

Press release: New UK Chief Veterinary Officer appointed

She will take over from Nigel Gibbens who is stepping down at the end of February 2018 following a highly successful 10 years in the post.

Christine will join Defra from her current high profile position in Australia, where she has been working as the CVO in New South Wales since August 2016. During her time there she led major improvements to biosecurity across many farming sectors.

She comes from a farming family in the south of Scotland, with a background in beef cattle and sheep.

Christine will be returning to Defra where she was Deputy Director for Animal Traceability and Public Health in 2016. She is an experienced veterinarian and worked for a number of years in private practice in Scotland and the north of England, prior to joining the Animal Health agency (now part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency) in 2008 as a Divisional Veterinary Manager in Scotland.

During a decade as Chief Vet Nigel Gibbens has been instrumental in driving animal welfare improvements both at a national and international level, and Christine will now build on that work.

The Government has recently made a number of announcements on improving animal welfare and is committed to further reforms as we leave the EU.

Speaking about her appointment, Christine Middlemiss said:

I am delighted to have been appointed and it will be a privilege to lead my veterinary colleagues to support our farming and food industry in this hugely important role.

I am very much looking forward to working again with the team at Defra, its agencies, the devolved administrations and all the individuals and groups which will contribute to meet future challenges across animal health and welfare.

The UK Government has made no secret it wants to cement its place as a world-leader on animal welfare as they leave the European Union, and I'm delighted to have an opportunity to play a part in that.

Welcoming the appointment, the government's Chief Veterinary Officer, Nigel Gibbens, said:

I would like to congratulate Christine on her success against a strong field of candidates and I am certain she will be a great addition to the department.

Her breadth of experience from work within Government and in the private sector will enable her to provide excellent veterinary leadership to the Defra group to deliver government's ongoing commitment to maintaining our high animal health and welfare standards and to represent the interests of the whole of the UK internationally.

Animal Welfare Minister Lord Gardiner added:

I warmly welcome Christine to her important role. She brings to it a wealth of experience and enthusiasm.

This Government is embarking on an ambitious programme of animal welfare reform, including plans to increase the maximum sentence for animal cruelty to five years in prison and introducing mandatory CCTV in all abattoirs. Christine will be invaluable in helping us in achieving world leading standards.

I thank Nigel Gibbens for his outstanding contribution as CVO over the past ten years. Leaving the department at the end of February, he is hugely respected across the veterinary community and beyond – leading on responses to disease outbreaks including avian influenza and advising government on issues from antimicrobial resistance to animal welfare.

Christine will take up her new role as CVO for the UK on the 1 March 2018.

News story: UK-China relations flourish at the 2017 People-to-People Dialogue

The breadth and depth of UK-China cooperation will be on display this week (4-7 December) during a visit to the UK by Chinese Vice Premier Madame Liu Yandong for the UK-China People-to-People (P2P) Dialogue.

The P2P Dialogue is co-chaired by Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt and Madame Liu. The Chinese Vice Premier will visit Edinburgh and Oxford as well as London, where she will meet senior figures and attend a variety of events. She will also meet with the Foreign Secretary to discuss a number of

issues including modern slavery, women's equality and the DPRK.

The P2P Dialogue will enhance the UK-China partnership by promoting further collaboration on a broad range of issues including health, education, culture, science and innovation, tourism and sport.

Ministers are expected to agree a range of initiatives including new joint UK-China health agreements that will further our work on a number of healthcare challenges, further collaboration on female leadership and empowerment, and strengthening existing collaboration between higher education institutions.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

The UK-China relationship is strong and continues to deliver benefits for both countries, so I am delighted to welcome Madame Liu to the UK for the People-to-People Dialogue.

China and Britain are both global powers with a global outlook, and will continue to work together to solve the big issues facing our world today, build economies of the future and develop our people-to-people links.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

I am delighted to once again co-chair the People-to-People Dialogue, which will reaffirm the strong ties between the UK and China and underline our commitment to working together to solve some of the biggest issues facing the world today.

