

# How the world should prepare for the next pandemic

Inventing a safe and effective vaccine is not easy and never guaranteed. Developing a vaccine for malaria took decades and despite great effort there is still no vaccine against HIV. But against the odds and in record time we already have a range of vaccines to protect against COVID-19.

It's been one of the greatest scientific achievements in recent history. As a result the UK and other nations are now well advanced in their vaccination programmes and the grip that COVID-19 has held on our lives is being loosened.

How was it possible to move so fast? One answer is that key starting blocks were in place. Decades of research on vaccine technologies, experience of clinical trials and attempts to make vaccines for other coronavirus infections meant a quick start. In contrast, while rapid tests emerged during the first few months, it has taken much too long to work out which worked well and when to use them.

Despite these advances, many countries have not had access to vaccines and many continue to battle tragically high rates of infection. They are not safe now, and until we are all safe none of us is safe. This is why the international community must act now to tackle COVID-19 across the world and share vaccines.

We should also be planning for future pandemics. We need to reduce the chance of emergent infectious threats by detecting them quickly and taking decisive action to contain them. These are prerequisites. But we should also stock our arsenal and be prepared to respond. Imagine if we'd had safe, effective and high-quality vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics available at scale within 100 days of this pandemic being declared. The world might have already been back to normal. This should be our aim for the future.

In preparation for the upcoming G7 summit, the prime minister asked me to bring together experts from industry, academia, governments and organisations like the WHO and the Wellcome Trust to look at how we might accelerate the discovery, development and deployment of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. This partnership will recommend practical steps that the international community can take to make it possible to meet the 100-day ambition.

There are specific needs in each area. Regulation for rapid diagnostic tests needs an overhaul focused on quality and use; clinical trials infrastructure needs to be built across the globe; a distributed manufacturing network with easier technology transfer is required; and we need to generate prototype vaccines and medicines against the WHO priority pathogen list to create the building blocks for a fast start. Investment in diverse technologies paid dividends in the advent of mRNA vaccines and is required in all of these

areas.

To create a war chest of options backed by strong research will require public-private partnerships. New technologies and modes of working will need to be embedded in everyday activities so that when we require rapid scale-up during emergencies, the exceptional is already part of the routine. We will need to define the rules of the road now so that time is not wasted during epidemics or pandemics in agreeing data-sharing protocols, supply chain movements, funding processes for R&D and procurement, or technology transfer arrangements.

We cannot prevent the threat of pandemics completely. But we can work together to ensure they never again cause such devastation. We must show humility and prepare but recognise that we will be taken by surprise. Strengthening healthcare and public health systems and having a world class surveillance system are essential.

A 100-day target for effective, safe and high-quality diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines produced at scale for equitable distribution is extremely ambitious. But it is a target that the world can and should measure our progress against.

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## Scams warning for tax credits customers

Tax credits customers should be vigilant and alert to potential scams, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has warned, as the remaining annual renewal packs will arrive in the post this week.

In the 12 months to 30 April 2021, HMRC responded to more than 1,154,300 referrals of suspicious contact from the public. More than 576,960 of these offered bogus tax rebates.

In the same period, HMRC has worked with telecoms companies and Ofcom to remove more than 3,000 malicious telephone numbers, and with internet service providers to take down over 15,700 malicious web pages. HMRC responded to 443,033 reports of phone scams in total, up 135% on the previous year.

Anyone doing their tax credits renewal who has received a tax or benefits scam email or text might be tricked into thinking it was from HMRC and share their personal details with criminals, or even transfer money for a bogus overpayment.

HMRC's Cyber Security Operations identifies and closes down scams every day. The department has pioneered the use in government of technical controls to stop its helpline numbers being spoofed, so that fraudsters can no longer

make it appear that they are calling from those HMRC numbers.

Myrtle Lloyd, HMRC's Director General for Customer Services, said:

We're urging all of our customers to be really careful if they are contacted out of the blue by someone asking for money or bank details.

There are a lot of scams out there where fraudsters are calling, texting or emailing customers claiming to be from HMRC. If you have any doubts, we suggest you don't reply directly, and contact us yourself straight away. Search GOV.UK for our 'scams checklist' and to find out 'how to report tax scams'.

Many scams mimic government messages to appear authentic and reassuring. HMRC is a familiar brand, which criminals abuse to add credibility to their scams.

If customers cannot verify the identity of a caller, HMRC recommends that you do not speak to them. Customers can check [GOV.UK for HMRC's scams checklist](#) to find out how to [report tax scams](#) and for information on how to [recognise genuine HMRC contact](#).

Tax credits help working families with targeted financial support, so it is important that people do not miss out on money they are entitled to. Customers have until 31 July to notify HMRC of any change in circumstances that could affect their claims.

