

Four new Cabinet Office Non-Executive Board Members appointed

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, Michael Gove, has today appointed Lord Hogan-Howe, Baroness Finn, Henry de Zoete and the Rt Hon Gisela Stuart as Non-Executive Board Members for the Cabinet Office. Baroness Finn and Lord Hogan-Howe have been appointed to the audit and risk committee.

They have been appointed for at least three years and will provide independent advice, support and scrutiny on the department's work. The new board members will work with civil servants and ministers across all areas of the Cabinet Office. They will help focus on the Government's priorities including responding to the coronavirus pandemic, preparing for the end of the EU exit transition period on 31 December 2020, strengthening the integrity of the Union, and improving the efficiency of the public sector.

They join the existing Non-Executive Board Members, Michael Ashley, chair of the department's audit and risk committee, Anand Aithal and Karen Blackett OBE.

Non-Executive Board Members are ministerial appointments. All members of the Cabinet Office Board were appointed following open and fair competition.

Alex Chisholm, Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office and Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service said:

Non-executive directors play an important role in ensuring that the Civil Service is well placed to deliver the government's ambitious agenda.

Our new board members bring a wealth of experience and expertise and I look forward to working closely with them.

Rt Hon Gisela Stuart

Served as the Labour Member of Parliament for Birmingham Edgbaston from 1997 until 2017, during which time she was a Health Minister (1999-2001) and member of the Intelligence and Security Select Committee (2015-17). She was formerly co-Chair of Vote Leave and is currently the Chair of Wilton Park, an executive agency of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Henry de Zoete

Is a tech entrepreneur and the co-founder of Look After My Bills, the largest auto-switching service in the UK, which was acquired by GoCo Group PLC (owners of GoCompare) in July 2019. He has previously served on the Board of

grassroots campaigning organisation 38 Degrees (2015-2018), co-founded The Beal Deal in 2014 – which uses tech to facilitate collective bargaining for consumers – and was a Special Adviser in the Department for Education (2010-2014) .

Baroness Finn, of Swansea

Was the Coalition Government's adviser on industrial relations, and subsequently a Special Adviser in the Cabinet Office (2012-2015), the Foreign Office and Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (2015-2016). She became a Conservative peer in 2015, and she is the co-founder of FMA Ltd, a consultancy. She also serves on the audit committee of Arbutnot Latham & Co, and is a member of the advisory council of Transparency International, and a trustee of the think tank Demos.

Lord Hogan-Howe, of Sheffield

Served as Commissioner for the London Metropolitan police between 2011-2017. Prior to this he was HM Inspector of Constabulary (2009-2011) and Chief Constable of Merseyside police (2004-2009). He was elevated to the House of Lords as a crossbench peer in 2017. He is a trustee of the Arise Foundation, and a patron of the St Giles Trust.

Business Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 12 May 2020

[Business Secretary Alok Sharma speaking at the daily coronavirus press conference](#)

Good afternoon. I am joined today by Professor Stephen Powis, National Medical Director of NHS England and Sarah Albon who is the Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Executive.

First, I want to update you on the latest data on the coronavirus response.

2,007,146 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 85,293 tests carried out yesterday.

226,463 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 3,403 cases since yesterday.

11,605 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus, up from 11,465 the previous day

And sadly, of those tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, 32,692 have now died. That's an increase of 627 fatalities since yesterday.

This is of course devastating news for families across the UK, and we all need to stay alert and control the virus.

I just want to remind people of the details of the next phase of our fight against coronavirus that we set out this week.

If we turn to the first slide, in order to monitor our progress, we are establishing a new COVID Alert Level System, with five levels, each relating to the level of threat posed by the virus.

The alert level will be based primarily on the R value and the number of coronavirus cases.

And in turn that alert level will determine the level of social distancing measures in place.

The lower the level the fewer the measures; the higher the level the stricter the measures.

The social distancing measures remain critical in our efforts to control the virus.

Throughout the period of lockdown, which started on March 23 we have been at Level 4.

Meaning, a COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation, and transmission is high or rising exponentially.

But thanks to the hard work and sacrifices of the British people in this lockdown, you have helped to bring the R level down and we are now in a position to begin moving to Level 3, in careful steps.

As you see on the next slide, we have set out the first of three steps we will take to carefully modify the measures, gradually ease the lockdown, and begin to allow people to return to their way of life – but crucially, while avoiding what would be a disastrous second peak that overwhelms the NHS.

After each step we will closely monitor the impact of that step on the R and the number of infections, and all the available data, and we will only take the next step when we are satisfied that it is safe to do so.

Step 1. From this week:

Those who cannot work from home should now speak to their employer about going back to work.

You can now spend time outdoors and exercise as often as you like.

You can meet one person outside of your household outside provided you stay 2 metres apart.