Health is a key pillar in this relationship, which is why we will be collaborating to tackle major health issues such as fighting disease and improving health outcomes for all.

1. The theme for the UK-China P2P Dialogue in 2017 is Spirit of Youth, a UK government campaign in China that promotes deeper collaboration and exchange through inspiring the next generation of leaders in both countries.
2. The P2P Dialogue will maintain the momentum of the Golden Era of bilateral relations, established during President Xi's State Visit in 2015.
3. During her visit to the UK, Vice-Premier Liu is expected to:
 - Meet the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in London, and visit HRH The Princess Royal and the Duke of York at Buckingham Palace
 - Witness the launch of the UK-China joint Science and Innovation strategy
 - Co-chair a cross-cutting plenary meeting of the P2P with Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Health and UK chair of the P2P. The

meeting will also be attended by Justine Greening, Karen Bradley and a senior ministerial delegation from both the UK and China.

- Participate in a forum for CEOs in the creative industries and a roundtable of Young Leaders including young parliamentarians.
- Travel to Edinburgh, where she will receive an honorary degree from Edinburgh University.
- Travel to Oxford, where she will deliver a speech at the Sheldonian Theatre.

[News story: Careers guidance for modern country unveiled](#)

Every school and college in the country will aim to have a dedicated careers leader in place by the start of the new school year – backed by £4million of funding – who can give advice on the best training routes and up-to-date information on the jobs market, helping young people make decisions about their future.

The plan will also boost careers support in the areas of the country most in need, with £5million funding to create 20 careers hubs across the country that will link schools and colleges with local universities and employers to help broaden pupils' horizons.

The Strategy – developed in partnership with the [Gatsby Charitable Foundation](#) and co-ordinated through an expanded role for the [Careers and Enterprise Company](#) – will help young people choose the career that is right for them, alongside the £500million investment in new T levels to deliver a world-class technical education system on par with the high-quality academic routes available.

It is part of the government's commitment to make sure people have the skills they need to get on in life and help build a Britain that is fit for the future.

Launching the strategy at the [Careers Development Institute](#) (CDI) annual conference in Birmingham, Skills Minister Anne Milton said:

Without access to the best possible careers support, some people will miss out on the opportunities available.

They will continue to be held back if they don't have the right advice, at the right time to make informed decisions about their future, or may not have access to the broader experiences and role models to help them develop as people.

It matters to me that we give people from all backgrounds the best possible preparation to move into a job, or training that enables them – whatever their background or wherever they live – to have a fulfilling life.

The announcement follows the launch of the government's Industrial Strategy which sets out a long term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK. The Careers Strategy will include:

Dedicated careers leaders

We will aim for every school and college to have a dedicated careers leader, with £4 million to provide training and support for at least 500 schools and colleges, so they can give the most up-to-date advice and fully prepare young people for the world of work.

Quality interactions between schools and businesses

Secondary schools will be expected to provide pupils with at least one meaningful interaction with businesses every year, with a particular focus on employers from Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) industries to help deliver the high-skilled workers we need in these industries.

Careers hubs to be set up across the country

To support young people in the most disadvantaged areas, £5million funding will develop 20 careers hubs, led by the Careers and Enterprise Company. Hubs will link together schools, colleges, universities and local businesses to broaden the aspirations of young people.

Trials of careers activities in primary schools

Backed by £2million, these pilots will test out ways of engaging children from an early age on the wealth of careers available to them, helping to raise their aspirations. These trials will focus on some of the most disadvantaged areas of the country through the government's Opportunity Areas programme.

Specialist advice for long-term unemployed and those with additional needs

The National Careers Service will provide access to specialist support for adults who need it most, ensuring that we help create opportunities for everyone, no matter where they live or their background.

The Gatsby Charitable Foundation has set out eight clear benchmarks for schools and colleges on good careers advice. The strategy puts employers at the centre of the careers programme, ensuring young people receive tailored advice about the training routes and work experience needed to secure a successful career in the future.

