

# £70 million Argyll & Bute Rural Growth Deal agreed

A landmark investment deal to boost economic growth across Argyll and Bute was agreed at a virtual signing event today (11 Feb 2021).

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart, joined Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Michael Matheson, and Argyll and Bute Council Leader, Councillor Robin Currie, to sign the [Heads of Terms](#) for the £70 million Rural Growth Deal.

The deal comprises £25 million each from the Scottish and UK governments, and at least £20 million from Argyll and Bute Council and partners. This will be used to create opportunities for people living in the region and attract further investment.

The [Heads of Terms document](#) sets out the themes for the 10 – 15 year programme of investment. Aquaculture, tourism, housing, digital connectivity and skills for a rural economy are among the sectors set for development.

UK Government Minister Iain Stewart said:

This is an important milestone for the Argyll and Bute Rural Growth Deal which will play a vital role in building back better from COVID-19.

These innovative and ambitious plans will unlock jobs, opportunities and sustainable growth for communities throughout the region.

The UK Government has committed more than £1.5 billion to growth deals across Scotland to secure our future prosperity.

The proposals, all of which are subject to approval of full business cases, will take advantage of existing regional strengths in tourism, food and farming, distilling and defence, and invest up £70 million in:

- Aquaculture: to develop the area as an international centre for excellence and create a marine industry training centre to support the growth of marine sectors
- Tourism: to develop the area as a West of Scotland “must visit” location for the maritime leisure market
- Low carbon economy: to deliver more sustainable local energy systems on Islay
- Skills: to support growth and work opportunities for rural communities
- Housing: to attract economic growth and provide affordable housing
- Clyde engineering and innovation cluster: to address the lack of commercial accommodation for supply services to Ministry of Defence

facilities

- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles hub at Oban Airport: to deliver the UK's first dedicated drone training centre with indoor facilities
- Digital connectivity

These will also build on the opportunities represented by other UK Government investments in the region, including:

- The consolidation of the submarine fleet at HMNB Clyde by spreading the economic benefits across the region
- The UK Government's Green Distilling Fund by supporting green energy solutions for Islay
- The UK Government's existing City Region Deal investment at the National Aquaculture Centre at Stirling University by supporting further facilities at Machrihanish

The next stage is for the council and its partners to develop outline business cases that will set out the details of the projects for delivery.

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## [Presentation by the UK Chairperson of the OSCE Security Committee, Ambassador Neil Bush](#)

Thank you Chair.

I am grateful for the opportunity to return to brief the Permanent Council for a second year as Chair of the Security Committee.

Thank you to the Swedish Chairpersonship for putting its faith in me to continue in this role and to implement your priorities in the field of transnational threats.

I am especially eager to be working again with all participating States to advance our work in this area. Indeed, I am already grateful for the dedicated and active participation of your experts in the informal meeting of the Security Committee on 25 January – including the colleagues who so expertly facilitated discussion in the virtual breakout rooms. This greatly helped in the planning of our work.

I am pleased to start the year by building on the success at the Tirana Ministerial Council with the agreed Declaration on Strengthening Co-operation in Countering Transnational Organized Crime.

According to the World Bank, the value of transnational criminal networks engaged in various manifestations of organised crime is growing and exceeded

\$US 1.3 trillion by 2018—equivalent to around 1.5 percent of global GDP.

It is particularly important to break the cycle of recruitment and ensure that institutions to fight transnational organised crime continue to be fit for purpose.

The COVID-19 pandemic of course affects this threat. After some initial disruption to their operations, transnational organised crime groups are benefitting from the ongoing crisis by exploiting or exacerbating long-term or structural vulnerabilities. This makes preventing the scourge even more important.

Malicious cyber activity causes economic loss and individual suffering and poses a national security threat to our countries. The last year has forced all of us to rely even more heavily on digital technologies for nearly all aspects of our lives – this has brought the cyber skills gap and cyber security itself into much sharper focus.

The threat from terrorism and violent extremism has also sadly not diminished. Last year saw appalling terrorist attacks and loss of life in the OSCE area, including here in Vienna. The pandemic has provided another febrile atmosphere for terrorists and violent extremists to thrive, including those on the far right.

