

£148 million to cut drugs crime

Today (20 January 2021) the Home Secretary Priti Patel and Health Secretary Matt Hancock announce a £148 million new investment to cut crime and protect people from the scourge of illegal drugs.

The £148 million package takes a system-wide approach to the problem of illegal drugs. It gives extra resources to law enforcement to dismantle organised criminal gangs and tackle the supply of drugs. At the same time, it delivers more money for drug treatment and recovery to help cut drug-related crime and the cycle of misuse and reoffending. It represents the largest increase in drug treatment funding for 15 years.

Building on recent successes in tackling county lines gangs, the government will double the funding available for law enforcement to take down and bring to justice county lines gangs and drug kingpins. The £40 million of new money to tackle county lines and drugs supply brings the total invested to £65 million since November 2019.

The funding has already seen more than 3,400 people arrested, more than 550 lines closed, drugs with a street value of £9 million and £1.5 million cash seized, and more than 770 vulnerable people safeguarded.

A further £28 million will be invested into piloting Project ADDER – a new intensive approach to tackling drug misuse, which combines targeted and tougher policing with enhanced treatment and recovery services. Project ADDER (which stands for Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery) will bring together partners including the police, local councils and health services, and run for 3 financial years in 5 areas with some of the highest rates of drug misuse: Blackpool, Hastings, Middlesbrough, Norwich and Swansea Bay.

The funding will allow the police to target local gang leaders driving the drugs trade while better helping people to recover from addictions.

An extra £80 million will also be invested in drug treatment services right across England to give more support to offenders with drink and drug addictions, which can fuel crime. This new money will increase the number of treatment places for prison leavers and offenders diverted into tough and effective community sentences. Together the funding represents a comprehensive drive by the government to build back safer from the pandemic by helping people break free from the scourge of drug use and cutting drug-fuelled crime and violence.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I am determined to cut crime and make our streets safer, which is why we are recruiting 20,000 more police officers, toughening sentences and making sure the police and prisons have the powers and tools they need to clamp down on criminals and stop re-

offending.

But it is clear that drugs are a serious driver of the violence which devastates communities and robs young lives. That is why we must take action to cut off supply and cut the head off the snake by tackling the criminal gangs which exploit young people.

We must also help people to get off drugs in the first place and that is why we are launching Project Adder, a new, targeted approach which will ramp up local enforcement, while at the same time diverting more people into recovery, backed up by the largest investment in treatment in 15 years.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I am determined to cut crime and restore confidence in our criminal justice system, so that people can live their lives knowing their family, community and country is safe.

The government's work to tackle county lines drugs gangs has already resulted in thousands more people being arrested and hundreds more vulnerable people being safeguarded, but we must do more to tackle the underlying drivers behind serious violence.

That is why today's announcement will provide the largest investment in drugs treatment and support in 15 years, while also giving more resources to law enforcement so they can continue dismantling organised criminal gangs and tackling the supply of drugs.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Addiction and crime are inextricably linked and to truly break the cycle we must make sure people can access the help they need to get their lives back on track for good.

This is the largest increase to drug treatment funding in 15 years and underlines our absolute commitment to reduce drug-related deaths, offending and use.

As part of this package, £2.5 million will also be invested in providing continuity of care for prisoners on release to avoid this becoming a crisis point. The enhanced RECONNECT service supports offenders with complex needs to engage with and get the right treatment from mental health, substance misuse and other services, for up to a year after release. Offenders will be supported by expert care navigators working with health and probation services.

The money will also support offenders into treatment upon release from prison and fund additional detox beds and the life-saving overdose medicine, naloxone. By saving lives and providing treatment former offenders have the chance and support to break the cycle of crime and addiction.

The increase in drug treatment funding will help us provide lifesaving overdose medicine to every heroin user in the country that needs it and will help end the postcode lottery for inpatient treatment so that people from across the country can come off drugs safely.

This work follows the appointment in February 2019 of Professor Dame Carol Black to undertake an independent review of drugs.

Last year she provided detailed analysis of the challenges posed by drug supply and demand, including the ways in which drugs fuel serious violence.

The second part of her review launched in July 2020, focused on treatment, recovery and prevention, with an overarching aim of ensuring vulnerable people with substance misuse problems get the support they need to recover and turn their lives around in the community and in prison.