Step 2. From June 1, at the earliest, as long as the data allows, we aim to allow:

Primary schools to reopen for some pupils, in smaller class sizes.

Non-essential retail to start to reopen, when and where it is safe to do so,

Cultural and sporting events to take place behind closed doors, without crowds.

And then Step 3. No earlier than July 4, and again, only if the data says it is safe, we aim to allow:

More businesses and premises to open, including potentially those offering personal care such as leisure facilities, public places, and places of worship.

Many of these businesses will need to operate in new ways to ensure they are safe, and we will work with these sectors on how to do this.

As you will see from slide 3, having taken the first step in carefully adjusting some of the measures, and our advice to people on what to do, we have also updated our messaging.

We are now asking people to Stay Alert, Control the Virus and Save Lives.

Yes – staying alert, for the vast majority of people, still means staying at home as much as possible.

But there are a range of other actions we're advising people to take.

People should stay alert, by:

Working from home if you can.

Limiting contact with other people.

Keeping distance if you go out – 2 metres apart where possible.

Washing your hands regularly.

Wearing a face covering when you are in enclosed space where it's difficult to be socially distant – for example in some shops and on public transport.

And if you or anyone in your household has symptoms, you all need to self-isolate.

As slide 4 shows, if everyone stays alert and follows the rules, we can control coronavirus by keeping the R down and reducing the number of infections.

This is how we can continue to save lives, and livelihoods, as we begin as a nation to recover from coronavirus.

And to underpin this in the workplace, we have published new ['COVID-19 secure' guidance on working safely](#), available to UK employers, across 8 work settings, which are allowed to be open and where their employees cannot work

from home.

This also includes guidance for shops which we believe may be in a position to begin a phased reopening at the earliest from the 1 June.

Firms, unions, industry bodies and the devolved administrations have all fed into this guidance to give businesses and their employees the confidence they need to work safely.

And I believe we have reached a consensus in doing that.

We have also worked with Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive, to develop best practice on the safest ways of working across the economy.

The guidelines outline practical steps for employers to take, including carrying out a COVID-19 risk assessment, in consultation with employees or trades unions.

A downloadable notice is included in the documents, which employers should display in their workplace to show their employees, customers and other visitors, that they have followed this guidance.

We have also provided practical steps for employers to consider such as putting up barriers or screens in shared spaces, creating "fixed teams" or "partnering" to minimise the number of people in contact with one another, and frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses to reduce transmission.

To support employers and employees through this, the government has made available up to an extra £14 million for the Health and Safety Executive, equivalent to an increase of 10% of their budget.

This is for extra call centre employees, inspectors and equipment, if needed.

We know how important the Job Retention Scheme has been in helping businesses through this difficult time.

And today the Chancellor has announced a four-month extension of the scheme to help provide certainty to businesses.

To date, 7.5 million jobs have been furloughed, protecting livelihoods across the nation.

Until the end of July, there will be no changes to the scheme.

Then from August to October the scheme will continue, for all sectors and regions of the UK, but with greater flexibility to support the transition back to work.

Employers currently using the scheme will be able to bring employees back part time.

And, as the economy reopens, we will ask firms to start sharing, with government, the cost of paying people's salaries.

To be clear, the same level of support of 80% of people's current salary, up to £2,500 will continue to be met, but through a shared effort between employers and government.

We will be setting out more details on the changes before the end of the month.

Throughout this pandemic, I have been struck by the way people have looked out for one another.

These measures are produced in that spirit.

So to employers I say: use this support and guidance to know you are doing the right thing and work with your unions and workers to keep each other safe.

And to workers I say: we are looking out for you; we want you to feel confident that you are financially supported and returning to a safe workplace.

Because in this time like no other, we all need to work together safely, as we rebuild our economy.

Thank you.

[Government expands expert team to rapidly roll out coronavirus test and trace programme](#)

- The government has today appointed 2 new members to the team of experts working on the coronavirus test and trace programme
- Tom Riordan and Sarah-Jane Marsh will join the programme which is being chaired by Baroness Dido Harding
- The team will work to rapidly expand test and trace nationwide, backed by the successful scaling up of testing capacity across the country

The government has today announced the expansion of the expert team leading on the rapid nationwide roll out of the coronavirus test and trace programme.

The test and trace programme has been designed to minimise the spread of coronavirus, by identifying people who may have been in contact with the virus.

The programme is backed by increased testing capacity and a contact tracing app developed by NHSX, launched on the Isle of Wight earlier this month.

Today, further experts have been added to the team working on the programme's nationwide roll out for later this month.

Tom Riordan, Chief Executive of Leeds City Council, will be leading on tracing alongside his existing role, and Sarah-Jane Marsh, Chief Executive of Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital, will be the lead on testing.