Renewing online is quick and easy. Customers can log into GOV.UK to check on the progress of their renewal, be reassured it is being processed and know when they will hear back from HMRC. Customers can also use the HMRC app on their smartphone to:

- renew their tax credits
- check their tax credits payments schedule, and
- find out how much they have earned for the year

Tax credits customers must [report the changes](#) to HMRC. Circumstances that could affect tax credits payments include changes to:

- living arrangements
- childcare
- working hours, or
- income (increase or decrease)

Customers do not need to report any temporary falls in their working hours as a result of coronavirus. They will be treated as if they are working their normal hours until the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme closes.

Information on [renewing your tax credits](#)

The deadline for customers to renew their tax credits is 31 July 2021. If

customers haven't received their renewal pack by 4 June, they will need to [contact HMRC](#)

Tax credits is being replaced by [Universal Credit](#). Customers cannot receive tax credits and Universal Credit at the same time.

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## [Rogue recovery specialists wound-up in court](#)

Global Investigations and Recoveries Limited was wound up in the public interest in the High Court on 17 May 2021 before DDJ Watkin. The Official Receiver has been appointed liquidator of the company.

During the proceedings, the court heard that Global Investigations and Recoveries was incorporated in April 2019, with registered offices in Nottingham.

The company contacted businesses who were creditors of insolvent companies, offering that it could recover debts from the director directly and outside of statutory liquidation proceedings.

Global Investigations and Recoveries, however, came to the attention of the Insolvency Service after receiving complaints that the company was operating contrary to insolvency legislation.

Following confidential enquiries, investigators established several instances of misconduct caused by Global Investigations and Recoveries.

The rogue debt collectors used a bank account not in its own name and engaged in misleading sales practices with no apparent commercial benefit to customers, while also failing to maintain a registered office, which is prejudicial to creditors or customers of the company.

Global Investigations and Recoveries failed to co-operate with the Insolvency Service's enquiries and did not deliver any accounting or trading records.

This has meant investigators could not establish the full extent of harm caused by Global Investigations and Recoveries. It is understood, however, that one potential victim was quoted £4,000 to engage with Global Investigations and Recoveries' debt collection services.

The court wound up Global Investigations and Recoveries on the grounds that it traded with a lack of transparency and commercial probity.

David Usher, Chief Investigator for the Insolvency Service, said:

Insolvency proceedings are established in law and liquidators are responsible for recovering returns to creditors. Global Investigations and Recoveries, however, acted contrary to insolvency law and unscrupulously targeted creditors, who only wanted to secure their returns.

We will not hesitate to petition the courts where evidence uncovers abuse and in this case the courts have wound-up Global Investigations and Recoveries, which will protect further creditors from harm.

All enquiries concerning Global Investigations and Recoveries should be directed to the Official Receiver via [PIU.0R@insolvency.gov.uk](mailto:PIU.0R@insolvency.gov.uk), quoting: LQD6241915 – Global Investigations and Recoveries Ltd.

Global Investigations and Recoveries Limited – company registration number 11928205 – was incorporated on 5 April 2019.

The petition was presented under s124A of the Insolvency Act 1986. The Official Receiver was appointed as liquidator of the company on 17 May 2021 by DDJ Watkin, a Judge of the High Court.

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). [Further information about live company investigations is available here.](#)

[Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is available here.](#)

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

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## **[Joint statement following the visit of COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma to Viet Nam](#)**

COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma visited Hanoi from 28-29 May 2021. During his visit, he met Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Tran Hong Ha, Viet Nam's Chief Negotiator for climate change, and Minister of Industry and Trade Nguyen Hong Dien.

Following an open and constructive exchange of views on climate change including adaptation, mitigation, climate finance and negotiation issues at

COP26, the COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma and Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Tran Hong Ha released the following statement:

Both sides called for increased climate action in the lead up to the COP26 Summit, which will be held in Glasgow, in November, and agreed on the importance of further action after COP26.

Mr Sharma recognised Viet Nam's particular vulnerability to the effects of climate change, and welcomed the commitment and engagement of Viet Nam, including at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Open Debate on Climate Change and Security, chaired by the UK Prime Minister Johnson in February 2021.

Both sides recognised the global efforts required to maintain momentum ahead of COP26 to tackle the urgent threat of climate change. Both sides agreed that it is vital for the world to act to limit average temperature rises to 1.5C by the end of the century, to avoid the worst effects of climate change, in line with the Paris Agreement. To achieve this the COP President Designate underlined the importance of all countries committing to achieving Net Zero emissions by the middle of the century, and with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) aligned with this.

Mr Sharma set out the UK's ambitious NDC. They discussed the UK's support to Viet Nam's energy transition, including speeding up the development of its renewable energy sector. The UK and Viet Nam both welcomed recent announcements on reaching Net Zero emissions across the region, and Viet Nam confirmed its intention to reach Net Zero emissions as early as possible based on further international support. Vietnam affirmed its continuing policy of transitioning from a "brown" economy to one based on green, renewable energy with low carbon emissions, with a roadmap suitable to the country's development needs and capacity. This should be accompanied by adequate technological and financial support from developed countries including the UK.

