

Report of the Section 151 Officer

Council - 4 March 2021

The Capital Strategy 2020/21 - 2026/27

Purpose: To approve the Capital Strategy which informs the

seven year capital programme.

Consultation: Legal, Finance and Access to Services.

Recommendation(s): It is recommended that:

1) The Capital Strategy 2020/21- 2026/27 be approved.

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Finance Officer: Ben Smith

Legal Officer: Debbie Smith

Access to Services Rhian Millar

Officer:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following the publication of the Revised CIPFA Prudential Code in Dec 2017, it is now a requirement for Authorities to produce a Capital Strategy in addition to its suite of reports which are required by Regulation which outline and support the capital and revenue budgets
- 1.2 The Capital Strategy has been developed to ensure that the Council can take capital expenditure and investment decisions in line with Council priorities and properly take account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, risk, sustainability and affordability. The Strategy, therefore, sets out the longer term context in which capital expenditure and investment decisions are made and gives due consideration to both risk and reward and the impact on the achievement of priority outcomes. The Capital Strategy sets out the underlying principles in support of the capital programme presented to Council for approval on this same agenda. It seeks to ensure that each project is supportive of our corporate objectives, has clearly identified funding and has appropriate governance arrangements in place to support decision making and deliver the scheme.

- 1.3 The strategy covers capital expenditure, capital financing and asset management and is one of the key strategies alongside the more operational strategies for these and other areas including Treasury Management, Tax, Property Investment and service areas such as housing and other spending areas. It also gives an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. The Capital Strategy should support the delivery of the corporate objectives of the Authority and must complement and demonstrate clear links with the:
 - The Corporate Plan
 - Swansea: Achieving Better Together, Transformation Strategy and Programme Framework (Recovery Plan)
 - The Revenue Budget Report
 - The Capital Budget & Programme Report
 - The Medium Term Financial Plan
 - The Treasury Management, Investment Strategy and MRP Policy Statement Report

and have due regard to:

- The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015
- 1.4 The Council's Corporate plan has the following pre-existing well-being priorities:
 - 1. **Safeguarding** people from harm so that our citizens are free from harm and exploitation
 - Improving Education and Skills so that every child and young person in Swansea gains the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life
 - 3. Transforming our **Economy and Infrastructure** so that Swansea has a thriving mixed use City Centre and a local economy that will support the prosperity of our citizens
 - 4. **Tackling Poverty** so that every person in Swansea can achieve his or her potential
 - 5. Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's **natural resources and biodiversity -** so that we maintain and enhance biodiversity, reduce our
 carbon footprint, improve our knowledge and understanding of our
 natural environment and benefit health and well-being
 - 6. **Transformation and Future Council** development so that we and the services that we provide are sustainable and fit for the future.
- 1.5 The Council has subsequently adopted the Swansea: Achieving Better Together, Transformation Strategy and Programme Framework (Recovery Plan) with which it can plan and deliver services and objectives in the next 5 years. It is utilising this framework and its other planning tools that the Council plans to steer the City to recover from the aftermath of the effects of the Covid 19 global pandemic.
- 1.6 In formulating the detailed schemes within the programme of capital expenditure 2020/21- 2026/27 in the Capital Budget report, it can be demonstrated that all projects promote the objectives of at least one or more of the above corporate priorities in 1.4 and included in the capital programme

is significant additional capital expenditure to support the economic recovery of the City following the Covid 19 pandemic.

2. The Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2026/27

2.1 The Capital Budget and Programme 2020/21 – 2026/27 for the General Fund and HRA is reported in detail in The Capital Budget & Programme & HRA Capital Programme Reports on this agenda.