It will consider how treatment services can enable people with a drug dependency to achieve and sustain their recovery – spanning the wide range of support they may need, including with across mental health, housing, employment, and criminal justice agencies.

Dame Carol Black said:

Drug treatment has a vital role to play in helping people to come off drugs and thereby reduce crime, from minor acquisitive crime right through to homicide. The evidence for this is abundantly clear – drugs drive crime.

I am therefore delighted to hear that the government is to invest an additional £80 million in drug treatment. This will assist local authorities to improve the services they deliver in this important area, in all their various aspects.

Areas to be funded by Project ADDER are

1. Blackpool – £4.8 million
 2. Hastings – £4.35 million
 3. Middlesbrough – £4.58 million
 4. Norwich – £4.8 million
 5. Swansea Bay – £1 million
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£12M UK-Japan robotics deal for fusion energy and nuclear decommissioning research

Britain and Japan have signed a research and technology deployment collaboration to help automate nuclear decommissioning and aspects of fusion energy production.

A world-leading alliance, it will see new robotics and automation techniques applied to both fusion research and to decommissioning nuclear facilities in Japan and the UK.

The £12M UK-Japanese robotics project, called “LongOps”, will support delivery of faster and safer decommissioning at TEPCO’s Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors in Japan and at Sellafield in the UK, using long-reach robotic arms.

This four-year research collaboration will be funded equally by UK Research and Innovation (“UKRI”), the UK’s Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (“NDA”) and Japan’s Tokyo Electric Power Company (“TEPCO”).

The collaboration between the three entities will see UKAEA’s Remote Applications in Challenging Environments (“RACE”) facility lead the project, design strategy and deliver new robotic capabilities with global potential.

It is also expected to result in direct benefits, such as employment opportunities, advances to “fusion-adjacent” technologies, upskilling of the UK and Japanese scientific and engineering capabilities.

The decommissioning of legacy nuclear facilities and fusion facilities are complex large-scale projects that are time-intensive to accomplish safely.

Robotics and digital twin technologies will play an essential part in carrying them out efficiently with no risk to human health.

A major feature of the LongOps programme will be the deployment of sophisticated digital twin technology – virtual models where the pairing of the virtual and physical worlds allows for highly detailed analysis of data, and the forecasting of potential maintenance and operational issues.

“Digital twins” is a formative technology for the Industrial Internet of Things (“IIoT”) enabling the optimisation of operations, improved productivity, and the ability to test and innovate in the virtual world before developing real world applications.

The software created will allow RACE to show how such machines are controlled in real-time during remote operations.

Developments from LongOps will also be applied to the upgrading, maintenance and dismantling of fusion devices, such as the Joint European Torus (JET),

once their lifespans have ended.

Knowledge transfer from LongOps to other sectors shows the commercial potential of investing in UKAEA's fusion and robotics technologies.

Fusion is a form of low-carbon energy whereby the power of the sun is replicated on earth.

It promises minimal impact to the environment, long-term reliability and weather independence.

LongOps forms part of over £450m investment by Government into robotics and autonomous systems (RAS) projects since 2014.

The Robotics Growth Partnership brings UK RAS businesses and government together to harness smart machines for productivity and wider societal benefit.

Amanda Solloway, UK Minister for Science, Research and Innovation, said:

To unlock the amazing potential of nuclear power, it's critical that the UK works hand in hand with international partners to safely decommission nuclear sites while backing pioneering research into fusion, which could offer a limitless source of clean energy.

This innovative research alliance with Japan will ensure we share our expertise in robotics to address complex challenges such as nuclear decommissioning, while helping to secure highly skilled jobs across the country as we build back better from the pandemic.

Adrian Simper, Group Strategy and Technology Director at the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, said:

The NDA group is a world leader in decommissioning – our high hazard challenges require innovative and efficient solutions. Robotics offers us new ways to tackle our complex work safely, securely and cost-effectively. This unique international collaboration allows us to pool expertise and experience from Japan, working together and investing in cutting edge ways to find solutions to our shared problems and benefit our clean-up mission.

Akira Ono, Chief Decommissioning Officer of Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, Inc. ('TEPCO'), said:

It has been almost a decade since the Fukushima Daiichi(1F) accident on March 11th, 2011.

