

UK Statement to the High-Level Event on Financing for Development

Thank you to the UN Secretary-General and the Prime Ministers of Canada and Jamaica for hosting this event.

It's an honour to join you today for this event, and as my Prime Minister said in May, we owe it to future generations to build back better. We must use our recovery from COVID-19 to accelerate, not slow down our delivery of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The UK is proud to co-lead on Recovering Better For Sustainability alongside the European Union, Fiji and Rwanda.

So today I want to focus on three particular priorities, but I urge you to consider our full set of proposals as you plan your recoveries in each of your respective countries.

First, we must build strong and resilient health systems to achieve Universal Health Coverage that protects us all from health threats, whether they're COVID or non-COVID. The UK has already committed over 1 billion US dollars of aid to tackle COVID-19.

Second, we must deliver a green recovery that lives up to the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. We need governments to submit more ambitious, Nationally Determined Contributions, develop long-term strategies and put these at the heart of their national economic recovery plans.

The UK has announced over 5£ billion to implement a domestic green recovery, we're providing international support through our ambitious climate finance commitment.

And third, our global recovery must be inclusive and support the most vulnerable who are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and climate change. We must commit to leaving no one behind. And that includes standing up for gender equality and in particular, every girl's right to 12 years of quality education.

Next up, we know that COVID-19 has exacerbated longstanding debt vulnerabilities. The G20 debt service suspension initiative was valuable, but we've got to extend and fully implement it to provide the liquidity countries need to build back better.

As COP 26 and G7 presidents next year, we're asking for a global effort. Now more than ever, we must come together to drive forward these changes so that we can get back on our feet and look to the future with ambition, with confidence and with greater unity forged in the global challenges that we've overcome together.

Thank you.

Highways England delivers funding boost for Plymouth cyclists

The company, responsible for England's motorways and major A roads, will be funding and delivering a scheme, starting early next year, to widen the Mowhay Footbridge over the A38 to improve the safety of walkers and cyclists.

Since 2015 the company has invested more than £85 million towards the creation of 160 new and upgraded cycle ways across England, providing safe, attractive and accessible facilities for people to cycle for work, shopping and leisure.

Cycling and walking charity Sustrans recently completed a Highways England-funded cycle path scheme at the A38 Marsh Mills Interchange, and in the latest initiative, Highways England will be investing £2.2 million, from its Designated Users and communities fund, into a scheme to enhance the Mowhay bridge for shared use.

The existing bridge is not wide enough to safely accommodate both cyclists and walkers and work will start early in the new year to modify both the bridge and ramps to enable it to link up with a recently completed footway/cycleway, joining a local cycle route between residential areas to the north of the A38 and Plymouth city centre and the Dockyard to the south.

Highways England Route Manager Ed Halford, said:

We're committed to significantly improving safety across our road network, and the new and improved cycle and footpaths will make it much easier and safer for cyclists and pedestrians travelling to and from the centre of Plymouth.

At Highways England, our work goes beyond operating, maintaining and improving roads. We're investing in the environment and communities surrounding our network, as well as the people travelling and working on it. We aim to address social and environmental issues and add real value to society.

We're working closely with Plymouth City Council to realise this project – a glowing example of how this funding can make life better for communities living and working near our roads.

Councillor Mark Coker, Plymouth City Council's Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, said:

I am delighted that Highways England is investing in upgrading the

footbridge. We are committed to encouraging and enabling more trips to be made on foot and by bike and making substantial investments in our walking and cycling network, to deliver more than 16 kilometres of new and improved traffic-free facilities on our strategic cycle network, alongside major roads and through green spaces, and 600 metres of on-road cycle lanes by April 2021.

We are pleased that this commitment to invest in active travel is shared by our partners and look forward to building on the positive relationship we have with Highways England.

Highways England manages four designated funds, allocated by the Government, to deliver benefits above and beyond building, maintaining and operating England's strategic roads.

From protecting the environment and enhancing the landscape around roads, to improving safety, reducing congestion, and supporting communities, the aim is to make a positive difference to people's lives.