So the Security Committee work programme seeks to focus on these core areas. Transnational organised crime is a priority of the Swedish Chairpersonship-in-Office (CiO). Our meetings on this topic seek to operationalise the Tirana declaration in key strategic areas. Across all transnational threats, there is also a priority to implement existing commitments.

Our programme recognises the importance of cyber security. It also recognises your feedback that counter terrorism and violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism (VERLT) continue to be priority themes for many participating States and we've selected a framework of themes in this area to explore.

Through the timings of the meetings, I aim to maximise links and synergies with Chairperson and OSCE conferences: the OSCE wide counter-terrorism conference in April, the CiO cyber conference in May and the drugs conference in June.

Importantly, there is also a link, either directly or through the wider issues raised, between the programme and the overarching horizontal Chairperson themes for each month. And I aim to add value in the context of the work of the Committee to these monthly themes.

In the delivery of our programme, I aim for an inclusive, dynamic and de-politicised debate with more discussion and interaction with and between experts to explore the technical issues in detail.

While, like all of you, I hope for a safe return to in-person meetings soon, while the virtual format remains I aim to maximise the opportunities it offers to facilitate diverse expert participation, including in capitals.

I will seek ways through the structure of our meetings to help maximise debate and interaction, and to be as creative as possible. But, as ever, I rely on your help too to make their delivery a success.

I will continue an approach of meaningful gender mainstreaming, as well as the mainstreaming of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Gender dynamics are part the transnational threat ecosystem we face so must therefore be part of our discussions in preventing and combatting it.

And we can only effectively do that in full compliance with our human rights commitments. The voices and experience of civil society are a way to help guide us in this and I will ensure robust civil society representation in our meetings.

I will also continue to fully involve the OSCE field missions in our meetings to help bridge the gap between the work in Vienna and activity on the ground. I am hopeful we will this year meet the ambition for the Committee to visit an OSCE field mission.

I set out at the Permanent Council around this time last year my belief in the potential of the Security Committee. A year on, I have seen how this potential can be realised through our collective hard work and political will. I am excited to continue this journey and my team and I seek to be open, transparent and responsive to your feedback on how we're doing.

Thank you.

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## **Blueprint launched for NHS and social care reform following pandemic**

- Action will support recovery by stripping away unnecessary legislative bureaucracy, empowering local leaders and services and tackling health inequalities
- The reforms build on the [NHS's Long Term Plan](#) proposals and a bill will be laid in Parliament when parliamentary time allows to carry the proposals into law

The Health and Social Care Secretary, with the support of NHS England and health and care system leaders, will today set out new proposals to build on the successful NHS response to the pandemic. The proposals will bring health and care services closer together to build back better by improving care and tackling health inequalities through measures to address obesity, oral health and patient choice.

The measures set out today, in a government white paper to be published on GOV.UK, will modernise the legal framework to make the health and care system

fit for the future and put in place targeted improvements for the delivery of public health and social care. It will support local health and care systems to deliver higher-quality care to their communities, in a way that is less legally bureaucratic, more accountable and more joined up, by bringing together the NHS, local government and partners together to tackle the needs of their communities as a whole.

The proposals build on the NHS' recommendations for legislative change in the [Long Term Plan](#) and come a decade on from the last major piece of health and care legislation. While the NHS has made practical adaptations within the current legal framework, this can be unnecessarily time consuming and changes are now necessary as part of the future recovery process from the pandemic.

The measures include proposals to make integrated care the default, reduce legal bureaucracy, and better support social care, public health and the NHS. The reforms will enable the health and care sector to use technology in a modern way, establishing it as a better platform to support staff and patient care, for example by improving the quality and availability of data across the health and care sector to enable systems to plan for the future care of their communities.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The NHS and local government have long been calling for better integration and less burdensome bureaucracy, and this virus has made clear the time for change is now.

These changes will allow us to build back better and bottle the innovation and ingenuity of our brilliant staff during the pandemic, where progress was made despite the legal framework, rather than because of it.

The proposals build on what the NHS has called for and will become the foundations for a health and care system which is more integrated, more innovative and responsive, and more ready to respond to the challenges of tomorrow, from health inequalities to our ageing population.

