

UK in Australia launches 'High Commissioner for a day' competition

Winners from each location (Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Sydney) will gain insights into what it is like to lead a diplomatic mission. They will get the opportunity to work alongside heads of office to get a 'behind the scenes' view of diplomacy, politics, trade and cultural exchange.

British High Commissioner to Australia Vicki Treadell said:

I am continually struck by the passion and dedication of young people I meet in my role. I am keen to hear new ideas and different perspectives – it's energising! This competition offers young women a platform to outline what changes they would make to improve gender equality and the opportunity for us to learn from one another.

I would encourage all young women, including trans+, to enter the competition and start a conversation with my UK in Australia team.

To enter the competition applicants should submit a short video explaining how they would #ChooseToChallenge if they were High Commissioner for the day and what policies or initiatives they would recommend to make a difference. The competition is to mark International Women's Day 2021 and support this year's #ChooseToChallenge theme.

Applications are open to anyone who identifies as female, aged 16 to 22 and who is able to attend one of the UK missions (Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Sydney) on or around Monday 8 March 2021.

Applications are open until 23:59 AEDT Friday 19 February 2021. Videos should be uploaded to <https://vimeo.com/hc4aday>. Winners will be announced on Monday 1 March 2021.

See also the [full terms and conditions of the competition](#).

A panel from the UKinAustralia team will select two winners per location (Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Sydney) from all entries to the 'Be a British High Commissioner for a Day' competition. Winners will be announced on UKinAustralia social media channels.

This competition forms part of the UK Government's efforts to increase its engagement with future leaders and builds on the Young Leader's Network which The High Commissioner launched in November 2020.

Deputy Consul-General Melbourne, Catriona Boyd said:

This time last year, I was lucky enough to be listening to an excellent panel exploring the role of women in politics and business. A year on, something that sticks in my mind was a unanimous agreement that 'you can't be what you can't see'.

It wasn't until after a move to London in my early-20s that I discovered jobs like mine were available, and more importantly, accessible. If young people can only be what they can see, then it's also important that we help them know where to look.

That's why I'm excited to launch this competition and welcome a new generation of young women to the team for a day.

Further information

- British High Commissioner Vicki Treadell is the UK government's representative in Australia. She became British High Commissioner to Australia on 13 March 2019.
- Read more from Catriona Boyd about her experience as a young leader in the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office:
<https://blogs.fcdo.gov.uk/ukinaustralia/2021/02/02/high-commissioner-for-a-day-comp/>
- For more information on the Young Leaders Network contact: YoungLeaders.Australia@fcdo.gov.uk
- For media enquiries, contact hazel.gidley@fcdo.gov.uk; Emily.phillips@fco.gov.uk or call +61 406 746 806

First phase of school transformation launched

Tens of thousands of pupils are set to benefit from new, modern, energy efficient school buildings as 50 schools are confirmed for the first wave of the Prime Minister's ten-year rebuilding programme, to level up opportunities for all.

Transforming education for thousands of pupils, the first 50 projects announced today are supported by £1 billion in funding and mark the start of the School Rebuilding Programme, which is due to deliver 500 rebuilding projects over the next decade. The schools include primary, secondary and specials as well as a sixth form college in West Yorkshire, with more than 70 per cent of the schools in the North and Midlands. The initial rebuilds and refurbishments will create modern education environments, providing new facilities from classrooms and science labs, to sports halls and dining rooms. The schools will also be greener, helping meet the Government's net zero target.

Over 15,500 children will also benefit from 21 new free schools, the government has confirmed today, with ten opening in some of the most deprived areas. Three are in Opportunity Areas, where the Department works to remove barriers that could stop young people from achieving their potential.

More than £10 million will also be invested to support school sports and swimming facilities in England, and will be distributed through Sport England. This targeted investment to selected schools will build on existing funding to help schools open their facilities outside of school hours, and encourage pupils to be more physically active.

Today's announcement for a revamp of schools across the country comes as the department continues to plan to welcome students and teachers back to face to face education as soon as possible. Testing and strong safety measures will be in place as before, to make sure that schools remain as safe as possible despite the challenges brought by the new variant. This first phase of the school rebuilding programme, the commitment to 21 new free schools and extra support for physical activity, provides a boost for us all to build back better, concentrating on levelling up opportunities for all.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Today we are launching the first phase of our ambitious new schools programme, with 50 rebuilds and 21 new free schools.

