

Traffic commissioners to resume in-person hearings

News story

Physical attendance at public inquiries and other hearings are due to resume from Monday 6 July, with social distancing measures in place.



The Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain have announced that in-person tribunal hearings are set to resume from Monday 6 July 2020. This follows the postponement of cases in March 2020 as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Each tribunal location has been risk assessed and appropriate control measures identified. Steps will be put in place to maintain social distancing and ensure that facilities are COVID-secure. The health and safety of attendees, Office of the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) staff and the commissioners themselves remains of paramount importance and underpins the decision to resume in-person hearings.

Those called to a hearing will be advised of the time and date of their hearing, with sufficient notice given to prepare their case. OTC will provide advice on the steps they may need to take ahead of the hearing in the provision of evidence, and on arrival to assist in maintaining social distancing and ensuring hygiene standards.

Anyone who wants to attend a public inquiry as an observer will need to contact the OTC in advance. This is because the capacity of the tribunal rooms will be restricted during the current period. Some hearings may continue to be held via video link or equivalent. This will be limited to appropriate cases only.

Anyone called to PI who has concerns about attending in person should let OTC staff know immediately on receipt of the letter calling them to a hearing.

While the majority of OTC staff continue to work from home, please direct any email enquiries to Enquiries@otc.gov.uk or your relevant case worker's email

address.

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UN Human Rights Council 43: Interactive Dialogue on the Democratic Republic of Congo

Thank you Mr. Vice President,

The United Kingdom welcomes the oral update provided by the High Commissioner and the International Expert team.

We welcome the High Commissioner's visit to DRC in January and the focus on inter-ethnic human rights violations within Ituri. We urge DRC's Government to continue its efforts to end violence, tackle impunity and address corruption.

While we are encouraged by the Government's commitment to work with the international community, the UK remains concerned by DRC's human rights situation. In particular, reports of increased abuses by armed groups in conflict-affected areas, noting the recent escalation of violence in Ituri. We are also concerned that COVID-19 risks undermining progress made by the DRC government on addressing human rights. The Joint Office for Human Rights has reported incidents of state agents violating human rights while implementing measures to address the pandemic. In addition, the poor conditions in prisons across DRC are leaving detainees in desperate need, and risk prisons becoming hubs for transmission.

Madam, High Commissioner,

We would welcome an update on how the Government is strengthening local human rights mechanisms, their capacity to investigate violence such as the events in Yumbi in December 2018, and the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review recommendations made in May 2019.

Thank you.

World-first scheme underway to tackle AMR and protect UK patients

- Government offers contracts to develop new antibiotics to treat deadliest diseases
- NHS patients could benefit from new antibiotic treatments as early as 2022
- New drugs will be paid for by world's first 'subscription-style' payment model for antibiotics

The NHS is offering 2 contracts to pay pharmaceutical companies at the start of their work for access to innovative antibiotics, incentivising them to bring new classes of the drugs to patients across the UK for the first time in almost 30 years.

Of particular interest are antibiotics that can provide alternative treatment options for serious infections, such as bloodstream infections, sepsis and hospital-acquired pneumonia.

The high cost and low returns associated with antibiotic research and development makes it commercially unattractive. This is why the drugs will be paid for by the world's first 'subscription-style' payment model for antibiotics and will be made available to UK patients as soon as possible, potentially as early as 2022.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The incredible discovery of antibiotics nearly 100 years ago transformed the health of our nation and our ability to combat infections. Diseases that were once a death sentence are now treated in just one small step.

But resistance to antibiotics is increasing and it's imperative we take urgent action on a national and global scale to protect future generations.

This new way of buying antibiotics for patients in the NHS breaks down restrictive barriers to offer companies a vital springboard to foster innovation and develop potentially life-saving new products.

Professor Dame Sally Davies, UK Special Envoy on Antimicrobial Resistance, said:

Antibiotics underpin modern medicine and are integral for global health security. Governments and industry must work together to produce new antibiotics and ensure that we can continue to treat common diseases.

The UK is leading the way by encouraging companies to produce new antibiotics to stay one step ahead of life-threatening diseases.

The payment model, which was launched in July 2019, will pay pharmaceutical companies upfront for access to their antibiotic product, based on a product's value to the NHS, rather than how much is used.