TEPCO's 1F Decontamination and Decommissioning was carried out initially on an emergency response basis, but we now will be entering the stage of taking on challenges in uncharted territory such as Fuel Debris Retrieval (FDR).

I recognise that the robotics and remote-control technology is one of the most important key success factors for the FDR project.

I believe LongOps R&D will contribute a tremendous support to this FDR project, and I also feel secure that we can work with our partners, UKAEA, NDA/Sellafield, and UKRI for this UK-Japan international challenge.

Andrew Tyrer, Challenge Director for Robots for a Safer World at UK Research and Innovation, said:

This landmark international collaboration between the UK and Japan will spearhead significant progress into the complex challenge of nuclear decommissioning. That these nuclear decommissioning operations were selected as the focus of UK-Japanese robotics collaboration, including UK engineers developing technology for use in Fukushima, highlights the UK's world-leading strength in this sector. The UK's strength has been accelerated in recent years by the Robots for a Safer World challenge from the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.

Dr Rob Buckingham, Director of UKAEA's Remote Applications in Challenging Environments ('RACE') centre, said:

LongOps will build long-term partnerships, such as that between UK's Sellafield and Japan's TEPCO to find faster and safer methods for fusion development and to solve complex decommissioning problems.

The project will build innovation pipelines with industry for new robotics and AI tools.

It will also solidify relationships between operators and researchers in the UK and Japan. I am delighted that UKAEA will play a key enabling role in this international venture.

For media enquiries please contact Nick Holloway, UKAEA Media Manager, at nick.holloway@ukaea.uk.

[New financial support for the UK's fishing businesses that export to the EU](#)

Seafood exporters across the UK will receive government funding of up to £23 million, to support businesses which have been most adversely affected by the COVID pandemic and the challenges of adjusting to new requirements for exporting.

This is in recognition of the unique circumstances of the fishing sector, which has had the most significant new requirements to adjust to, and for whom even a short delay can lead to goods perishing – at a time when the industry is facing lower market prices and demand due to the pandemic.

The fund will be targeted at fishing export businesses who can evidence a genuine loss in exporting fish and shellfish to the EU. Support will be available immediately and paid retrospectively to cover losses incurred since 1 January 2021. The scheme will be targeted at small and medium enterprises and the maximum claim available to individual operators will be £100,000.

The Marine Management Organisation will administer the scheme on behalf of exporters across the UK. More details will be available on eligibility criteria in the coming days. The Government will be consulting industry across the UK and working with the devolved administrations on these eligibility criteria before they are confirmed.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

This £23 million scheme will provide crucial support for fishermen and seafood exporters, who have experienced delays and a lack of demand for fish from the restaurant industry in the UK and Europe.

We are continuing to work closely with the fishing and aquaculture sectors to make sure that they are supported, and can continue to fish whilst contributing to the economies of our coastal communities.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Steve Barclay said:

This further £23 million package of support will help our

hardworking fishing sector navigate the challenges of the next few months.

It is vital that no community nor region within our United Kingdom is left behind as we continue to support British jobs and build back better from the coronavirus pandemic.

In addition to funding, the UK Government will provide further support to businesses in adapting to new export processes. Defra and HMRC will be offering targeted, proactive and hands on support to fisheries exporters to help them successfully meet the new requirements. This includes a new training package and focused workshop sessions.

Seafood exports to the EU require specific procedures, customs declarations, Catch Certificates and Export Health Certificates (EHCs) and businesses have adapted to these requirements at speed. As seafood is a perishable product with a 'just in time' supply chain, it is important that the sector can export quickly.

The UK Government has been working closely with the seafood industry and individual businesses to support them through this period and to ensure that any errors or problems are tackled as early as possible. The situation has been improving over the last week and the flow of goods is improving, but we will do more.