The rebuilding projects are just the start of our major ten-year programme, transforming hundreds of schools and improving the education of tens of thousands of children. Alongside this, over 15,500 children will now benefit from 21 new free schools across the country as we look to build back better after the pandemic.

I am determined to get all children back into education as soon as possible, and will make sure we do not let the pandemic stand in the way of giving every young person the opportunity to succeed, progress and fulfil their potential.

Unity Howard Director of New Schools Network said:

This is fantastic news for communities across the country. Free schools have an incredible track record of driving up standards, and we have seen over the past decade just how popular free schools are with parents.

The groups planning these new free schools should be proud today; the free school application process is demanding, and this year they have dealt with additional uncertainties owing to the pandemic. I wish them the very best of luck as they begin working towards welcoming children through the doors of their new schools

in the years to come.

The 21 new free schools announced today reflects the Government's continued commitment to the free school programme. 558 free schools have already opened across the country to date.

Project planning for the 50 rebuilds is already advanced on a number of schools following site visits last year, so construction can begin on the first projects from autumn 2021. The programme will help create jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities across England, with suppliers offering training and apprenticeships as part of their work on the rebuilds. The majority of the first 50 rebuild projects under the programme are expected to be completed within three to five years.

Alison Rigby, Headteacher of St John Fisher Catholic High School, Wigan said:

We cannot express our sheer delight that our young people will have access to modern, state-of-the-art facilities in the future. We all know buildings don't educate children, people do, but the environment in which children learn and are encouraged to grow is vital in producing decent human beings.

It is great that our school has been identified for this investment – we have a unique sporting heritage – we have produced international Rugby league, Rugby Union and Netball players and athletes – despite our modest sporting facilities!

This new build project will boost our curriculum offer and provide fantastic facilities in which our learning community will continue to flourish, and, most importantly, build confidence in our young people because they will feel valued and invested in and – ultimately, loved.

The investment of over £1 billion to support the first round of the School Rebuilding Programme comes on top of the Government's commitment to allocate £1.8 billion for school repair and upgrade projects over this coming year. It represents a sustained investment in our schools, creating classrooms and environments that support the country's world-leading teachers to deliver the best possible education.

Further details about the School Rebuilding programme will be set out later in 2021, including how evidence about schools' condition needs can be provided to support prioritisation for future rounds of the programme.

Projects will range from replacing or refurbishing individual buildings through to whole school rebuilds. The department also plans to consult this year to gather views on how schools are prioritised for future rounds of the long-term programme. The sports facilities funding will be distributed through Sport England and their county level networks, Active Partnerships, who will work with local schools to identify who are most in need. Schools in

disadvantaged areas, or areas with high inactivity among children, will also be given the opportunity to bid for funding. The investment can also support schools with opening in a Covid-secure manner, such as with additional signage, touch-free entry and cleaning equipment.

The funding can also support facilities to improve accessibility, especially for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. This could include buying adaptive sports equipment, like sensory balls for the visually impaired or wheelchair-accessible equipment.

ENDS

State-of-the-art £31 million Feltham station update complete

- £31 million Feltham station upgrade completed with extended platforms, new pedestrian and cycle bridge and step-free entrance
- closure of Feltham West level crossing has enhanced the safety of local community
- £375 million project to replace older signalling by 2024 continues, improving reliability on busy commuter line

Important upgrades to improve accessibility, local connections and increase capacity at Feltham station have been completed, Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris has announced today (5 February 2021), thanks to government investment of £31 million.

The station and the surrounding area has seen a host of improvements since Network Rail began work in September 2018, delivering significant benefits to passengers on a busy commuter line into London Waterloo. These include extended platforms to allow longer 10-car trains to call, while the Feltham West level crossing has been closed to improve community safety.

Accessibility has also been enhanced with the construction of a new shared pedestrian and cycle bridge, providing a bike-friendly route over the railway, along with a further step-free entrance to platform 1, next to newly positioned bus stops, improving local connections.

It comes as a £375 million project to replace older signalling with new state-of-the-art equipment continues, with the new technology set to improve reliability for passengers by reducing the time it takes to restore services in times of disruption.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

These important upgrades to Feltham station will make a huge difference on this key commuter line from London Waterloo, providing smoother passenger journeys and improved accessibility into and between platforms.

This investment underlines our commitment to build back better out of COVID-19, delivering improved journeys for passengers as they return to the railway.

Mark Killick, route director at Network Rail Wessex, said:

We're committed to providing better journeys for passengers. These improvements, on a key route into London, make the station more accessible for passengers and the local community.

