

Government announces £40 million green jobs challenge fund

Plans to create thousands of new jobs to kick-start the nation's green recovery from the coronavirus pandemic were unveiled by the government today.

The £40 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund will bring forward funding to help charities and environmental organisations start work on projects across England to restore nature and tackle climate change.

The fund will help conservation organisations and their suppliers create up to 3,000 jobs and safeguard up to 2,000 others in areas such as protecting species, finding nature-based solutions to tackling climate change, conservation rangers and connecting people with the outdoors.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Our ambitious green recovery package will deliver a steady stream of shovel-ready environmental projects, protecting nature at the same time as creating and retaining thousands of new jobs.

Many of us have become even more appreciative of nature during lockdown and our Green Recovery Challenge Fund will help charities and other organisations employ more people to work on tree-planting, nature restoration and helping the public enjoy the outdoors.

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund will be funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs by bringing forward £10 million of money from the Nature Recovery Fund and £30 million of Nature for Climate Funding, so that the money can be spent now when it is most needed.

It is envisaged that the fund will create a broad range of short and long term jobs such as ecologists, surveyors, nature reserve staff and education workers in environment organisations; and support their suppliers in areas such as agricultural engineering, horticulture, and equipment and seed supply.

Organisations will be invited to bid to the fund and details will be set out in due course.

Natural England Chair Tony Juniper said:

Coronavirus has shown us even more starkly how vital access to a thriving natural environment is to everybody's health and wellbeing. This new fund will kick start nature's recovery by building partnerships across the country, in towns and cities and

in rural areas.

It's also an unprecedented opportunity to build new careers for people from all walks of life to create the environment we need for the future.

Today's green recovery funding support formed part of a [wider package to boost the economy announced by Prime Minister Boris Johnson](#) and "build back a greener and more beautiful Britain".

[The Prime Minister also re-iterated the government's commitment](#) to re-forestation Britain by planting 75,000 acres of trees every year by 2025, "creating a new patchwork of woodlands to enchant and re-energise the soul". The Government is currently [consulting on a new English Tree Strategy](#) to expand tree cover, support woodland management and increase public engagement with trees and woodlands.

[Rental e-scooter trials to be allowed from this weekend](#)

- government paves way for e-scooter rental trials to start as lockdown restrictions eased
- fast-tracked trials will test devices' safety, green credentials and ability to reduce traffic

New regulations allowing trials of rental e-scooters will come into force on Saturday 4 July 2020, Transport Minister Rachel Maclean has announced.

The first trials are expected to begin the following week. Local authorities and devolved administrations hosting the trials can allow or run the rental schemes in their areas, as outlined in accompanying [guidance for areas and rental operators](#) published today (30 June 2020).

Whether commuting to work or riding for leisure during the warm summer months, local residents will soon be able to test the benefits of e-scooters on roads, cycle lanes and tracks.

The trials are designed to help understand whether the devices reduce motor traffic, as well as their impacts on safety for their users and others. They will be strictly prohibited on pavements, will be limited to 15.5mph and riders are recommended to wear helmets.

Users will need a full or provisional car, motorcycle or moped licence to take part in the trials, and must be 16 or over. To avoid a flood of poor-quality scooters onto the streets, the regulations only cover rental schemes.

Individually owned scooters will still be illegal on public roads.

Transport Minister Rachel Maclean said:

As we emerge from lockdown, we have a unique opportunity in transport to build back in a greener, more sustainable way that could lead to cleaner air and healthier communities across Great Britain.

E-scooters may offer the potential for convenient, clean and cost-effective travel that may also help ease the burden on the transport network, provide another green alternative to get around and allow for social distancing. The trials will allow us to test whether they do these things.

The trials, which are due to last for 12 months, will be closely monitored so the government can assess the benefits of e-scooters and their impact on public space.

The rental schemes will involve leading companies in the industry from Great Britain and across the globe working closely with local authorities to provide a plan for the controlled introduction of e-scooters in cities, towns and rural areas.

Switzerland and UK to negotiate a bilateral financial services agreement

The joint statement signed today by Rishi Sunak and Ueli Maurer the Head of Switzerland's Federal Department of Finance, is the most ambitious commitment made by two countries to develop an international agreement on financial services. It signals the UK's ambition to continue to cement its role as an international financial centre once it has left the EU, with the highest standards of regulation and an openness to the whole world.

The commitment outlines the UK and Switzerland's shared ambition to negotiate an outcomes-based mutual recognition agreement on financial services that will enhance cooperation and trust between the two countries. This will reduce costs and barriers for UK firms accessing the Swiss market, and vice versa, and cover a wide range of sectors.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

The UK's financial sector is integral to the success of the British economy, creating jobs, driving regional growth, and contributing

taxes that pay for essential public services.

Leaving the EU means we are now free to chart our own course, driven by our clear values as a financial centre: a safe and transparent place to do business, innovative markets that drive change for the better, and openness to the whole world.

Today's agreement is about our vision of the world economy as open, global and free – a vision shared by Switzerland, with our long history of trade and finance.