Elsewhere in the south-west, designated funding has already provided safer journeys for cyclists around M5 Junction 16 near Bristol, the A35 and Sea Road South in Bridport and Cycle Route 45 around the A303 Solstice Park near Amesbury, while other ongoing schemes include:

- £17 million of funding invested to enable Cornwall Council to deliver four major cycle routes alongside the busy A30
- £1.2 million towards a cycle path upgrade and £1m towards the design of several other cycle routes around the Avonmouth area of Bristol
- £1.3 million towards North Somerset Council's £2.09m project to create a new mile-long walking and cycling path between Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon, to the west of the M5

Going forward, cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders will see more benefits over the next five years, with £169 million set aside in Highways England's new Users and communities fund. The company is using the fund to improve services for users and neighbours of England's motorways and major A-roads, including increasing the options people have for sustainable travel.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Belarus: UK sanctions eight members of regime, including Alexander Lukashenko

The UK has imposed landmark sanctions on Alexander Lukashenko, his son and senior figures in the Belarusian government under the UK's new human rights sanctions regime, the Foreign Secretary announced today. The sanctions have been imposed as part of a coordinated international approach with Canada, in a bid to uphold democratic values and put pressure on those responsible for repression.

Alexander Lukashenko's regime is responsible for a string of human rights violations against opposition figures, media and the people of Belarus in the wake of rigged elections. Despite numerous calls from the international community, he has refused to engage in dialogue with the opposition, choosing instead to double down on his violent repression.

The new sanctions include a travel ban and asset freeze on eight individuals from the Belarusian regime, including Alexander Lukashenko, his son Victor Lukashenko and Igor Sergeenko, Head of the Presidential Administration. Similar sanctions were imposed by Canada.

The Global Human Rights sanctions regime gives the UK the power to stop those involved in serious human rights abuses and violations from entering the country, channelling money through UK banks, or profiting from our economy. Alexander Lukashenko is the first leader to have been sanctioned under the regime, which was introduced in July.

These sanctions build on earlier steps taken by the UK to hold the Belarusian authorities to account and to help secure a peaceful end to this crisis, which reflects the will of the Belarusian people. These steps include triggering an independent investigation into the flawed elections and human rights violations that followed, under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The UK has also doubled its financial support to human rights groups, independent media and community groups in Belarus to £1.5million over the next two years.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Today the UK and Canada have sent a clear message by imposing sanctions against Alexander Lukashenko's violent and fraudulent regime. We don't accept the results of this rigged election.

We will hold those responsible for the thuggery deployed against the Belarusian people to account and we will stand up for our values of democracy and human rights.

The sanctions have been imposed in response to the torture and mistreatment of hundreds of peaceful protestors in custody following the fraudulent Presidential elections. The Belarusian authorities have taken no action to hold those responsible to account. Many opposition figures have been arrested or forcibly deported and denied re-entry, in a clear show of Lukashenko's disdain for dialogue with the opposition and for basic human rights.

Notes to Editors:

- The UK sanctions include a travel ban and asset freeze on the following individuals:
 1. Alexander Lukashenko – President
 2. Viktor Lukashenko – son and National Security Adviser to the President of Belarus
 3. Igor Petrovich Sergeenko – Chief of Staff to the President of Belarus,
 4. Yuri Karayev (Minister of Internal Affairs, Major General of Militia),
 5. Alexander Barsukov (Deputy Minister of Ministry of Internal Affairs and Chief of Public Security Police),
 6. Yuri Nazarenko (Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and Commander of Internal Troops),
 7. Khazalbek Atabekov (Deputy Commander of Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs)
 8. Dmitry Balaba (Commander of the Special Purpose Police Unit of Minsk aka OMON).
- This is the second time the regime has been used since its introduction in July 2020. In July, the Foreign Secretary announced new sanctions on forty-nine individuals and organisations involved in some of the most notorious human rights violations and abuses in recent years including 25 Russian nationals involved in the mistreatment and death of auditor Sergei Magnitsky, 20 Saudi nationals involved in the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, two high-ranking Myanmar military generals involved in the systematic and brutal violence against the Rohingya people and two organisations involved in forced labour, torture and murder in North Korea's gulags.
- The sanctions come into force with immediate effect.

[Meet the Wigan residents reunited by new £1.8 million footbridge](#)

Highways England has completed work to install the 30-metre-long bridge over the A577 slip road at Orrell Interchange, where the M6 connects to the M58.

