

- Open Data/Access to information – including but not limited to

digitalisation of government services and information

- Improving the quality of and access to government/national statistics/information
- Supporting human rights
- Supporting LGBT+ rights in Panama
- Supporting Media Freedom
- Supporting indigenous rights and inclusion in policymaking
- Supporting Gender Equality in Panama

## **2. COVID-19, vaccines, recovery and health security:**

- Supporting inclusive, green and sustainable economic recovery and growth after the impacts of the pandemic
- Supporting data-driven initiatives to tackle Covid-19

## **3. Climate and Biodiversity:**

- Tackling biodiversity loss/deforestation, with a particular interest on tackling this issue in the indigenous regions
- Policy support in solid waste management and recycling
- Capacity building and preparation ahead of COP26, including in climate negotiations and implementation of NDCs

## **Exceptions**

To ensure the best value of investment during these challenging times, we are unable to support proposals that involve:

- Procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), oxygen-related equipment (e.g. ventilators and respirators), diagnostic tests/materials and COVID-19-related medicines
- Purchase or maintenance of any IT and other equipment
- Direct cash transfers to vulnerable individuals or families

# Funding Terms

Proposals must be submitted in United States Dollars (USD) currency.

Full project spent must be completed by early to mid December 2021.  
Applications that exceed this funding period will not be accepted.

## Project Budget

From \$10,000 to \$30,000 USD

## Official Development Assistance (ODA):

All expenditures must qualify as ODA eligible. ODA is a term created by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This term serves as a measurement of international aid. ODA projects have, as a primary objective, the promotion of economic development and welfare.

## Important Milestones:

Date	Activity
May 27, 2021 (9:00 AM Panama Time)	Outreach session
June 6, 2021 (11:59 PM Panama Time)	Call for Bids closes
June 21-25, 2021	Confirmation to participants
July, 2021	Projects initiate
October 31, 2021	Projects must reach a minimum 85% spend Projects must reach 100% spend, activities must have been completed and Project Completion Report (PCR) submitted
December 15, 2021	

# Application Process

Please ensure that project proposals are designed and submitted in accordance with the following guidelines. Proposals that do not meet the guidance will be rejected.

## Assessment criteria:

- strict alignment with aforementioned priority areas
- evidence of urgent or priority need
- activities are value for money (VfM) and cost-efficient
- clear, tangible, and achievable deliverables within the funding period

- clear monitoring and evaluation procedures included
- good risk & stakeholder management
- project feasibility, including capacity of implementing organisation and ability to deliver under current circumstances
- sustainability – project benefits continue after the funding ends
- the organisation's safeguarding policies ensure gender equality and protection of beneficiaries (i.e. against harassment and discrimination of women and children)
- administration costs for delivering the project do not exceed 10% of the total project budget

### **Submission:**

To submit a proposal, please e-mail the following Project Proposal Form and Activity Based Budget to [Panama.Prospérité@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Panama.Prospérité@fcdo.gov.uk), with the subject line "Organisation name – Project Title" and include a point of contact in the body of the email. All documents must be submitted in English. Ensure the submitted documents have the organisation name at the beginning of the file name. Example: OrganisationName\_PPF\_ProjectName; OrganisationName\_ABB\_ProjectName. Projects names on files must be up to five words.

[Project Proposal Form up to £10k](#) (MS Word Document, 78.1KB)

[Project Proposal Form above £10k](#) (MS Word Document, 85.4KB)

[Activity Based Budget Template](#) (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 27.2KB)

### **What to expect after?**

The Embassy will hold an outreach session via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 27 May 2021 at 9:00 AM (Panama Time) to provide information about the bidding process and funding objectives. To access the session, click [here](#).

Both successful and rejected bids will receive notice in due course. Selected proposals will go through a Due Diligence Assessment (DDA). The Embassy will save the right to decide whether it should maintain or reject a proposal depending on DDA outcomes. Implementing partners will be expected to sign a standard FCDO contract or grant agreement with the Embassy. The terms are non-negotiable. All implementers must also commit to a consistent financial management, regular monitoring and reporting back when requested; including discussing and updating any changes to the Activity Based Budget with the

assigned Projects Officer.

The Panama Prosperity mailbox will only receive proposal applications. Please direct any general inquiries to [Anibal.Castillo@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Anibal.Castillo@fcdo.gov.uk).

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## Ensuring sustainable solutions to address root causes of conflict in the Sahel region

Thank you, Mr President, and my thanks to all the briefers that we've heard from today. As ever, your insights give us a fuller picture of the challenges facing the Sahel region and your prognoses for the way forward are incredibly important to our thinking. I'm also very grateful, as ever, to Ambassador Abarry for the A3 statement and the insights there, too.

Mr President, as we've heard in the last six months and again here today, we have witnessed a growing number of attacks in Niger, creeping instability into southern Mali, and renewed attacks on villages in Burkina Faso. Civilians are being killed; they're being displaced; children are losing access to education as schools close; and again there is an increasing threat of famine across the region.

Mr President, we recognise the enormous efforts of the G5 states to address the challenges facing the region. And we welcome, in particular, their commitment through the Sahel Coalition Roadmap to refocus attention on governance, on development and the provision of basic services. This has to underpin the support for the military response to the instability in the Sahel.

And this is equally true in Chad, and in particular, with the establishment of the Transitional Military Council on the sad death of President Déby. And we urge this Transitional Council to deliver a peaceful, timely transition to civilian and constitutional rule, including through free and fair elections within an 18-month timeframe.