Miles Celic, Chief Executive Officer, TheCityUK, said:

The UK and Switzerland are natural partners for financial and related professional services trade. As the first and third largest net exporters of these services globally, both countries are committed to developing high-quality global standards and maintaining open and efficient markets. These discussions present an opportunity to set a new gold standard for global services trade between two sovereign nations.

In a further sign of the two countries' integrated equity markets, the Chancellor also announced that the Treasury has completed its equivalence assessment of Switzerland in relation to Swiss stock markets and found them to be equivalent. This will benefit investors in both countries.

Today's commitment is a concrete demonstration of the Chancellor's strategy to cement London's role as an international financial centre and ensure the UK remains a global example of excellence in financial services regulation. It sits within HMT's broader international strategy for financial services, which includes pursuing ambitious financial services trade policy in the UK's programme of Free Trade Agreements, as well as strengthening ties with fast-growing markets in the East.

Switzerland is the ideal partner for this strategy, due to the strong commitment and enthusiasm they share with the UK for open, stable and competitive financial markets, underpinned by quality regulation. Details of the agreement will be discussed over the coming months ahead of the UK/Switzerland Economic & Financial dialogue in September.

Further information

[Speech by the Chancellor of the](#)

Exchequer, Rushi Sunak, on the future relationship between the UK and Switzerland on financial services

Good afternoon – great to see you all.

For me, today's announcement is about a vision of the global economy built on openness, free trade and cooperation; a vision grounded in the values of the past but also unafraid to innovate, to move forward.

It's a vision that has always defined the UK-Swiss relationship – a relationship that is critical for the economic prospects of both our countries.

Nowhere is our relationship more important than in financial services. Nearly half of all Swiss financial services imports come from the UK; and the UK is one of the main destinations for Swiss foreign direct investment.

And as the two biggest financial centres in Europe, we also share a common governing and regulatory philosophy: I think we've both learned in recent years of the dangers of market fragmentation, and that unilateral approaches to trade in financial services just don't work.

But close as we are, it's not in the spirit of our relationship – or either of our national characters – to be content with how things are. We want to innovate, to try new things. So I'm delighted to be making two announcements today.

First, we're signing a Joint Statement committing us to begin negotiating an ambitious, outcomes-based mutual recognition agreement between the UK and Switzerland.

Our agreement will bring together government, regulators and industry to create a new and better framework for cross-border financial services, across insurance, banking, asset management and capital markets.

The benefits are clear for both countries: it should deliver lower costs, opportunities for new and better revenues, and improved cooperation between regulators.

And this agreement puts our two countries at the forefront of innovation in financial services trade – no-one's ever done anything as ambitious as this, on this kind of scale.

It shows that it is possible to achieve genuinely fluid cross-border trade in financial services, while recognising and respecting that different jurisdictions can achieve the same outcomes in different ways.

Next steps: technical work is immediately beginning in earnest, ahead of the

financial dialogue on September 8th.

And I want to say a huge thank you to Councillor Maurer, and to all our partners in industry, for everything you've done to make this happen.

I'm also very pleased to announce today that we have now completed our equivalence assessment of Swiss stock markets and found them to be equivalent.

So as soon as our equivalence powers come into force, we'll lay the necessary legislation so we can start trading on each other's stock exchanges once again.

Let me make one final point to finish. These aren't the circumstances I think any of us would have chosen to be signing today's agreement.

But actually, right now, at a time when the path of least resistance for many governments is to turn inwards, to put up the shutters to global trade, it's more important than ever that countries like the UK and Switzerland, who believe in that vision of an open, trading and cooperative world, continue to demonstrate through actions, not just words, what we can achieve if we continue to work together.

Thank you.

[UN Human Rights Council 44: Cross-regional statement on Hong Kong and Xinjiang](#)

Thank you Madam President. I am delivering this cross-regional joint statement on behalf of 27 countries.

A number of the signatories to this statement submitted a letter last year to express concern about arbitrary detention, widespread surveillance and restrictions, particularly targeting Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. These deep concerns have been reinforced by additional information now in the public domain. We urge China to allow the High Commissioner meaningful access to Xinjiang at the earliest opportunity.

We further wish to raise our deep and growing concerns at the imposition of legislation related to national security on Hong Kong, with clear implications for the human rights of people in Hong Kong.

The Joint Declaration, a legally binding treaty, registered with the United Nations, sets out that Hong Kong is guaranteed a high degree of autonomy and

rights and freedoms, including those of the person, of the press, of assembly, and of association and that the ICCPR and ICESCR shall remain in force. These rights are also guaranteed in the basic law for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Making such a law without the direct participation of Hong Kong's people, legislature or judiciary of Hong Kong undermines 'One Country, Two Systems'.

We urge the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments to reconsider the imposition of this legislation and to engage Hong Kong's people, institutions and judiciary to prevent further erosion of the rights and freedoms that the people of Hong Kong have enjoyed for many years.

High Commissioner, we note your calls for legislation to respect human rights obligations relating to Hong Kong, and the serious concerns raised by the mechanisms of this council. We encourage you to provide regular information on the human rights situation in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, in order to safeguard the rights and freedoms which are guaranteed under international law.

Thank you

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