A previous bridge at the same location, which links Pemberton to the east of the M6 with Orrell to the west, had to be removed after it was struck by a

lorry.

The new footbridge has a higher barrier on both sides, making it suitable for cyclists, and a new ramp provides step-free access over the slip road for people with prams and wheelchairs.

A bridge at the same location was removed after being hit by a lorry.

Nic Winstanley lives on the Pemberton side of the M6 with her two-year-old daughter. She said:

I'm both a runner and a pram pusher so the bridge is fab for cutting out the busy motorway junction.

It's a much prettier and safer route for my daughter who loves watching what's going on around her when she's in her buggy. The footbridge adds a nice scenic route between my house and friends and family that live in Orrell. It's also a welcome return to a route off the busy roads that my running group have missed.

Nic Winstanley and her daughter use the bridge to reach friends and family.

Ann Miller lives on the other side of the M6 in Orrell, and uses the footbridge on her way to work in Wigan. She said:

The new bridge has brought the two areas back together and we're really pleased to have it!

Both my husband and I cycle to work and we're now able to use the footbridge to get to the cycle path in Pemberton, rather than having to go the long way round and cross the motorway junction. It's also great for being able to pop to the shops in Pemberton.

Ann Miller rides her bike over the footbridge on her way to work.

Highways England's contractors worked through the night last month to install the new footbridge, which was brought onto the site on the back of a truck and lifted into place using a crane.

You can watch a [timelapse video of the bridge lift](#) on You Tube.

Gary Knowles, Highways England's head of scheme delivery in the North West, said: "The M6 plays a vital role in connecting the country, and we're pleased we've been able to reconnect the communities that live on either side of it as well.

We needed to remove the old bridge after it was badly damaged by a lorry, but we've been able to replace it with something even better. The new ramp means it's suitable for the whole community and we're delighted to see the footbridge is already proving popular.

The new bridge was lifted into place over the A577 slip road in August.

AE Yates was Highways England's main contractor for the project, and Wigan Council also arranged for maintenance work to be carried out on the paths leading to the footbridge.

Councillor David Molyneux, Leader of Wigan Council, said:

I am delighted to see Highways England complete the work on the A577 footbridge which should play a fantastic role in reconnecting communities in the borough.

The new and improved bridge will not only give those living in surrounding neighbourhoods an extra incentive to choose more active travel options through walking and cycling, but it provides many parents with greater assurances for their children who may be making their way to and from schools and colleges in the locality.

Highways England's contractors have scattered hundreds on wildflower seeds on land by the footbridge, and new trees will be planted in the autumn between the bridge and nearby homes.

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[Return of students to universities statement](#)

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement regarding the

return of students to universities.

Throughout this pandemic, our priority has always been to keep young people as safe as possible while they continued to learn.

It is this commitment to learning and skills that has led the Prime Minister to announce today that, through our Lifetime Skills Guarantee, we will upgrade Further Education colleges across the country with huge capital investment; we'll expand the apprenticeship offer; we will fund valuable free technical courses for adults equivalent to A level, and extend our digital bootcamps.

We'll expand and transform the funding system so it's as easy for a student to get a loan for a higher technical course as for a university degree. The government will give everyone a flexible lifelong loan entitlement to four years of post-18 education – so adults will be able to retrain with high level technical courses, instead of being trapped in unemployment.

At the beginning of September we saw the successful reopening of our schools and colleges. Universities have been working just as hard to make campuses as safe as possible, including through enhanced cleaning measures, social distancing on campus and changes to timetables to stagger and manage attendance on site.

We have now seen the new intake of first-year students who are beginning a new chapter in their lives at university, together with those who are returning to carry on their studies.

I know this will not be the start that any of them would have wanted or expected and I would just like to say that I am pleased to see both Universities and students have followed the guidance in a responsible way, putting themselves, friends and the local community in a safe place and out of harms' way.

Students, as well as the wider community, accept when we are living in a global pandemic we have to operate in a society with restrictions but I do not believe that we should look to inflict stricter measures on students or expect higher standards of behaviour from them than we would from any other section of society.

The decision to keep universities open and all of our students learning has been a result of an enormous team effort throughout the higher education sector.