By acting now, the government can make permanent some of the beneficial changes where COVID-19 has catalysed new and better ways of working and clear the path for improvements into the next decade such as delivering on manifesto commitments including 50,000 more nurses and 40 new hospitals.

Sir Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of the NHS, said:

Our legislative proposals go with the grain of what patients and staff across the health service all want to see – more joined-up care, less legal bureaucracy and a sharper focus on prevention, inequality and social care.

This legislation builds on the past seven years of practical experience and experimentation across the health service and the flexible 'can-do' spirit NHS staff have shown in spades throughout the pandemic.

The proposals are designed to be flexible, allowing the health and care system to continue to evolve, and are designed to better equip the NHS and local health services to meet the longer-term health and societal challenges over the coming decades.

Key measures included in the 'Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all' white paper include:

- The NHS and local government to come together legally as part of integrated care systems to plan health and care services around their patients' needs, and quickly implement innovative solutions to problems which would normally take years to fix, including moving services out of hospitals and into the community, focusing on preventative healthcare
- Hardworking NHS staff currently waste a significant amount of time on unnecessary tendering processes for healthcare services. Under today's proposals, the NHS will only need to tender services when it has the potential to lead to better outcomes for patients. This will mean staff can spend more time on patients and providing care, and local NHS services will have more power to act in the best interests of their communities
- The safety of patients is at the heart of NHS services. The upcoming bill will put the Healthcare Safety Investigations Branch permanently into law as a statutory body so it can continue to reduce risk and improve safety. The Healthcare Safety Investigations Branch already investigates when things go wrong without blaming people, so that mistakes can be learned from, and this strengthens its legal footing
- A package of measures to deliver on specific needs in the social care sector. This will improve oversight and accountability in the delivery of services through new assurance and data sharing measures in social care, update the legal framework to enable person-centred models of hospital discharge, and introduce improved powers for the Secretary of State to directly make payments to adult social care providers where required
- The pandemic has shown the impact of inequalities on public health outcomes and the need for government to act to help level up health across the country. Legislation will help to support the introduction of new requirements about calorie labelling on food and drink packaging and the advertising of junk food before the 9pm watershed

Prof Helen Stokes-Lampard, Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, said:

We welcome the central proposals to drive integration and support greater collaboration through integrated care systems (ICS), that go beyond the traditional NHS boundaries. This is absolutely the

right direction of travel for health and care more widely.

Legislation won't make collaboration happen, but it can remove barriers and facilitate the changes that the NHS really needs as we move into the post-pandemic recovery stage.

It is vital that we see genuine clinical engagement at every level of the operation of the ICS to drive collaboration.

We will look forward to reviewing the full range of proposals and engaging in the development of the legislation.

The legislation will fold Monitor and the NHS Trust Development Authority into NHS England, while maintaining the clinical and day to day operational independence of the NHS. Corresponding reforms will ensure the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has the right levers to ensure accountability back to Parliament and taxpayers.

The white paper sets out the government's proposals for legislation, building on the extensive consultation that has already been undertaken by NHS England. A bill will be laid before Parliament later in the year.

The government intends to bring forward separate proposals on social care reform later this year.

Ed Garratt, Executive Lead for the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care System, said:

I welcome the white paper, as the lead of an integrated care system, as it gives clearer accountability for the NHS and at a system level formalises shared governance across the NHS, local government and other partners. The proposals will support greater collective effort on improving outcomes for our population, which is the ultimate purpose of our work.

## **Case study on joined-up care**

Greater integration of services across the NHS, voluntary sector and local authority has enabled Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to provide more effective support to people experiencing a mental health crisis.

By establishing a community-based mental health crisis First Response Service (FRS), the county has been able to provide responsive support for anyone experiencing mental health crisis.

Before the service was launched, there was no capacity to see people in need of mental health care out of hours, except via A&E. And there was no self-referral route, meaning many sought help direct from A&E.

Open 24/7, the FRS provides support for people of all ages across

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It welcomes self-referrals as well as urgent referrals from carers, GPs, ambulance crews, police and the emergency department. The result has been a 20% reduction in the use of the emergency department for mental healthcare and a 26% decrease in the number of people with mental health needs being admitted to acute hospitals from the emergency department.