3. Asset Management Planning

- 3.1 The programme includes capital expenditure on the following categories of spend:
 - Operational supporting core business and service delivery
 - Investment to provide a financial return to the Council
 - Regeneration/ Community & Recovery enabling strategic place shaping and economic growth / to support specific local community and regional projects/ investing in the City to aid recovery from the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic
- 3.2 <u>Operational</u> Within the capital programme, is a comprehensive schedule of programmed routine repairs and maintenance both on the existing property and housing inventory and the significant portfolio of highways assets.
- 3.3 Investment It is recognised that, over the long term property offers a sound total investment opportunity, (including yield in the form of contractually agreed rental/lease income and the potential for capital growth in the form of potential asset appreciating in value). The formation of the Property Investment Board has enabled the Authority to take advantage of investing in property with a view to making a financial return, based on robust business case analysis evaluating not only on financial returns but providing strategic control of key sites within the City boundaries.
- 3.4 Historically the PWLB has been the most economically advantageous form of capital financing for the Council. Following the HM Treasury consultation on the PWLB borrowing process, strict guidance has been issued by HM Treasury which strictly prohibits the use of PWLB borrowing for investing in property/commercial assets 'purely for yield'. These changes clearly affect the viability of the Council buying investment assets. However alternative financing (grants, capital receipts and commercial financing) can still be used to fund these 'yielding investments' if the investment metrics still allow. It is envisaged that these restrictions in PWLB borrowing shall require robust business case appraisal and risk management to ensure any such investment is in the best interests of The Council.

3.5 Regeneration/Community

The significant portion of the current capital programme is comprised of a number of major regeneration and community construction programmes being undertaken by the Authority:

- 21st Century Schools A programme of major school refurbishment and new school build
- Swansea Bay City Region Deal The Swansea City and Waterfront Digital District project (one of the 9 Swansea Bay City Region Projects) plans include a 3,500-seat digital indoor arena at the current LC car park site in the city centre that will accommodate music concerts, touring shows, exhibitions, conferences, gaming tournaments and other events. A digital square featuring digital artworks and ultrafast internet connection speeds will also be developed outside the arena.
- More Homes and Welsh Housing Quality Standards
 – A programme of council house refurbishment and new council house building, utilising new borrowing powers to invest in new Council housing stock.
- A significant programme of capital expenditure to assist the City's economic recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic

3.6 Covid 19 Pandemic Response

The robust asset management planning processes outlined above in 1.3, 1.4 and 3.1 could not have foreseen the speed and depth of impact of the global Covid 19 pandemic which took hold in March 2020. It is testament to the inherent robust, resilient professional, efficient asset management, corporate building services, legal support, procurement, finance and treasury management services operating within the Council which allowed it to design, allow planning consent, contract with partners, finance, insure and build and handover a 1,000 bed Covid 19 Field Hospital in 3 months, being fully operational in June 2020. The facility has subsequently been modified to support the national Covid 19 vaccination programme.

4. Commercial Activity & Property Investment

- 4.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) defines investment property as property held solely to earn rentals or for capital appreciation or both. Returns from property ownership can be both income driven (through the receipt of rent) and by way of appreciation of the underlying asset value (capital growth). The combination of these is a consideration in assessing the attractiveness of a property for acquisition
- 4.2 In the context of the Capital Strategy, the council can use capital to invest in property and or infrastructure assets to provide a positive surplus/financial return. The council may fund the purchase of the property/infrastructure by borrowing money, (although as identified in 3.4 above, this now precludes PWLB). The income generated should cover the cost of servicing and repaying

the borrowed money each year. If an annual surplus is generated, this can be used to support the council's budget position, and enables the council to continue to provide services for local people. The business case process shall now need to be a more challenging/rigorous in light of the PWLB position in relation to investing purely for yield. Alternative sources of commercial funding usually carry a premium compared to usual prevailing PWLB interest rates, therefore this sets a higher bar for the commercial returns expected from investing into the asset and as such the business case and risk management process shall need to be robust before any such investment is made.

- 4.3 The reasons for buying and owning property investments are primarily:
 - Market and economic opportunity.
 - Strategic control of key City sites
 - Economic development and regeneration activity in the City (all investment property is within the City & County boundaries)
 - Financial returns to fund services to residents
- 4.4 Historically, property has provided strong investment returns in terms of capital growth and generation of stable income. Property investment is not without risk as property values can fall as well as rise and changing economic conditions could cause tenants to leave with properties remaining vacant
- 4.5 The strategy makes it clear that the council will continue to consider investments on a commercial basis and to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves, supported by our robust governance process. However the source of finance needs to be robust and the interest rates available need to be viable and support each business case. In light of this, it is expected that commercial property investment activity shall be reduced.
- 4.6 The Authority has established an appropriate gateway mechanism through the property investment board to appraise and evaluate all such investment opportunities.

