

Farmers' £3 billion support confirmed in time for 2020

- this cash injection will maintain the level of funding for Direct Payments at the same rate as last year
- this will provide certainty for farmers, giving them confidence for next year

The Chancellor has today (Monday 30 December) given a welcome boost to UK farmers and rural communities by announcing nearly £3 billion of funding for 2020.

Sajid Javid confirmed the cash will be used to support farmers once the UK leaves the EU next year, allowing them to plan for the future, sow their crops and care for their livestock with confidence.

The UK will leave the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Direct Payments scheme, which supports farmers across Europe with subsidies in 2020. This will be replaced by a new system based on public money for public goods.

The cash injection will allow the funding for Direct Payments for 2020 to continue at the same level as 2019 and supplement the remaining EU funding that farmers will receive for development projects until 2023 at the latest. We will guarantee the current annual budget to farmers in every year of the Parliament.

It is in addition to the £206.6 million of funding awarded since Spending Round to support the farming sector in Scotland and Wales.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sajid Javid, said:

When we leave the EU and are freed from the Common Agricultural Policy, we will be able to support our vital rural communities – who are a cornerstone of life in the UK – with a fairer and less bureaucratic system.

Farmers can enter the New Year with confidence that they have our backing and will be able to thrive after Brexit.

Environment Secretary, Theresa Villiers, said:

Outside the EU we will have a simpler, fairer funding system – one that rewards farmers for enhancing our environment and safeguarding our high animal welfare standards.

We are committed to making sure our rural communities feel the benefits of Brexit and will ensure our farmers get a better deal.

The CAP is an EU policy that provides financial support to farmers in Member States. The Direct Payments scheme forms the majority of spending under the CAP and provides subsidies to farmers based on the area of land under management.

The funding announced today will be available from late 2020, as in previous years.

The UK Government will therefore provide £2.852 billion of support, topping up the remaining EU funding, and matching the total funding for Direct Payment available for 2019.

This will provide certainty for the rural economy.

The funding is spread across two financial years. The allocations for each nation of the UK for 2020/21 are:

- £1,751 million for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- £449 million for the Scottish Government
- £231 million for the Welsh Government
- £279 million for the Northern Ireland administration

And for 2021/22:

- £92 million for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- £24 million for the Scottish Government
- £12 million for the Welsh Government
- £15 million for the Northern Ireland administration

Notes to editors

- The CAP consists of two pillars:
- The vast majority of CAP Pillar 1 is the Direct Payments scheme. This scheme makes a payment to farmers each year based on the amount of land they manage. Farmers apply from March each year and are paid from October in Northern Ireland and from December elsewhere.
- CAP Pillar 2 schemes deliver rural development and multi-year environmental projects.
- Under the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK will continue to participate in all EU programmes financed under the EU's 2014-2020 multi-annual budget. The UK will leave the EU's CAP Direct Payments scheme in 2020, earlier than all other EU programmes, as 2020 Direct Payments are funded from the 2021 EU budget.
- The payment for 2020 will be provided across two financial years, with the majority of the payments in 2020/21 and the remaining in 2021/21 to provide flexibility for Defra and the devolved administrations.
- Remaining EU funding under CAP Pillar 2 (for rural development and environmental projects) will continue until the current EU funding is used up or 2023, whichever is earliest. The UK Government will fund Direct Payments for 2020 domestically. The UK will leave the Common

Agricultural Policy (CAP) Direct Payments scheme, which supports farmers across Europe with subsidies in 2020. This will be replaced by a new system based on public money for public goods. The cash injection will allow the funding for Direct Payments for 2020 to continue at the same level as 2019 and supplement the remaining EU funding that farmers will receive for development projects until 2023 at the latest. We are committed to matching the current budget available to farmers in every year of this Parliament

Further funding and expert support for high streets

- The first 101 places to benefit from up to £25 million each from the Future High Streets Fund were announced over summer. In the latest step of our £3.6 billion investment in towns and high streets, 20 pilot areas across England will lead the way in rejuvenating town centres with expert and tailored support from the High Streets Task Force before this offer is rolled out across the country next year.
- Today we announce 14 of these 20 pilot areas.
- Over 2020, hundreds of millions of the £1 billion Future High Streets Fund will be invested across the country in projects emerging in the initial towns that have already been announced

Industry experts will join forces with local leaders initially in up to 20 areas across England to breathe new life into town centres – with the first 14 of these areas announced by Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick today (Monday 30 December). This programme of support is being piloted and the full offer from the High Streets Task Force will be rolled out across the country in 2020.

In July the £3.6 billion Towns Fund was announced, including the £1 billion High Streets Fund to help high streets adapt and evolve while remain vibrant places for their community.