The [Feltham and Wokingham Resignalling Programme \(FWRP\)](#) involves the full renewal of the signalling systems and is being delivered in 6 stages between 2021 and 2024. As part of the work, a number of level crossings in the area are being upgraded to improve the reliability and resilience of services, and to ensure the safety of local residents using them.

Alex Foulds, South Western Railway's Commercial Projects Director, said:

This joint effort to enhance Feltham station is fantastic news for our customers and the local community. The improvements to accessibility, a modern new station entrance and improved links with cycle and bus routes will make the station a first-class gateway to the area.

The extended platforms will also welcome our brand-new fleet of longer Arterio trains later this year, fully equipped with charging points at every seat, onboard wifi and increased capacity.

Today's news comes ahead of the introduction of a new state-of-the-art train stabling and maintenance depot in Feltham that will serve [South Western Railway's new £1 billion fleet of Arterio trains](#) when it opens later this year.

[Ghana-UK Joint Statement: Ghana-UK Trade Partnership Agreement](#)

Press release

Ghana-UK joint statement on a new interim Ghana-UK Trade Partnership Agreement



On 31 December 2020, Ghana and the UK announced that they had reached a consensus on the main elements of a trade agreement that would replicate the effects of the trade relationship between Ghana and the UK prior to the end of the Transition Period following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union. They stated their intention to finalise the text of the agreement to reflect progress made in relation to rules of origin, cumulation arrangements, time-bound commitments, provisions for development cooperation and commitments to human rights and good governance.

Today Ghana and the UK are pleased to announce that they have finalised negotiations on a new Interim Ghana-UK Trade Partnership Agreement. This Agreement will provide for duty free and quota free access for Ghana to the UK market and preferential tariff reductions for UK exporters to the Ghanaian market.

The Agreement will enter into effect following the completion of relevant internal procedures required in both Ghana and the UK.

The new Agreement reaffirms the deep interest of both Ghana and the UK to strengthen their longstanding trade and economic relationship. The Agreement also reflects the importance of integration between the West African States within the context of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and amongst African States within the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The Agreement further underscores their shared ambition to enhance relations between the UK, ECOWAS and African States more broadly.

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[United Kingdom and Peru hold dialogue](#)

about future of trade

Lima, 4 February 2021 – Today, the Minister of State for Trade Policy from the United Kingdom, Greg Hands and the Peruvian Minister of Foreign Trade and Tourism, Claudia Cornejo met virtually for the inaugural UK-Peru trade dialogue.

They welcomed the new UK- Andean Countries Trade Agreement that came into force in January and UK formal notification of its accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

They welcomed the UK's newly independent trade policy as a unique opportunity to further cooperate in areas such as agribusiness, green technologies and protecting the environment and agreed to a joint action plan to expand trade in digital products and services, including initiatives on sustainable agricultural and e-commerce.

Ministers agreed to work together to address global challenges such as COVID-19 recovery and climate change. They highlighted the continued role of free and open trade in 'building back better' and economic recovery for small and medium enterprises.

They looked forward to COP26 and role of trade in creating a low-carbon future. The UK government has committed £11.6 bn over the next five years to support developing countries combat climate change through the International Climate Finance (ICF), including £3bn to support nature and biodiversity initiatives. The UK will work with Peru in four ICF programmes for the next 3 years on halting deforestation, green finance and low carbon development.

They agreed on the need to on maintaining the highest environmental standards, and to increase collaboration on promoting the production and export of goods that protect biodiversity, and to address barriers to market for clean technologies, particularly in the energy sector.

Minister of State for Trade Policy Greg Hands said:

I was pleased to meet with Minister Cornejo and representatives from the Peruvian government today to continue strengthening our trade and investment ties. We look forward to boosting trade and investment within the framework of advancing clean and sustainable growth by creating new business opportunities in sectors such as services, technology and sustainable goods.

The United Kingdom sees Peru as a vital partner in the Latin America region and I look forward to working more closely together as the UK seeks to join CPTPP and we look to recover from the impact of Covid-19.

The Ministers also agreed on the need to accelerate efforts to remove any

existing barriers to trade and investment, which create imbalances in bilateral trade, and acknowledged that a double taxation agreement will improve business activities in both countries.

They highlighted the importance of research collaboration to improving prosperity, particularly through the Newton Fund and the Global Challenges Research Fund.

Both Ministers committed to work together to help maintain free and fair trade as a driver of prosperity and recovery, including through reform and modernization of global trade institutions.