5. Governance & Oversight

- 5.1 The Council has a well-established corporate governance framework with which to manage, monitor and quality assure the delivery of the capital programme:
 - Cabinet

Approval of large schemes/programmes

- Capital Budget Monitoring Cycle
 - Quarterly monitoring of progress against budget/programme
- Contract Procedure Rules
 - Identifies most appropriate procurement route for project
- Financial Procedure Rules

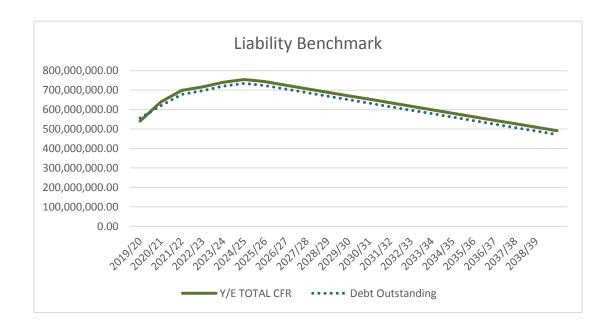
- Identifies appropriate scheme approval limits and budget virements/overspends thresholds
- Regeneration Programme Board
 - Monitors all regeneration programme schemes for progress against time, budget, quality
- Housing Futures Programme Board
 - Monitors all Housing schemes for progress against time, budget, quality
- 21st Century Schools Programme Board
 - Monitors all 21st Century Schools schemes for progress against time, budget, quality
- Property Investment Board
 - Identifies, appraises and approves property investment opportunities
- · Risk Register
 - Corporate framework for monitoring corporate risks (including major capital schemes)
- Grants & Capital Manual
 - Outlines the corporate capital & grant protocols, procedures and practices for compliance by practitioners within the organisation

6. Capital Financing Strategy

- 6.1 The Council's adopted capital financing strategy is to:
 - maximise external private investment
 - maximise external grant funding
 - maximise capital receipt income
 - finance self-funding income generative schemes
 - minimise external borrowing
 - minimise external funding costs
- 6.2 In the current difficult financial climate, capital allocations are constrained and the financing of prioritised schemes need to be carefully considered. In light of the continuing pressures on the revenue budget, unsupported borrowing is only to be utilised if there is a clear business case for expenditure and other sources of finance have been fully explored and ruled out. The corollary of austerity is that PWLB capital financing is still at competitively low levels, following the removal in Nov 2020 of the PWLB 1% premium introduced in Oct 2019, however PWLB borrowing cannot now be used in 'purely for yield' property investments as outlined in 3.4 but may still be used for operational and regeneration capital schemes.

7. Treasury Management Strategy

- 7.1 The Capital Strategy and the Capital Programme is intrinsically linked to the Treasury Management Strategy employed to fund the programme. The capital programme determines the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses. The Council approves its Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Policy in a separate report on this agenda.
- 7.2 The Council is required to produce a liability benchmark informed by its underlying need to borrow, otherwise known as the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), mapped against its actual levels of debt entered into. The attached is a projection of the benchmark as informed by the current capital programme. It can be seen that the benchmark enters into net repayment mode from 2025/26 as the current programme ends, but in reality the ongoing capital programme shall be refreshed on an annual basis with new commitments and ongoing financing shall be required.



8. Revenue Impact of The Capital Programme

8.1 Unsupported borrowing has a direct impact on the revenue budget, with revenue required to support both interest and principal repayments. The associated capital financing costs of a project are thoroughly considered when appraising a potential capital investment. The revenue impacts are considered in light of affordability, prudence and sustainability whilst considering the long term impact and benefits of a considered capital programme. The revenue impact of the capital programme are outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan, which is also presented on this agenda.