This aims to incentivise companies to invest in researching and developing new antibiotics, helping secure much-needed alternative treatment options for NHS patients.

Two drugs that have proven to be both safe and effective will be selected to undergo health technology assessment (HTA) by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) throughout 2021 using adapted methods for antimicrobials. The HTA will be used to decide the level of the subscription payment.

From this week, suppliers can register their interest for the scheme on NHS England's eTendering Service.

The UK is at the very forefront of the global fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR), launching its [5-year national action plan](#) in 2019 and setting out its vision for [AMR to be contained and controlled by 2040](#).

Yet, tackling AMR will require a global effort and the government is today calling for other countries to offer similar incentives in their own domestic markets.

Professor Stephen Powis, National Medical Director, NHS England said:

Staff across the NHS are already working with patients to ensure the antibiotics we have are used in the right way at the right time, and this new scheme is further important progress to develop new, life-saving antimicrobial medicines.

People's lives depend on us having effective antibiotics and steps like this further reinforce how the NHS is leading the way in efforts to safeguard against the rise of superbugs.

Professor Gill Leng, Chief Executive, NICE, said:

We are witnessing the effects of one global pandemic, which has highlighted the threat of communicable disease. Alongside the threat of coronavirus is the increasing risk posed by antimicrobial resistance, exacerbated by a sparse antimicrobial development pipeline.

That is why we need to incentivise investment in innovative antimicrobial drug development as soon as possible. Along with our

key partners, we have committed to develop and test innovative models for the evaluation and purchase of antimicrobials, applying advanced evaluation methods that recognise their full value to public health.

We hope that this project will inspire healthcare systems across the world to consider adopting similar models so that collectively, we deliver meaningful incentives that reinvigorate the global antimicrobial pipeline.

- The need to address the urgent issue of bringing new antimicrobials to market is widely recognised. Few new classes of antibiotic have been discovered since the 1980s and, for most antimicrobials, there are few replacement or alternative products in development and even fewer that target priority pathogens.
- The high cost and low returns associated with research and development of novel antimicrobials makes it commercially unattractive. In addition, pharmaceutical company revenues depend on volume of sales, potentially undermining antimicrobial stewardship initiatives.
- The UK is the first country in the world to announce it will test innovative models that pay companies for antimicrobials based primarily on a health technology assessment of their overall value to the NHS, as opposed to the volumes used.
- The subscription-style payment model will mean the NHS will have new drugs to call on when needed, while companies will be able to reliably forecast the return on their investment.
- A notice will be published on the Official Journal of the European Union website in the next 2 to 5 days.
- Once the notice is live, suppliers can register their interest via <https://nhsengland.bravosolution.co.uk>. Instructions and selection criteria will be published as part of this notice. Once released the procurement documents can also be found on the [NICE website](#).
- Two procurement exercises will be run in parallel: one for an antimicrobial recently introduced to the UK market, and a second for a new antimicrobial with plans to launch in the UK before January 2021.
- The selection process has been designed to favour products which meet a key need in the UK while also addressing disease areas of international importance. Points will also be awarded for degree of novelty, surety of supply, the supplier's demonstrated commitment to antimicrobial and environmental stewardship, and commitment to support surveillance.
- Products will be selected by the end of this year, and these selected products will progress to the HTA stage in 2021 to estimate the value of each product to the NHS. Contracts for the 2 antibiotic products are due to start in April 2022.
- The scope of the current procurement is the NHS in England. The expectation is that, if the project is successful, future rollout of these purchasing arrangements could be UK-wide.

New US-UK agreement boosts UK's spaceport plans

Press release

The UK and US governments have signed a new agreement paving the way for US companies to operate from UK spaceports and export space launch technology.



UK Ambassador Dame Karen Pierce and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Non-proliferation, Christopher Ford, signed the US-UK Technology Safeguards Agreement, which will enable U.S. companies to participate in space launches from the United Kingdom, on Tuesday 16 June 2020.

The Agreement means US space and technology companies throughout the supply chain can contribute to and benefit from the commercial opportunities offered by the UK space sector which already employs 42,000 people and generates an income of £14.8 billion each year.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

This deal with the US takes us one step closer to seeing the first ever launch into space from British soil.

