

House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS297)

Ministry of Justice

Written Statement made by: **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Minister for Prisons, Probation and Rehabilitation (Andrew Selous)** on 24 Feb 2015.

North Wales Prison

The construction of the new prison in North Wales is already underway as part of the Prison New Capacity and Unit Cost Programmes. I can confirm that the new prison will be operated by Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS) but with 34% of service provision outsourced, including the running of the large industrial workshop complex. This new model will bring the public, voluntary and private sectors together, working to provide the best rehabilitative environment and to tackle re-offending rates.

The prison will provide 2,106 male Category C places for offenders from North Wales and North West England, and will have a small remand function serving the courts in North Wales. The first houseblock will start to take prisoners from early 2017. In addition to places for education and resettlement, there will be 12 large workshop spaces that can be used flexibly for a range of work and skills training activities and a recycling unit. This new prison will enable offenders to be held closer to home, allowing better support for their rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities on release.

The decision to allow HMPS to operate the prison reflects the success of the Prison Unit Cost Programme which will save £300m per annum from prison budgets by 2015/16 and reduces unit costs by £2,200 per place. The innovative approach we are taking in North Wales provides value for the taxpayer, makes best use of the considerable public sector expertise in running safe and decent prisons and will draw on the core strengths of the public, private and voluntary sectors to achieve the best results. It will incorporate the learning and good practice from previous prison mobilisations to ensure that it operates efficiently while providing prisoners with a robust and effective regime to assist them to address their offending behaviour.

This £212m investment in constructing the prison is a significant opportunity for North Wales, with the project set to boost the regional economy by around £23m a year and create up to 1,000 jobs once operational. The Ministry of Justice has been working closely with Welsh devolved health and education services to develop suitable models for the prison and will continue to work with the Welsh Government and other partners to agree the necessary resourcing as delivery requirements are finalised.

Our estate strategy will achieve long term cost reduction in the prison estate through the policy of 'New for Old' – this means replacing uneconomic prison places with modern, fit for purpose accommodation at much lower cost. The National Audit Office has stated that *"The strategy for the prison estate is the most coherent and comprehensive for many years, has quickly cut operating costs, and is a significant improvement in value for money on the approaches of the past."* The North Wales prison will provide good quality prison accommodation that delivers value for the taxpayer as a result of the low cost per place. Creating a modern low cost prison estate is essential to further reduce the overall cost of the prison system.