We have drawn on the expertise of the HE taskforce that we set up, and we have been providing robust public health advice and regular updates to the sector to help them to plan carefully to keep students and staff as safe as possible.

As with all our education settings, we will continue monitoring the situation closely and will follow the latest scientific advice, adapting policies as the situation changes.

I know there has been some anxiety about the impact safety measures will have on the Christmas holidays. Students are important members of the communities that they chose to study in.

We expect them to follow the same guidance as their local communities. We are going to work with universities to make sure that all students are supported to return home safely and spend Christmas with their loved ones, if they choose to do so. In this context, it is essential we put in place measures to ensure this can happen while minimising the risk of transmission.

Where there are specific circumstances that warrant it there may be a requirement for some students to self-isolate at the end of term, and we will be working with the sector to ensure this will be possible, including ending in-person learning early if that is deemed to be necessary. My department will publish this guidance shortly so that every student will be able to spend Christmas with their family.

Where students choose to stay in their university accommodation over Christmas, universities should continue making sure they are safe and well looked-after.

Of course it is inevitable there will be cases of Covid occurring in universities, just as there are in our wider communities and the constituencies that we represent. But Mr Speaker, we believe that universities are very well prepared to handle any outbreaks as they arise, and we have been working with the sector and Public Health England to make sure that they have every support and assistance they need should this happen.

I have been impressed by the steps that our universities have been taking, working hand in glove with local authorities and local public health teams to safeguard students and staff. All our universities have local outbreak plans, and all of these have been discussed with local Directors of Public Health.

It is essential that we continue to allow our students to have face-to-face teaching wherever possible, as part of a blended learning approach. I have heard the Opposition call for all learning to move online. While online learning is a highly effective part of the learning experience, there are many courses – including medicine and dentistry, as well as the creative arts – which require a face-to-face element.

That's why our guidance, published on the 11th of September, set out a tiered approach in Higher Education.

Tiers enable a balance of face-to-face and online learning within the context of the COVID risk, and will operate alongside local restrictions that are placed on the wider community in the area the university is in.

I would now like to mention the latest position regarding testing for students. We have been working with DHSC to make sure that the testing capacity is sufficient and appropriate for universities and I am sure you will be aware that DHSC has now launched the NHS Covid-19 app.

The Department for Health and Social Care continues to make more testing available and the vast majority of people can get a test locally. DHSC is also increasing the number of local testing sites and laboratories, adding new Lighthouse laboratories in Newport and Charnwood to the national lab network as well as additional walk-in centres being planned.

Mr Speaker, while we know that testing capacity is the highest it has ever been, we are still seeing a significant demand for tests. So like any other member of society, it is vitally important that staff and students at universities only get a test if they develop coronavirus symptoms or if advised to do so by a clinician or public health official.

I'm aware that going to university can be a stressful time for some students – many of whom will be living away from their family and friends for the first time in their lives. This year there will undoubtedly see added pressures because of the disruption and uncertainty caused by the pandemic and we must be mindful of how this will affect mental health and wellbeing of students.

Many universities have bolstered existing mental health services, and offer alternatives to face-to-face consultations. Once again I would like to thank staff at universities and colleges who have responded so quickly and creatively to the need to transform these essential services.

We have asked universities to provide additional help and practical support to students as well. And I am pleased to say Mr Speaker that universities are making sure students that are isolating are properly cared for and can access food, medical and cleaning supplies if needed. Student accommodation and support services will be a vital resource if any student has to isolate, and for students generally during this difficult period.

As well as providing support for those in halls of residence, we will make sure students who live in houses of multiple occupation away from campus, will still have access to advice and support if they need it. Universities are also able to call on £256 million provided by the government for hardship funding for students who have to isolate.

Mr Speaker, this Government has taken a conscious decision to prioritise education. We know how fundamental a good education is to opportunity, to aspiration and to social mobility.

That is why we opened schools, and why over 99.8% of schools are now open, delivering education to our children. Delivering education and the opportunity to go to university is equally important for those youngsters who have left college or left school as well.

We cannot eliminate all risk, but we will not condemn a generation of young people by asking them to put their lives on hold for months or years ahead.

We believe that universities are very well prepared to handle any outbreaks as they arise and I commend this statement to the House.