The first 101 places to benefit from up to £25 million each were announced over summer, today training and support for a further 14 places is being announced, with six more to follow in the pilot phase.

The places announced today will benefit from bespoke support and guidance from the new High Streets Task Force, announced by the government in response to recommendations of an expert panel on the high street chaired by Sir John

Timpson.

The High Streets Task Force will give face-to-face support, access to cutting-edge research, new online training, and local footfall data to give businesses that vital edge and transform local town centres.

The government is also providing additional funding to further support the 101 high streets announced over summer in planning for how to best use the £25 million funding available to them.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick said:

This government is investing £3.6 billion in our great towns, including £1 billion to help our high streets to adapt and evolve while remaining vibrant and safe places at the heart of our communities.

Having announced the first 101 high streets that can benefit from £25 million each back in the summer, I am announcing support from our new High Streets Task Force for a further 20 places and naming 14 of these today. The Task Force will provide the tools they need to get the best advice possible and a dashboard of key local data.

Central to the mission of this new government is levelling up towns and regions, ensuring prosperity and opportunity are available to everyone. Over the course of 2020, we will invest hundreds of millions into projects to transform our town centres and support bespoke plans to meet the needs of individual local communities.

Minister for the Northern Powerhouse Rt Hon Jake Berry said:

Every place has its own unique strengths and challenges but all our town centres and high streets have one thing in common – they are the lifeblood of communities.

The tailored support from our new High Streets Task Force and up to £25 million each from the Towns Fund for 100 places gives communities the money and support they need to unleash the potential of their towns.

This people's government is backing people across the Northern Powerhouse and every part of the UK to succeed no matter where they live.

Today the government is also seeking views on whether an online register of commercial properties would make it easier to bring empty shops back into use.

Government wants to understand people's experiences of leasing commercial property – with a view to making ownership of high street properties more transparent, making it easier for businesses and community groups to find space and supporting investment in local areas.

Today's announcements build on ongoing government action to support high streets, including cutting small retailers' business rates bills by 50% from April, following more than £13 billion of business rates support since 2016.

The High Streets Task Force was announced by the government in response to recommendations of an expert panel on the high street chaired by Sir John Timpson.

The High Streets Task Force will give high streets and town centres advice, training and information to adapt and thrive, piloting a range of products and services with 20 places before rolling out across the country next year. The first 14 of the 20 areas are announced today.

The Task Force, run by the Institute for Place Management on behalf of government, is holding an open recruitment for a Board Chair to provide expert leadership to this programme.

The Task Force brings together a range of expert groups on reinventing and restructuring places, including the Royal Town Planning Institute and The Design Council.

Today the government is also announcing an extra £1 million dedicated to providing further support to the 101 high streets announced over summer in planning for the

£25 million of funding that is available to them, ensuring the vibrance of these high streets for years to come.

The first fourteen places that will take part in the pilot are:

1. Salford – Swinton Town centre
2. Croydon – Thornton Heath
3. Staffordshire Moorlands – Cheadle
4. Rushmoor – Aldershot Town Centre
5. Birmingham – Stirchley
6. Hyndburn – Accrington Town Centre
7. South Lakeland – Kendal
8. Preston – Friargate
9. Coventry – Coventry City Centre
10. Hartlepool – Hartlepool Town Centre
11. Cheshire West and Chester – Ellesmere Port Town Centre
12. Sandwell – West Bromwich Town Centre
13. Knowsley – Huyton Town Centre
14. Manchester – Withington District Centre

Loan system overhaul to benefit millions of students and graduates

Millions of graduates will be able to bin their paper statements and access their student loan account online as part of a major revamp to the system, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has announced today (30 December).

A new online repayment service will go live in 2020 and will allow graduates to see and manage more up to date information about their student loan balance.

The service is part of improvements to modernise the Student Loans Company (SLC) repayment system and will largely replace annual paper statements – although those who prefer the existing paper statements will still be able to receive them.

To stop students over-repaying their loans altogether, the Universities Minister is also calling on graduates to switch to direct debit towards the end of their loan – rather than continue with automatic deductions from their salary.

Earlier this year, the Government [introduced legislation](#) to bring in more frequent data sharing between the SLC and HMRC so students can see more up to date loan balances.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Student loans can remain part of graduates' lives for many years, so it's only right we do all we can to improve the system for them. These changes will make it easier for students to understand their balance, manage their loan and avoid over-repaying.

The student loan system helps make sure anyone with the drive and desire to benefit from our world-leading universities can do so, and it's right we invest in that system so it works for students and taxpayers.

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore said:

With more and more people enjoying the benefits of a university education, it's only right that graduates have easy access to the information they need about repaying their student loan.