It has also resulted in fewer ambulance call-outs, assessments and conveyances to the emergency department and reduced the need for out of hours GPs to see people in mental health crisis.

## **Case study on bureaucracy**

The Department of Health and Social Care's [consultation reviewed what bureaucracy looks like in the health and care system](#). It found that NHS staff felt that unnecessary bureaucracy is time-consuming, frustrating and stressful, largely because they felt it took them away from patient care.

In Manchester, following the 2012 reforms, re-tendering and re-procurement have become much more frequent to meet competition regulations, even when they are won repeatedly by the same organisation. In order to overcome this hurdle, the Local Government Association shifted the procurement window of a project on homelessness in Manchester from 3 to 7 years. The new re-procurement period allowed the organisation to retain staff, think longer term about the project and to consider innovative solutions that had been impossible before because of time constraints.

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## **Safer, greener travel: government investment in transport tech to accelerate the road to a green recovery**

- talented transport tech start-ups given government funding to support COVID-19 recovery and decarbonisation as we build back better from the pandemic
- projects could improve ventilation systems on trains, create safer environments for the visually impaired and lead to greener deliveries on our roads
- fund has supported nearly 200 innovative ideas, with investment totalling £6 million in 7 years

Pioneering technology and projects that prioritise safer, greener travel are among the winners of government funding announced today (11 February 2021).



Now in its seventh year, the [transport-technology research and innovation grant \(T-TRIG\) programme](#), in partnership with [Connected Places Catapult](#), enables the country's brightest entrepreneurs and researchers to develop cutting-edge tech to make UK transport systems safer, more sustainable and accessible.

A number of this year's winners focus on ways that we can respond to and recover from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, including a project that looks at how a purifying system can remove airborne COVID-19 particles from trains, creating safer and cleaner carriages.

Another involves the development of a bracelet that allows people with visual impairments to be alerted when they are not social distancing, allowing them to travel with more confidence as we emerge from the pandemic.

Another winner will use the weight data of passengers to supply real-time carriage information on how busy a train is, allowing passengers to choose whether to travel and where to board.

Transport Minister Rachel Maclean said:

I'm delighted to see government investment bringing together talented start-ups and policy-makers at the earliest stages of innovation, and giving a boost to the technology, which could make travelling safer on our road to a green transport recovery.

This funding will make the UK one of the most attractive places for SMEs and university thinkers to do what they do best, as we look to build back better, while also solving the complex challenge of decarbonising transport.

Among the green tech ideas is a project that would see local communities signing up to an app where those making deliveries would upload their journey plans for the day. This would then be matched to local people who are expecting deliveries, helping reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on our roads by cutting lengthy detours.

This year, T-TRIG is investing £30,000 in each of the 23 successful projects focused on COVID-19 recovery and decarbonisation to help budding innovators and academics propel their ideas to market more quickly.

To date, 199 innovation projects have received a share of £6 million in funding – more than 60% of these grants have been awarded to small businesses, with 30% going to universities.

Connected Places Catapult's CEO Nicola Yates OBE said:

We are immensely proud of what Connected Places Catapult and the Department for Transport (DfT) have achieved together through the T-TRIG scheme. Transport innovation is a critical tool for creating

and driving the transport systems of the future, and the core of that is the talented SMEs and researchers that make up the UK's transport innovation community.

We look forward to continuing work with DfT and the UK's brilliant SME community in making sure that the best of British innovation successfully makes it to the market, both here and abroad.

Support from this fund has often been a precursor to funding from private investors. Since the scheme began, successful T-TRIG projects have secured more than £25 million in additional investment, largely from the private sector.

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## **Funding boost provides councils with certainty to plan for year ahead with £51 billion funding package**

- Local Government Secretary confirms £51.3 billion package for councils
- £2.3 billion increase in core spending, includes access to extra £1 billion for social care
- An estimated £3 billion additional support for councils to deal with COVID-19 pressures

Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick has confirmed today (10 February 2021) that councils across England will have access to £51.3 billion next year.

This represents a £2.3 billion increase on this year – including access to an extra £1 billion for social care to help support vulnerable adults and children.

This funding package gives councils the resources they need to continue to deliver services and support their communities during the pandemic while protecting council taxpayers from excessive increases.