8.2 The S 151 officer has carefully considered the impact of the many variables and unknowns inherent in the funding of the presented capital programme (e.g. Brexit impact, volatility of markets, timing of City deal funding, variability of direct capital grant funding, impact of MRP review on equalising principal repayments in later years) and has sought to mitigate the impact of the funding of the capital programme on the revenue account with the establishment of the capital equalisation reserve. The utilisation of the reserve recognises the future obligations arising out of the committed capital programme whilst prudently mitigating that impact on the revenue account by adopting professional judgement in reserving appropriately at this time in the capital equalisation reserve.

9. Risk Appetite

- 9.1 Under CIPFA guidance, a local authority is required to outline its risk appetite in respect of its investment activities.
- 9.2 For the purpose of this statement, the Authority has referenced the Orange Book (UK government publication on the strategic management of risk within government) definition of Risk Appetite, namely:

"the amount of risk that an organisation is prepared to accept, tolerate, or be exposed to at any point in time."

It is important to note that risk will always exist in some measure and cannot be removed in its entirety. Additionally, in order to realise investment and commercial gains, one has to take some measure of risk. Therefore, risks need to be considered both in terms of threats to the Council as well as positive opportunities. It is worth noting that the Public Accounts Committee supports well-managed risk taking across government, recognising that innovation and opportunities to improve public services requires risk taking, providing that the ability, skills, knowledge and training to manage those risks well, exist within the organisation or can be brought to bear from outside.

- 9.3 The risk appetite statement sets out how we balance risk and return in pursuit of achieving our objectives. It is intended to aid careful decision-making, such that the Council takes well thought through risks to aid successful delivery of its services and obligations, while also understanding the adverse aspects of risk undertaken and taking appropriate measures to mitigate these in line with its stated goals. Thereby, the Council's risk judgements are more explicit, transparent and consistent over time.
- 9.4 The risk appetite statement shall form a key element of the Council's governance and reporting framework. In addition, the risk appetite will be considered annually and monitored on an ongoing basis by senior management, advisors, Audit Committee and Scrutiny Panel as appropriate.
- 9.5 It is important to note that the risk appetite is a high level view on the key areas of risk and the qualitative quantum therein that the Council is willing to accept in pursuit of its objectives. In this, it is different to other key aspects of risk management, primarily:

- The risk universe a detailed list of all the potential risks the Council is exposed to.
- Risk capacity the maximum level of risk the Council can run given its reserves, revenues, and access to funding, liquidity, regulatory and legal constraints, and any other restrictions.
- Risk tolerance the maximum amount and type of risk that the Council is willing to tolerate on a prudent assessment.
- 9.6 The latter two are usually quantified and given as a series of limits and analyses. The risk appetite is also supported by the following:
 - The Council's risk management framework
 - The governance structure and responsibilities
 - Risk reporting
 - Monitoring and escalation procedures

It should be noted that aspects of these will be bespoke to individual areas where risk is undertaken, e.g. managing the treasury portfolio, GDPR,

- 9.7 In general, the Council's risk appetite is expressed through its tolerance to risk in respect of capital preservation, meaningful liquidity and income certainty and volatility. The Council seeks to minimise its exposure to risks that are unwanted and unrewarded. Capital is managed centrally on an ongoing basis to ensure that there is sufficient liquidity in the short and medium term to meet costs and support front line services, as well as meeting long-term solvency and funding requirements. The benefits of this approach were apparent in the ability to fund the building of the 1,000 bed Covid 19 Field Hospital until such time, the Council could be reimbursed by WG.
- 9.8 The Council is exposed to a broad range of risks:
 - **Financial risks** related to the investment of the Council's assets and cash flow, market volatility, currency etc.
 - Macroeconomic risks related to the growth or decline of the local economy, interest rates, inflation and to a lesser degree, the wider national and global economy amongst others.
 - **Credit and counterparty risks** related to investments, loans to institutions and individuals and counterparties in business transactions.
 - Operational risks related to operational exposures within its organisation, its counterparties, partners and commercial interests
 - Strategic risks related to key initiatives undertaken by the Council such as significant purchases, new ventures, commercial interests and other areas of organisational change deemed necessary to help the Council meet its goals.