Sir John Holman, Senior Advisor to the Gatsby Foundation and author of the Gatsby Career Benchmark report said:

Good Career Guidance is the key to social mobility. For young people coming from a background of low socioeconomic aspirations, school career guidance is their best hope of charting the way to a rewarding future career. We now know, from our international study and from the work of career guidance experts, what makes for good career guidance: it is described by the eight Gatsby benchmarks which have been shown in the pilot in the North East of England to have such a powerful positive effect in schools and colleges. I am very pleased that the Department for Education has put these benchmarks at the heart of its strategy.

For the first time, schools and colleges have a clear description of what they need to do get good career guidance for each and every student, whatever their needs. Employers can equally clearly see the important part they play in a single coherent framework. The schools and colleges in Gatsby's pilot have shown that an essential part of success lies in leadership at the school level, and I am pleased to see that DfE has acknowledged this and has committed to a programme to identify the role of Career Leaders and to help to train them.

With new technical training routes coming from 2020, and with Brexit making it more important than ever to develop home-grown skills, this is an auspicious moment at which to launch this imaginative and pragmatic strategy.

The Careers and Enterprise Company will support schools and colleges to meet these benchmarks and Ofsted will hold schools and colleges to account for the careers provision they offer pupils.

Claudia Harris, CEO of the Careers & Enterprise Company says:

We welcome the Careers Strategy and its adoption of The Gatsby Charitable Foundation Benchmarks, widely recognised as the hallmark of best practice in careers and enterprise provision. We are delighted we have been asked to play an expanded role, operating as the backbone organisation coordinating efforts across these benchmarks. We also welcome the focus on Careers Leadership in schools which organisations including Teach First, The CDI and The Gatsby Charitable Foundation have highlighted as key to successful careers support. We are grateful for the strong partnerships we have developed with the Local Enterprise Partnerships, schools, colleges and employers and over the coming months we will share a plan on how we will collectively take forward the recommendations in the Strategy.

All this careers information will be brought together on one website, to be launched by the [National Careers Service](#) next year, to support people just starting out on a new career path, or those who want to re-skill or upskill. It will feature more than 800 job profiles developed with industry experts and a comprehensive list of training courses available.

Russell Hobby, chief executive of education charity [Teach First](#), said:

The changing global economy and technological advances mean the world of work is evolving at a rapid pace. More than ever young people need support to make informed choices about their futures. But schools haven't always been able to deliver this support to a consistently high standard. And it is often pupils in low income communities who miss out most on the help they need. We welcome the Government's careers strategy, particularly the commitment to training and supporting careers leaders in schools, and we hope this reaches the schools and pupils most in need. This is something we have called for to allow schools to support every pupil to fulfil their potential, regardless of their background.

[Press release: Highways England lightening the load for hauliers and motorists this Christmas](#)

Since it was created in 2015, Highways England has completed 18 road improvements across the country, which is a welcome bonus for haulage firms preparing to deliver millions of parcels over the next few weeks.

And Highways England is also going the extra mile this Christmas to help motorists and hauliers reach their destinations hassle-free as it prepares to lift and complete almost 400 miles of roadworks across the country. Almost 99 per cent of motorways and strategic A roads will be roadworks-free in time for Christmas, meaning people travelling to meet up with families and friends can more easily reach their destinations.

And that is a welcome bonus for UK next day parcel delivery firm, DPD, as it prepares to deliver 16 million parcels over the next three weeks.

Its 9,000-strong army of drivers will notch up more than 15 million miles of driving.

Justin Pegg, UK Operations Director for DPD, said:

Time is always of the essence in our business, so the work Highways England does throughout the year and especially in December is hugely appreciated. We're out there every single day in December – quite literally delivering Christmas – and if the roads are clear, it makes a huge difference to the service our drivers can provide.

DPD will be moving a record number of parcels the length and breadth of the country this December and the vast majority will need to be delivered the next day. We started planning for Christmas in January and every aspect of that plan is painstakingly put together, but there are still elements that remain outside of our control, such as traffic and the weather.

(LtoR): Finn Owens from DPD with Highways England customer service director Melanie Clarke and Highways England traffic officer Vicki Lawton who will be working on Christmas Day to keep traffic moving on the Midlands motorway network.