This is a key moment for our commercial space industry, and I look forward to seeing companies from Scotland to Newquay benefiting, and the creation of highly skilled jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

Karen Pierce, UK Ambassador to the US said:

This agreement marks an exciting new area for UK-US space collaboration and represents a significant step towards US

companies launching from UK spaceports.

The commercial space sector already represents hundreds of millions of dollars in trade between our two countries each year, as well as thousands of jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. This new agreement will generate further growth and prosperity for both our countries.

The UK Government has already awarded grants totalling nearly £40 million to establish commercial vertical and horizontal small satellite launch from UK spaceports and put in place the necessary regulation to enable the first launches to take place in the early 2020s.

The UK Government's Spaceflight Programme aims to establish commercial vertical and horizontal small satellite launch from UK spaceports. Bringing launch to the UK will be a catalyst for growth in the wider space industry, and the government is also developing a comprehensive national space strategy to bring long-term strategic and commercial benefits for the UK.

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Statement on launch of UK-New Zealand FTA

Today we are very pleased to announce the launch of free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations between the United Kingdom and New Zealand. An FTA between our two nations, the closest of friends with deep historic and family ties rooted within New Zealand's founding Treaty of Waitangi, will strengthen our economies and set the stage for an exciting new chapter in our relationship. It is a top priority for both countries and will play an important role in our COVID-19 economic recovery strategies.

Our FTA will be ambitious, comprehensive, future-focused, and will support sustainable and inclusive trade. By removing tariffs and tackling non-tariff barriers, the agreement will reduce costs for exporters and consumers, support job creation, innovation and collaboration, and boost two-way trade in goods and services worth £2.9bn in 2019. It will also encourage more two-way investment, with the UK already the fifth largest investor in New Zealand, and the UK the fourth largest recipient of New Zealand's direct investment in 2018. At the same time, our agreement will ensure we can continue to regulate in the public interest and uphold our high health, environmental, labour, food safety, animal welfare and product standards.

We are committed to achieving a modern agreement with best-practice trade rules on emerging and increasingly important issues, including the digital

economy. New Zealand's track record of innovation on digital trade, such as the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA), matched with the UK's innovation-oriented ecosystem, provides a strong foundation to enhance digital trade even further through our FTA.

With shared ambition in leading the global fight against climate change, we also see a UK-New Zealand FTA supporting our respective targets to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050, including by working closely together to ensure the agreement helps promote clean growth, supports our transition to a low carbon economy, and contributes to efforts to address other important sustainability concerns.

We both believe our agreement should open up the opportunities of trade to all parts of our economy and society, including for women-led businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as for Māori economic interests in the case of New Zealand. Similarly, we will work to make it easier for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to seize the opportunities our FTA will bring and encourage more growing businesses to do so.

At a time when the global trading environment is under threat from protectionism, and as we look to speed up our economic recovery from the effects of COVID-19, the launch of negotiations today demonstrates our support for open, rules-based, trade arrangements. These are so central to our shared prosperity, which is why we are committed to negotiating an ambitious agreement alongside deepening our cooperation at the WTO, in the Commonwealth and other fora on these issues.

Trade Minister, David Parker, said:

We are looking forward to getting down to business quickly with the UK to forge a world-leading bilateral agreement that not only opens doors for our businesses to trade, invest and innovate more together, but also demonstrates our commitment to inclusive and sustainable trade. Blazing an early trail together in this way will also act as useful stepping stone for the UK in advancing its wider Asia-Pacific trade connections, including through possible future accession to the CPTPP.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

This is an historic moment for both our countries. A free trade agreement will strengthen our historic bonds of friendship, help grow our economies, and perhaps most importantly demonstrate to the rest of the world that like-minded democracies are prepared to advance and defend free trade in the face of rising global protectionism. New Zealand is one of the world's most progressive trading nations. Together, we can break new ground in trade policy and help set new global standards, and in doing so position both our countries as leaders in the debate about how to grow and advance international commerce.

The FTA will serve as a framework for an even stronger economic partnership as the UK seeks to expand its already close relationships in the Asia-Pacific. New Zealand, as a leading member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), welcomes the UK's intention to join this group and its determination to turbocharge its economic engagement in the region through membership.

The first round of UK-New Zealand FTA negotiations will begin on 13 July through virtual means. We will work flexibly and creatively to conclude a high-quality, comprehensive and inclusive agreement as quickly as possible, consulting closely with all interested stakeholders.