- Reputational risks related to the Council's dealings and interests, and the impact of adverse outcomes on the Council's reputation and public perception.
- Environmental and social risks related to the environmental and social impact of the Council's strategy and interests.
- **Governance risks** related to ensuring that prudence and careful consideration sit at the heart of the Council's decision-making, augmented by quality independent advice and appropriate checks and balances that manage oversight and efficiency.
- 9.9 Managing the Council's risks is an area of significant focus for senior management and members, and the Council adopts an integrated view to the management and qualitative assessment of risk. The Council aims to minimise its exposure to unwanted risks those risks that are not actively sought and which carry no commensurate reward for the Council through a range of mitigation strategies to the extent that it is cost-effective to do so. Specifically, the Council has no appetite for reputational risk, governance risk and currency risk.

For other risks, the Council's appetite is as follows:

Risk	Appetite
Financial	Moderate appetite for a range of asset classes, property and longer-term investments, subject to careful due diligence and an emphasis on security as well required liquidity profile.
	Lower appetite for capital growth oriented investments versus income generating investments. No appetite for currency risk,
	emerging markets and high volatility investments.
Macroeconomic	High appetite for exposure to local economic growth. Moderate appetite for exposure to national and global growth.
	Low appetite for interest rate risk, and inflation risk.
	No appetite for geopolitical risks and tail risk events.

Credit & Counterparty	High appetite for investment grade or secured credit risk, as well as exposure to highly rated counterparties and financial institutions with strong balance sheets.
	Lower appetite for unsecured non- investment grade debt. All subject to careful due diligence and an assessment of the transaction capacity, funding needs, broader goals and cashflow requirements.
Operational	Low appetite for BAU (Business as Usual) operational risks such as pricing errors, errors in administration, IT, cybersecurity etc. The Council maintains Risk Registers for key initiatives and significant investments to assess and mitigate specific risks on a more granular level. Business continuity plans have also been established to mitigate external occurrences.
	No appetite for fraud, regulatory breaches and exceeding risk tolerances.
Strategic	High appetite for strategic initiatives, where there is a direct gain to the Council's revenues or the ability to deliver its statutory duties more effectively and efficiently.
Environmental & Social	No appetite for environmentally negative risks.
	Low appetite for social risks, especially in the local region and always subject to full due diligence.

9.10 Risk management is not a stand-alone discipline. In order to maximize risk management benefits and opportunities, it is integrated with existing business processes.

10. Skills & Knowledge

- 10.1 It is important that the Authority has the appropriate staff with the right skills, knowledge and expertise with which to deliver the capital strategy and the programme.
- 10.2 The Director of Place has operational responsibility for the delivery of the capital programme and has management responsibility for :
 - Building Services (including procurement of Education Capital Programme)
 - Property Services
 - Regeneration & Planning Services
 - Highways and Transportation
 - Housing

where the staff are appropriately qualified as engineers, quantity surveyors, town planners, housing professionals, electricians, carpenters, subject matter experts and building professionals. Where required, external professionals are engaged and the appropriate framework/procurement route is adopted.

- 10.3 The financial management and budget monitoring of the capital programme is the responsibility of the S 151 Officer who is a CCAB qualified accountant and is supported by professionally CCAB qualified finance staff and technicians in providing the financial oversight and strategic financial advice for business case appraisal and ongoing monitoring of the capital programme.
- 10.4 The Head of Commercial Services is responsible for ensuring appropriate internal and external procurement and commissioning procedures are adhered to, ensuring that best value is achieved.
- 10.5 The Chief Legal Officer is responsible for ensuring legal compliance in the execution of contracts and completion of legal agreements in relation to the capital programme.

11. Legal Implications

11.1 The regulations requiring Authorities to have regard to The Prudential Code are issued under part 1 of The Capital Finance Act 2003. The code and subsequent guidance was revised in 2017 and 2018 respectively. The 2017 Code now requires the production of a Capital Strategy.