To help make journeys better in December, Highways England repair teams will be working around the clock to complete hundreds of miles of road improvements in time for the Christmas getaway.

The roadworks embargo runs from 6am on 22 December until 12.01am on 2 January to help people get away this Christmas with as little disruption as possible.

By suspending or completing roadworks, more lanes will be open and many speed restrictions will be lifted. Highways England's customer service director, Melanie Clarke, said:

We're doing everything we can to make journeys as smooth as possible this Christmas and that's why we're keeping 99 per cent of the road network we manage free from roadworks.

Over the past two years we've already added 190 lane miles of much needed capacity and that will make life easier for those travelling around this month, as the Christmas countdown begins.

The majority of the 18 large-scale improvements already completed by Highways England have added much-needed capacity to some of England's busiest roads.

And this Christmas, more than 5,000 Highways England staff including traffic officers and control room operatives will be working around the clock, helping to clear incidents and manage congestion.

During 2016/17 Highways England traffic officers attended more than 49,000 incidents, clearing just over 85 per cent of them within an hour.

Those wishing to find out more about driving on smart motorways, you can [view our webpage](#).

Drivers planning to use the Dartford Crossing are reminded to pay Dart Charge in advance or by midnight the day after crossing.

More information can be found on our website or by calling our information line (0300 123 5000) people can keep up to date with conditions on the roads.

For more detailed information on how to carry out your vehicle checks, search Think!

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Statement to Parliament: EU Transport Council: agenda for 5 December 2017

I will attend the only formal Transport Council under the Estonian Presidency (the Presidency) taking place in Brussels on Tuesday 5 December (2017).

The first item on the agenda will be a progress report on phase one of the mobility package, focusing on proposals designed to improve the clarity and enforcement of the EU road transport market (the 'market pillar'), and proposals on the application of social legislation in road transport (the 'social pillar').

Following this, the Presidency has proposed a policy debate on the 'charging pillar' of the package. The proposals to amend the existing directives on HGV road tolls and user charges ('Eurovignette') and the interoperability of electronic road toll systems (EETS) set out rules for charging vehicles using the road (but do not mandate such charging) and promote better functioning of charging across national barriers.

Next, there will be a progress report on the proposed amendment to the regulation on safeguarding competition in air transport. The proposal aims to tackle discriminatory practices and address perceived deficiencies in the existing legislation by allowing complaints to be made to the European Commission by a wider range of interested parties who suspect, or have evidence that, one or more EU carriers are being harmed by the unfair practices of a third country.

The council will adopt conclusions on the progress on Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). The conclusions do not place any binding requirements on member states. They recognise the value that the TEN-T Policy and CEF (the associated funding programme) bring to EU transport infrastructure and look to strengthen transport investment in the next EU budgeting period. The UK can support these conclusions.

Conclusions will also be adopted on the digitalisation of transport. 'Digital Europe ' has been a priority for the Estonian Presidency and the conclusions highlight the potential and challenges for the digitalisation of transport and, amongst other things, call on the commission to develop a comprehensive and multimodal digitalisation strategy for the transport sector during the first quarter of 2019. The UK can support their adoption.

Next, the council will adopt conclusions on mid-term evaluation of the Galileo, EGNOS and European GNSS Agency. We welcome these conclusions and, in particular, the need for new recommendations about the future evolution of the programme to be proportionate and costed before they are brought forward for decision.

Under any other business, the commission will first present phase 2 of the mobility package, which focuses on clean mobility and includes proposals on promotion of clean and energy-efficient vehicles, combined transport of goods, and access to the market for coach and bus services. The presidency will provide information on the state of play on the proposed rail passenger rights regulation. The delegations from Germany, the Commission, Poland, France and Finland will, respectively, provide information on automated cars, implementation of the aviation strategy, World Maritime Days, IMO greenhouse gas emission reduction strategy, and summertime arrangements. The commission will also provide information on military mobility, and finally, the Bulgarian delegation will present the transport work programme of their forthcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union.