The experts will join the test and trace programme chair and Head of NHS Improvement, Baroness Dido Harding.

Both experts have been confirmed by Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock to further draw upon the best British expertise from across the country in the fight against the spread of coronavirus.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I am delighted to welcome Tom Riordan and Sarah-Jane Marsh to our team of experts working to rapidly expand the test and trace programme across the country.

As we respond to an evolving pandemic, their expert leadership will support us to follow each case of the virus within the UK, curbing its spread and saving lives.

Chair of the Test and Trace Programme Baroness Harding said:

Test and trace is a vital element in the next phase of the government's plan to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Expanding the test and trace team to bring in more experts will ensure we can use the very best of our tech, research and people power to help keep coronavirus at bay across the country.

I am very grateful to Leeds City Council and Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital for their support as Tom Riordan and Sarah-Jane Marsh join the national effort to stop the spread of the virus.

The test and trace team will work closely with National Testing Co-ordinator Professor John Newton. Professor Newton will continue to provide clinical guidance and will support the science of the programme alongside the deputy chief medical officers. His role has been expanded to allow him to ensure coordination between the testing and test and trace programmes, supporting Baroness Harding.

Vikoma exports pollution control equipment with UKEF support

About the transaction: Vikoma

Region	Isle of Wight
Sector	Manufacturing – pollution control
Project location	Multiple destinations
UKEF support	Bond Support Scheme

Vikoma, headquartered on the Isle of Wight, has been exporting throughout its 50-year history – the majority of their customer base is located overseas.

The business has won 25 global tenders to manufacture and supply pollution control equipment to businesses in Europe, Canada, India, the Middle East and China using UKEF guarantees.

Vikoma recently supplied oil skimming equipment to a base in India. The equipment will be used in the event of an oil spill to protect the country's coastlines and wildlife.

Our [Bond Support Scheme](#) freed up funds that Vikoma would previously have used on a bank guarantee deposit, enabling Vikoma's working capital to be spent fulfilling a range of export deals worth millions of pounds in revenue.

Karen Lucas, Managing Director of Vikoma, said:

One of the challenges we have with exporting is that we might want to get an advance payment from a customer and stage payments through the duration of the contract to fund the work in progress. But the customer doesn't necessarily want to part with the cash without some form of guarantee, which is where we need to use bank guarantees.

UKEF involvement is critical because there's no point getting advance funding for contracts if we then have to allocate that money to one side to secure the bank performance bond.

Stuart Stoter, Export Finance Manager for Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, said:

By helping Vikoma and their bank with the issuance of bonds and guarantees, we have been able to support export contracts to a wide range of countries. Vikoma is a great example of a successful

exporter and UK Export Finance stands ready to support other UK businesses trying to expand their exports.

Putting the right finance and insurance in place can give you the exporting edge, helping you to win contracts, fulfil orders and get paid.

[Tell us about your business](#)

Power Jacks enters new markets with UKEF support

About the transaction: Power Jacks

Region	Aberdeenshire
Sector	Manufacturing
Project location	Multiple destinations
UKEF support	Bond Support Scheme

Power Jacks is a leading design and manufacturing company, providing electro-mechanical lifting solutions for use in a range of sectors, including civil engineering, energy and transport.

The company exports to 80 countries from its base in Aberdeenshire. Over the last 20 years, exporting has become increasingly important for Power Jacks, with Asia becoming one of its biggest markets – 60% of the company's business is now destined to go to overseas clients.

Exporting to the Middle East can present challenges for credit and cash flow, with an increasing demand for advance payment guarantees, performance bonds and warranty bonds to secure contracts.

The facilities offered by banks on these advance payments and bonds are often unfavourable. At the same time, cash conversion cycles in the Middle East and Asia can be 150 days long. The resulting strain on cash flows can deter many companies like Power Jacks from exporting.

Our [Bond Support Scheme](#) has proven an ideal solution for Power Jacks. Through the scheme, we have underwritten up to 80% of commercially issued bond guarantees.

Since 2017, our support has helped Power Jacks to win £9.5 million worth of export contracts.

Bruce Bultitude, Managing Director of Power Jacks, said:

We could have potentially lost out on valuable export business without the support of UKEF. We will also be looking into UKEF's Exporting Working Capital Scheme in the future, for upcoming export contracts.

Alistair McMillan, Export Finance Manager for Aberdeenshire, Tayside, Highlands and Islands said:

These recent contracts represented significant wins for Power Jacks during what has been a difficult period for the sector as a whole. While the bank was supportive of the business and the management team, UKEF's guarantees reduced their risk, enabling them to issue these bonds while allowing Power Jacks to retain the cash needed to fulfil the contracts.

Putting the right finance and insurance in place can give you the exporting edge, helping you to win contracts, fulfil orders and get paid.

[Tell us about your business](#)