Support provided to the industry includes:

- Issuing clear guidance on the required IT forms to stakeholder representative groups, hauliers and businesses.
- Twice-weekly meetings with businesses to understand and address issues as they arise.
- Working closely with individual businesses to help them get used to the new procedures required to ensure that errors or problems are tackled early.
- UK Government is stepping up extra physical resources to support certification in Scottish Hubs
- The UK Government has provided two specialist certifiers to support Food Standards Scotland and DFDS over the last week
- An experienced certifying officer from Defra is also currently in Lanarkshire supporting Official Veterinarians with the issuing of health certificates
- APHA has additional Official Veterinarians on standby, available to Scottish Hubs, to support exporters if required.
- Working with French authorities to ensure that minor administrative issues associated with EHCs have not prevented goods from entering the market and with the EU Commission to help member states adopt consistent approaches.
- Providing extensive guidance as part of a range of measures to help the industry meet new export requirements, including training, regular engagement and weekly bulletins.

Separately, the Prime Minister has also committed to providing a £100m fund to help modernise fishing fleets, the fish processing industry, and rejuvenate a historic and proud industry in the UK, on top of the £32m that will replace EU funding this year.

Now we have left the Common Fisheries Policy, as an independent coastal state, the UK has taken its independent seat at the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, including the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and the North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation. We have put in place a bilateral agreement with the EU, and a partnership agreement with Norway.

The UK-EU agreement returns 25% of the EU's catch in UK waters (worth £146m) to Scottish, English, Welsh and Northern Irish fishermen, beginning at 15%. Increases in quota this year include key fish stocks such as North Sea cod, from 47% to 57 and North Sea hake, from 18% to 54% with a mechanism to exchange quota between the UK and EU.

The fishing industry has already been hit by the reduction in demand from the hospitality sector in the UK and other export markets as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic with market prices falling by as much as 40%. The measures announced today will therefore support the industry across the UK, during this challenging time and follow an unprecedented package of financial support already announced.

This financial support is in addition to the £9 million of support provided last year to support the sector in England, and support provided by the devolved administrations.

[Up-rating report 2021 – focus on the National Insurance Fund](#)

News story

The Government Actuary has published the Up-rating Report 2021 on the National Insurance Fund. It will be considered by MPs as they scrutinise draft government legislation.



The Government Actuary's [annual report on the National Insurance Fund](#) (NIF) has been published. The report:

- provides advice to MPs as they scrutinise the government's draft legislation for up-rating social security benefits and pensions and updating National Insurance Contribution (NIC) terms
- projects contribution income, benefit payments and the balance of the NIF over the coming financial years

Coronavirus impact

The coronavirus pandemic is impacting the NIF in several ways:

- increased levels of unemployment and lower salaries (for example where employees are furloughed) are reducing income to the NIF with receipts in 2020-2021 expected to be £5.4bn lower compared with the previous (pre-pandemic) projection last year
- payments of working age benefits are increasing while 'excess deaths' caused by the pandemic are reducing payments of pensioner benefits
- an unusual pattern of average earnings (ie a sharp drop followed by an expected recovery) is projected to cause state pension payments from the NIF to be around £1bn per year higher from 2022 (than with a more even progression of average earnings)

Headline results

Allowing for the impact of the coronavirus pandemic the headline results are that:

- income is projected to exceed expenditure by £1.3bn increasing the NIF balance to £40.8bn by 31 March 2022

- costs of the proposed changes to NICs to be paid from April 2021 are projected to be £0.2bn
- costs of the proposed increases to benefits to be paid from April 2021 are projected to be £2.0bn
- the NIF is not expected to need any top-up from HM Treasury over the next 5 years
- 5-year projections show the NIF balance decreasing in each year from the end of 2023

All the headline results are sensitive to future economic conditions.

Remote working

In line with government guidance GAD staff have been working from home during the pandemic. Bringing together a remote team to deliver this report added a new dimension to this annual project.

GAD Senior Consulting Actuary Chris Morley led the project. He said: “People from across the department have overcome remote working barriers and carried out the complex modelling underpinning this report in a collaborative and effective manner.

“I’m proud to have led this team and they have produced this report on time and on budget in challenging circumstances.”

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100th Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project decision reached

The A1 Birtley to Coalhouse Improvement Scheme is the 100th Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) to be decided following examination by The Planning Inspectorate. The examination completed its hearings virtually and to the original timetable.

Applications for projects considered to be of national significance are made

under the Planning Act 2008. The Act was introduced to streamline the decision-making process, making it fairer and faster for communities and developers alike and to encourage investment in the country's vital infrastructure by providing certainty on decision timescales.