12. Financial Implications

12.1 The financial implications of this strategy are outlined in the Capital Programme, Medium Term Financial Plan and Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy also on this agenda.

13. Equality Impact Assessment

- 13.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 13.2 Our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above. We have undertaken an EIA screening which demonstrates there are no equality impact implications arising directly from this report (Appendix 1)

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Please ensure that you refer to the <u>'Screening Form Guidance'</u> while completing this form. If you would like further guidance please contact your support officer in the Access to Services team (see guidance for details).

Section 1						
What service area and directorate are you from?						
Service Area: Financial Services & Service Centre						
Directorate:Resources	3					
04/ \ \	011 005					
Q1(a) WHAT ARE YOU SCREENING FOR RELEVANCE?						
Service/	Policy/					
Function F	Procedu	re F	roject	Strategy	Plan	
Proposal						
			✓			
				_	_	
(b) Please name						
Capital Strategy- No						
out the overarchin	g princ	ciples guid	ding the fo	rmulation (of the capital	
programme						
Q2(a) WHAT DOES	Q1a RE	LATE TO?				
Direct front li			t front line	Indirect	t back room	
service deliver	-		e delivery	service delivery		
					,	
☐ (H)		(M)		√(L)		
(b) DO YOUR CU			I	1		
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internal		. 4 4 -			lta basis	
need to	war			ally provided		
			everyone in		i.e. Staff	
(H)		(M)		(M)	✓ (L)	
Q3 WHAT IS THE	_		_		NG	
_			Medium Imp	act	Low	
Impact	Don't	know				
		<u>(H</u>)	(M)	(L)	(<u>H)</u>	
Age	\longrightarrow			✓		
D. 1.99	\longrightarrow					
Disability	\longrightarrow			✓		
0						
Gender reassignmen	T			✓		
Marriago 8 civil partnership						
Marriage & civil partnership ✓						
Pregnancy and maternity ☐ ✓ ☐						

Race	•			✓	
Sex Sexu Wels Pove Care	ion or (non-)belief al Orientation h Language rty/social exclusior rs munity cohesion			✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	
Q4	Have you / will y engagement rel		•	onsultation and	
	☐ Yes ✓	,		ler whether you should ment – please see the	•
If yes	s, please provide	details below	,		
•) HOW VISIBLE IS JECT/ STRATEGY			N/POLICY/PROCED C?	OURE/
	High visibility	Med	dium visibility	Low visibili	ty
	to general public	to g	eneral public	to general pu	ablic
	☐(H)		(M)	√(L)	
(b)	_	lowing impact	_	OUNCIL'S REPUTAcial, political, media,	_
	High risk	Med	dium risk	Low risk	
	to reputation		eputation	to reputation	
	(H)		✓ (M)	√	(L)
Q6	Will this initiativ		pact (howeve	r minor) on any oth	ier
	Yes ✓	No If y	es, please pro	ovide details below	1
Q7 – <i>NC</i>	HOW DID YOU S OTE: Q3 counts as a			vant box below / M outscores any nº	of Ls)
MOS	TLY <mark>H</mark> and/or M ⁻	→ HIGH PF	RIORITY \longrightarrow	☐ EIA to be con Please go to Sec	•
MOS	TLY L>	LOW PRIOR	-	✓Do not comple Please go to C followed by Sec	18

Q8 If after completing the EIA screening process you determine that this service/function/policy/project is not relevant for an EIA you must provide adequate explanation below.

This is now a code requirement to outline the principles behind the formulation of the capital programme and has no direct impact on the groups identified in Q3

Section 2

Please send this completed form to the Access to Services Team for agreement before obtaining email approval from your Head of Service.

Screening form completed by:	
Name: Jeff Dong	
Location: 1.4.1c	
Telephone Number: 07810438119	
Date	e: 29/1/21
Approval by Head of Service:	
Name: B Smith	
Position: Section 151 Officer	
Da	te: 29/1/21

Please return the completed form to accesstoservices@swansea.gov.uk