The UK reiterated its determination to support Viet Nam in its efforts on climate change, particularly adaptation and energy, through bilateral and multilateral frameworks to help deliver this target, including the Green Climate Fund and the COP26 Energy Transition Council that are aligning international support with Viet Nam's needs. Mr Sharma welcomed the prospect of accelerating Viet Nam's transition away from coal to clean and renewable energy under the upcoming Power Development Plan 8 (PDP8), building on Viet Nam's recent investments in solar and wind energy which will create economic growth and sustainable jobs.

They also discussed adaptation and resilience, and the importance of nature-based solutions to tackle climate change. Mr Sharma welcomed Viet Nam's commitment to planting one billion trees, and also its active consideration of signing up to the Adaptation Action Coalition.

They agreed that the international community should continue to support developing countries in improving their adaptation to the impacts of climate change and developed countries must meet their climate finance commitments

under the Paris Agreement.

They agreed to continue to work closely this year ahead of COP26. Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Tran Hong Ha stressed that Viet Nam would do its utmost possible to contribute to the success of COP26. And the UK as the host of COP26, will work closely with the Embassy of Viet Nam in the UK to facilitate Viet Nam's participation at COP26 and looks forward to further bilateral cooperation.

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## **Largest community woodland in the East to be created in Essex alongside Lower Thames Crossing route**

The woodland at Hole Farm near Great Warley, Brentwood in Essex is at the heart of the project's plans to boost the wildlife and increase habitats in the area. Under Forestry England's care, the 100-hectare site will become home to around 150,000 new trees and provide homes to thousands of native species, from mammals to invertebrates and birds to fungi.

The green space will be designed for people too, and could include facilities such as a café, education centre and a community orchard. A range of provisions for outdoor activities are also being considered, and new public paths may link to a footbridge across the M25 to create an uninterrupted walking and cycling route between other nearby woodlands, such as Folkes Lane Woodland, Thorndon Country Park and the wider area of the Thames Chase Community Forest.

Forestry England will carry out a consultation later this year to seek the public's feedback on plans for the site.

The new community woodland is part of Highways England's commitment to increase biodiversity along England's Strategic Road Network by 2050 and will go ahead regardless of consent being granted for the Lower Thames Crossing.

Mike Seddon, Chief Executive, Forestry England, said:

We know how important high-quality, local greenspace is to people as well as the country's ambition to plant new woods and forests. We have been creating and managing community woodlands for decades and are excited to be working with Highways England and looking forward to hearing from the local community. This will become a great addition to the nation's woodlands.

Matt Palmer, Executive Director for the Lower Thames Crossing, said:

The Lower Thames Crossing is the most ambitious road scheme in a generation, because as well as improving your journey and supporting 22,000 jobs, it will enhance the natural environment and leave a positive green legacy for our neighbours.

The plans for Hole Farm community woodland are part of our commitments to increase biodiversity alongside our major routes and I look forward to working with Forestry England to create a green space for the whole local community to enjoy for generations.

Councillor Chris Hossack, the Leader of Brentwood Borough Council, said:

Brentwood Borough Council is excited to support the Lower Thames Crossing in the establishment and provision of a new country park and the planting of 150,000 trees within the borough. This major acquisition will provide improvements in biodiversity, carbon capture and air quality while extending the outdoor leisure, recreational and educational provisions in Brentwood. This opportunity is great news for Brentwood but also provides a major boost to the greening plans for the South Essex Region.

The new woodland complements the project's existing environmental initiatives that will enhance and connect habitats across the area. This will be achieved by returning farmland along the proposed route to semi-natural habitats including species-rich grassland and wildflower meadows.

Elsewhere along the route, another 260 hectares of new woodland will be planted bringing the total to 360 hectares, and the project will significantly increase the number of ponds, watercourses, and hedgerows in the area. These areas will be connected by seven new green bridges and 42km of new pathways, allowing people to easily move around and enjoy the open spaces in the area.

The site will be managed by Forestry England, the country's largest land manager, on behalf of Highways England. Forestry England is supporting the government's target of planting 30,000 hectares of new woodland every year by 2025 to help deliver ambitious plans to become net-carbon zero by 2050. The new green space will be the largest community woodland in the East of England.

Highways England plans to resubmit its application for a Development Consent Order later this year. An application was originally submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in October 2020 but was withdrawn following early feedback from the Inspectorate on the application.

For more information on this project, [visit the scheme website.](#)



To keep up to date with the latest travel information follow @HighwaysEast on Twitter or [visit our website.](#)

## **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.