



Department
for Culture,
Media & Sport

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Rt Hon Dame Caroline Dinenage DBE MP
Chair, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Dear Caroline,

I am writing to update you on the announcement of the multi-billion-pound investment from Universal Destinations and Experiences to build a theme park and resort in Bedford.

The deal was reached during recess and announced at the earliest possible opportunity (9 April) due to the commercially sensitive nature of the negotiations with Universal. The investment proposed by Universal is to turn the 476-acre site of the former Kempston Hardwick brickworks, on the outskirts of Bedford, into a theme park and entertainment resort complex.

The expected multi-billion pound investment from Universal will be one of the most significant investments to be made in the United Kingdom in this parliament, and is among the largest single investments ever in the UK tourism and entertainment sector. It is proof that this Government is delivering on its plan to grow the economy by attracting private investment.

The benefits of the project are substantial. Universal expects the site to generate nearly £50 billion for the economy by 2055, with 8.5 million visitors expected in its first year – becoming the largest visitor attraction in the UK and one of the most advanced in Europe. This investment is the Government's Plan for Change in action, directly improving the lives of working people and strengthening our country. It aligns with our missions to kickstart economic growth and break down barriers to opportunity - providing valuable opportunities outside of London and our bigger cities for professionals to develop their careers.

The theme park will bring nearly 20,000 jobs during the construction period, with a further 8,000 new jobs across the hospitality and creative industries when it opens in 2031. As well as generating significant opportunities, the new theme park and resort will bring significant local benefits – with approximately 80% of employees at the theme park expected to come from local areas – and support a stream of ongoing work to unleash the potential of the Oxford-Cambridge corridor through growth, infrastructure revitalisation and further job opportunities.

Additionally, Universal has committed to working with local colleges and universities to train the next generation of its hospitality workforce, including through a range of apprenticeships and internships, directly supporting the government's Plan for Change to create economic growth and opportunities by getting people into well-paid, decent jobs across the creative, technology, tourism and hospitality sectors.

At a time of global change and uncertainty, this investment is instrumental in building a brighter future for the UK. I am writing today to ask for yours and the committee's support in the delivery of this transformational project.

As the Department responsible for the visitor economy and creative industries, DCMS is supporting Universal's engagement with relevant stakeholders and delivery bodies. As decisions on procurement and Intellectual Property rest entirely with Universal, they will be the first to share updates in those areas. We have of course championed the strengths of British companies and Intellectual Property.

Should you wish to read more on the project, you will find Universal's plans on their website <https://universalukproject.co.uk/>. I welcome further engagement with the committee in support of this transformational investment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lisa'.

Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

If you want any more information
about this, please just say.