The Government is investing in the student loans system to make it as simple and easy for people to use as possible. I urge all

graduates to use this new service and to join the direct debit scheme as they approach the end of their loan to ensure a smooth end and not repay more than they should.

From April 2020, graduates will only need to start paying back their loans [once they earn £26,575](#) – a third consecutive annual increase in the repayment threshold. The Government has acted to help graduates keep more money in their pockets in the early stages of their careers.

Under the current student loans plan, borrowers contribute an affordable amount based on their income, only once they reach the salary threshold. The Government subsidises around half of the overall cost of higher education.

[Orange peel, rubbish and fatbergs: the fuels behind the future of green transport](#)

- technological advances towards net-zero to be made through 4 new UK-based advanced biofuel plants
- pioneering projects will receive government funding and could lead to greener flights and road freight
- latest move in the government's green transport revolution, following the launch of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan which will help drive the UK towards its 2050 net zero target

Household waste, unused straw from farmland and old wood will be amongst the unusual components used by 4 world-leading UK-based plants to produce green fuels with support from government funding announced today.

Between 2018 and 2032 low carbon fuels are expected to save nearly 85 million tonnes of CO₂ – equivalent to taking nearly 18 million cars off the road. This equates to around a third of transport's projected contribution to UK carbon savings during the 2020s.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Whether you're commuting to work or travelling on a family getaway, we want that journey to be as green and environmentally friendly as possible.

This funding will help encourage innovative technology using today's waste to power tomorrow's green transport revolution, helping us reach a cleaner and greener future.

Future of Transport Minister George Freeman, said:

We made a legally binding commitment to reaching Net Zero. Now we are delivering. The UK is reducing CO2 emissions faster than any other G20 nation. We are doing it by investing in research and development, supporting the uptake of low emission and electrical vehicles, new inner city Clean Air Zones and the world's first comprehensive Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

This global leadership is helping create a 21st century transport network that is better for our environment, our health and our economy: with the potential to deliver high-skilled jobs in the green economy to all corners of the nation.

Two of the projects announced today are being funded under the government's £20 million [Future Fuels for Flight and Freight Competition](#) (F4C).

KEW Projects and Rika Biogas have been awarded a share of £6.5 million to build plants which aim to provide fuel for heavy goods vehicles. The project at KEW will also begin research which could pave the way for low carbon aviation fuel.

Over the next decade the UK advanced fuels industry is expected to be worth over £400 million and create 9,800 jobs.

A further 2 projects, which are being funded under the £25 million Advanced Biofuels Demonstration Competition (ABDC), are also driving towards their final stages of development. This includes Nova Pangaea Technologies, who will focus on the production of bio-ethanol from wood waste that can be blended with existing petrol used in road transport.

These latest investments build on the government's push to go further and faster to harness innovation, drive down emissions and improve air quality – including through the ground-breaking [Transport Decarbonisation Plan](#) which will set out plans to end the UK's transport emissions by 2050 and measures to rapidly [increase electric vehicle infrastructure](#).

[Health and Social Care staff and senior leaders among those praised in New Year Honours](#)

- Health and social care sector recognised in the New Year Honours list 2020

- This list celebrates the achievements and service of extraordinary people across the UK
- NHS Chief Executive Simon Stevens and Professor Dame Sally Davies, former Chief Medical Officer, among those honoured

This year's [New Year Honours list](#) celebrates the incredible work taking place in the health and social care sector all around the UK.

Among the senior leaders named is Professor Dame Sally Davies, the Government's Chief Medical Officer between 2011 and 2019, the NHS Chief Executive, Simon Stevens, and Chief Social Worker, Lyn Romeo.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

It's fantastic to see so many of our incredible NHS and social care staff recognised for their incredible achievements.

In particular, Professor Dame Sally Davies had an extraordinary impact during her time as Chief Medical Officer, including her revolutionary efforts in the fight against antimicrobial resistance and leading the UK's response to recent health emergencies. I'm delighted her unfaltering determination to improve the nation's health is being celebrated.

I love the NHS and am immensely proud of the incredible work it does. I want to thank Simon Stevens for his excellent work over the last five years and congratulate him on being recognised for that.

Also receiving an honour is Lyn Romeo, who became Chief Social Worker in 2013.

Minister for Care Caroline Dinenage said

I'm delighted to see health and social care sector staff get the recognition and thanks they so rightfully deserve.

Lyn Romeo has worked tirelessly to raise the profile of social work and social care, making a real difference to people's lives across the UK, and I want to congratulate her today.

Also recognised in this year's Honours list were several nurses, midwives, paramedics and surgeons who have dedicated their lives to supporting the NHS.