It will also enable councils to play a crucial role in our nation's recovery in helping schools and local businesses to reopen safely and support the most vulnerable.

Final allocations for the £670 million fund to enable councils to continue reducing council tax bills for those least able to pay, have also been confirmed today, helping households impacted financially by the pandemic. This is over and above the usual council tax support available for councils each year.

In addition, Mr Jenrick has extended the scheme that compensates councils for income lost during the pandemic from services including car parks, leisure facilities and museums, until June 2021.

This follows £1.55 billion of unringfenced funding which was announced in November to help councils continue to support their communities during the pandemic.

This means a further £3 billion of additional support for councils to deal with the pandemic in 2021-22 has been confirmed, taking the total overall amount of pandemic support to over £11 billion.

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Councils have played a key role during the pandemic by delivering vital services and supporting the most vulnerable backed with over £8 billion of emergency support from government to date.

Today I am pleased to confirm a £51 billion funding package for next year that increases funding for social care and other vital services by £2.3 billion. We are also giving councils an additional £3 billion boost to the level of COVID support available.

This is a fair and generous settlement that gives councils the resources they need to continue to deliver important services and support their communities while protecting council tax payers from excessive increases.

In addition to the funding confirmed for councils, we have announced the following:

### **Rewards for welcoming new homes**

The government has confirmed allocations for English local authorities totalling £622 million to continue the New Homes Bonus scheme in 2021-22; rewarding councils for the number of additional new homes built in their area, incentivising housing growth and creating homes for their residents.

We have also published a [consultation alongside the Local Government Finance Settlement on reforming the scheme from 2022-23](#), to ensure it is focussed where homes are needed most.

### **Giving residents a voice on council tax rises**

Residents will have the power to veto excessive council tax rises, with a

referendum being required if councils propose raising the tax by 2% or more, with extra flexibility for some authority types. Before setting rates, councils should take into account the financial circumstances of their residents.

Councils with responsibility for adult social care will be able to set a further 3% increase, ring-fenced exclusively for adult social care. Anything above this level will need to be voted on by local people. This strikes the right balance between addressing pressure on services and giving residents the final say on excessive increases.

In order to enable councils to continue supporting those least able to pay their council tax, including households financially hard-hit by the pandemic, there will be £670 million of new grant funding available outside of the core settlement for local council tax support.

### **Support for rural areas**

The government is committed to ensuring the unique needs of rural areas are met, and so will boost the Rural Services Delivery Grant by £4 million to £85 million next year, making it the highest rural grant paid to date.

In addition, we have also announced:

### **Additional support to help a small number of councils**

Today we are confirming details of additional support to a small number of councils who are unable to balance their budgets for 2020-21 or 2021-22. This support is being provided on an exceptional basis and the decision to grant these requests follows a robust and challenging process to confirm that councils have taken all reasonable steps to manage pressures locally.

These councils will now need to undertake an independent assurance review focused on the council's current financial position, sustainability and their ability to meet any of the identified budget gaps for 2021-22 without additional recourse to government.

### **Extension of the flexibility to use capital receipts to fund transformation projects**

We are also announcing a 3-year extension from 2022-23 onwards of the existing flexibility for councils to use capital receipts to fund transformation projects that produce long-term savings or reduce the costs of service delivery. We will provide further details on the extension in due course.

### **Confirmation of £160.6 million for the Former Independent Living Fund Recipient Grant**

This grant is paid to councils to ensure they can continue funding pre-existing Independent Living Fund arrangements, enabling those with disabilities to live within the community and not residential care.

## **£50,000 for the Isle of Wight**

This fund will be used to review the challenges face by the council, residents and businesses on the island who are separated from the mainland. This could include access to vital services, supplies and employment.

This relates to England only.

See full details of the [local government finance settlement](#).

On 25 November 2020, the government set out the outcome of the 2020 Spending Review, providing access to a rise in Core Spending Power from £49.0 billion to £51.3 billion in 2021-22, an increase of £2.3 billion or an estimated 4.6% cash-terms increase and a rise on real terms. This is alongside over £3 billion of additional COVID-19 support and an extra £254 million of funding to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

The additional £1 billion for social care comes from a £300 million social care grant and a 3% Adult Social Care council tax precept.