Prior to the introduction of the 2008 Act, it could take several years to decide major planning applications.

The Planning Act 2008 requires developers to consult with affected communities and to thoroughly prepare applications before submitting them for examination. The Planning Inspectorate examines the application and makes a recommendation to the relevant Secretary of State who makes the final decision. The regime imposes strict timescales on key stages of the process, and it typically takes 14-16 months from the day an application is submitted to a decision being made. Overall, the process increases confidence and provides the certainty of knowing when a decision will be made for developers, investors and all those with an interest in the project.

The first project to be examined and decided under the Planning Act 2008 was the Rookery South Energy from Waste Facility project in 2013. Since then, projects as diverse as the Thames Tideway Tunnel, the Hinkley Point C New Nuclear Power Station and Dogger Bank Offshore Wind Farm have been consented through this process.

Recent high-profile projects examined include the likes of A38 Derby Junctions and Norfolk Boreas Offshore Wind Farm, as the Planning Inspectorate has risen to the unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic with hearings currently being held virtually.

Sarah Richards, Chief Executive of The Planning Inspectorate, said:

This is the 100th application for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project to be decided following examination by The Planning Inspectorate – it is a significant milestone, particularly bearing in mind the challenges posed by working through three separate lockdown periods in the last 12 months. Every application has met the statutory timescales laid down in the Planning Act 2008 for examination by the Inspectorate.

This is a tremendous achievement for our Inspectors and casework staff. The Planning Act 2008 has streamlined and greatly improved the decision-making process for major infrastructure that the country needs, whilst ensuring proposals are properly and robustly examined and ensuring local people can have their say.

We have had to change how we work over the past few months, have done so with great success, and are aware that we have to keep evolving and challenging ourselves as an organisation in order to

keep improving.

Of the 100 projects decided to date, 61 were energy, 36 transport, 2 waste and 1 waste water developments.

There are currently 63 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects at Pre-Application stage, in a pipeline of projects which developers are designing and consulting on ready for examination over coming months and years. A further 13 are either awaiting Acceptance for Examination, are under Examination or in the Decision stage.

Details of these projects can be found on <http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>.

NSIPs are not only significant in their importance to the country but are large applications of particular interest to many local people.

The Planning Inspectorate places great importance on being fair, open and impartial. No matter the type, size or location of a project, it ensures that local communities have the opportunity to make their views known and are able to participate in the examination process. The examinations of the projects examined to date considered thousands of written representations and examiners have heard directly from thousands of affected people at Hearings held in the locality of the projects.

Graham Stallwood, Director of Operations at The Planning Inspectorate, added:

We encourage individuals and communities to get involved in the examination of major projects when developers are consulting on their proposals before submitting an application, at the pre-application stage and when we are examining their application. We listen carefully to what all interested parties tell us about a project that affects them, and we give full consideration to their views when making a recommendation to the Secretary of State.

Notes to editors:

Journalists wanting further information should contact The Planning Inspectorate Press Office, on 0303 444 5004 or email: pressoffice@pins.gsi.gov.uk

The decision letter, Recommendation and Development Consent Order for the A1 Birtley to Coalhouse Improvement Scheme can be viewed on the National Infrastructure Planning website.

Planning Inspectorate role

On 1 April 2012, under the Localism Act 2011, the Planning Inspectorate became the agency responsible for operating the planning process for nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs).

NSIPs are usually large-scale developments such as new harbours, power generating stations (including wind farms), and electricity transmission lines, which require a type of consent known as 'development consent' under procedures governed by the Planning Act 2008 (as amended).

The 2008 Act sets out thresholds above which certain types of infrastructure development are considered to be nationally significant and require development consent.

In England, the Planning Inspectorate examines applications for development consent from the energy, transport, waste, waste water, water and business and commercial sectors. In Wales, it examines applications for energy and harbour development, subject to detailed provisions in the Act; other matters are for Welsh Ministers.

The Planning Inspectorate recently produced a video highlighting its work.

Any developer wishing to construct an NSIP must first apply for consent to do so. For such projects, the Planning Inspectorate examines the application and will make a recommendation to the relevant Secretary of State, who will make the decision on whether to grant or to refuse development consent.