We also welcome the steps taken by the Joint Force to improve coordination with other forces on the ground and to build trust with local communities. The UK's troop deployment to MINUSMA is seeing first-hand the impact of effective civilian and military coordination, including dialogue with communities about their protection needs and their security concerns. And just this last week, we saw how that intelligence from communities can help drive activity on the ground to defeat armed groups.

Mr President, we do, however, remain concerned about continued allegations of human rights violations, and we welcome the swift action, as set out by USG



Lacroix, that the Force and the Nigerien and Chadian authorities have taken immediately following recent allegations in Niger. We think this sends an important message about accountability. And we're also encouraged by the role played by OHCHR in supporting this work. But there is more to do, as Mr Lacroix says. The human rights situation continues to deteriorate and incidents involving security forces persist. So we urge the Joint Force and relevant national authorities to really follow through on their commitments to ensure those responsible for human rights violations are held to account. And I also just want to echo here the point made by Ambassador Byrne Nason just now about senior women in leadership roles and the military and the police and the huge positive impact this could have in this respect.

Mr President, in concluding, I want to return to our main point. The G5 Sahel Joint Force is obviously a key part of the solution to peace and stability in the region. However, it is only one part of the solution. As the Sahel Coalition Roadmap makes clear, security interventions need to be part of a concerted political effort to address the root causes of conflict. G5 governments, with support from the international community, need to address governance and sustainable development needs, if military action is to have a lasting effect.

Thank you, Mr President.

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## **38th Universal Periodic Review of human rights: UK closing statement**

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique peer review mechanism of the Human Rights Council aimed at sharing best practice. As a strong supporter of the UPR process, we have participated and raised priority human rights concerns in all reviews since the process began in 2006. This session reviewed 14 States: Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Palau, Paraguay, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands and Somalia.

### **Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking**

The UK Government continues to push for global cooperation and action in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking. 2021 marks the tenth anniversary of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which the UK strongly supports. Internationally, the UK promotes implementation of the Guiding Principles through the drawing up of National Action Plans. We also encourage other governments to take practical action to protect human rights in the business sphere, and ensure access to justice and remedy for victims of rights abuses. The UK was the first state to produce a National Action Plan, which sets out our expectations of businesses to respect human

rights. We are backing these expectations with action. The UK has also committed to strengthening the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to tighten transparency requirements on large businesses, and extend those requirements to the public sector.

During the 38th UPR session, our recommendations ranged from calling for robust legislative developments and National Action Plans, to providing greater education to first responders and officials, and improved victim support. We also continued to recommend ratification of the 2014 ILO Forced Labour Protocol, which is an important instrument to tackle all forms of forced labour and provide protection to victims.

## **UN Treaty Bodies**

Since 2017, we have consistently made the recommendation to ‘adopt an open, merit-based selection process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections’ to most states. These expert bodies are a central part of the UN human rights system, charged with monitoring the implementation of human rights conventions in states which have signed up to them. The UK continues to advocate strengthening the quality, independence and diversity of Treaty Body membership.

## **Belgium**

The UK commends Belgium’s strong commitment to promoting and protecting human rights, this includes the positive steps taken by the Belgium Government to promote gender equality internationally and tackle racism through the introduction of a National Action Plan. We are also pleased by Belgium’s endorsement of the UK’s Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking to achieve SDG 8.7 and welcome the steps taken towards establishing a Federal Human Rights Institute. The UK calls on Belgium to make further progress to establish and operationalise a Federal Human Rights Institute that is fully compliant with the Paris Principles, provide further training to first responders to identify victims of trafficking and to provide necessary financial and human resources to first line actors, specialised shelters and the judiciary.

## **Mozambique**

The UK welcomes the government of Mozambique’s request for support to ensure their security forces are trained in International Humanitarian Law, and International Human Rights Law. The Mozambique government must ensure that all allegations of human rights violations and abuses are fully investigated, and perpetrators, both State and non-State actors, are held to account. We call on the government of Mozambique to criminalise all forms of modern slavery, including child prostitution, and amend the Law on Preventing and Combatting the Trafficking in People 2008 to bring the legal definition of ‘trafficking’ in line with international standards. The UK further urge Mozambique to provide its National Human Rights Commission with sufficient financial and human resources to enable effective implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the human rights framework.

## **Singapore**

The UK is pleased that the Government of Singapore has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and has made efforts to improve women's rights. As we do with all countries, we continue to urge the government of Singapore to impose a moratorium on executions as the first step towards abolition, end judicial corporal punishment, and end detention without trial. The UK calls on Singapore to implement comprehensive legislation to protect people from discrimination on the basis of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief and to adopt legislation against Modern Slavery, including reporting provisions for corporations, ensuring recruitment fee caps are enforced, greater flexibility to move between employers and statutory hours of rest and leave for foreign domestic workers.

## **Somalia**

The UK is concerned by the absence of significant progress made by the Government of Somalia to address its human rights challenges. We note the steps taken by Somali leaders to prepare for a return to talks on the electoral process and urge them to come to agreement and hold elections as soon as possible to protect the rights of the Somali people. We commend Somalia for establishing a legal framework to protect journalists, but remain concerned at continued high levels of harassment and arbitrary detention. Forced marriages and female genital mutilation remain pervasive, and the UK calls on Somalia to adopt the 2018 Sexual Offences Bill urgently. To ensure those most in need are able to receive humanitarian assistance, the UK urges Somalia to pass legislation allowing humanitarian organisations to operate within a clear framework and enable the Federal Government of Somalia to work towards the removal of illegal checkpoints and multiple demands of taxation.

The UK urges all countries under review during this session to give full and serious consideration to the UK recommendations. We encourage them not only to accept them, but also to implement all the recommendations in a timely and comprehensive manner. We look forward to the formal UPR adoption at the UN Human Rights Council in September 2021.