

Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 13 April 2020

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Downing Street Press Conference. I'm pleased to be joined by Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer, and Sir Patrick Vallance, Chief Scientific Adviser.

On Saturday, I spoke to the Prime Minister. I updated him on coronavirus, the progress we're making, and our plans for the next few weeks.

The government is united in our focus, our determination and our national mission to defeat the coronavirus. And defeat it, we will.

I want to join the PM in expressing our heart-felt thanks to the brilliant NHS team at St Thomas's hospital. And, as the Easter bank holiday weekend draws to a close, I also need to thank all of the NHS staff, all of the other frontline staff, who have been working so hard over the long weekend to care for those suffering from coronavirus.

We thank you.

We pay tribute to you.

And we're immensely proud of all you are doing.

Can I also take the opportunity to thank everyone who followed the advice to stay home, despite the wonderful weather, and despite the challenges and sacrifices that sticking to the advice presents to many families. I have to say that at the end of last week, we were concerned that people might start ignoring the advice, or cutting corners given the temptation to go out into the sunshine.

In fact, the overwhelming majority of people stayed at home and understood the importance of doing so.

You stuck to the advice.

You denied the coronavirus of the social contact it needs to spread.

People should be in absolutely no doubt that, by staying home this weekend, you have saved lives, and you also helped protect our precious NHS at this critical moment in the crisis.

So thank you.

Your efforts are making all the difference, and please keep them up.

We've come too far, we've lost too many loved ones, and we've sacrificed far too much to ease up now.

I can tell you on the latest data that 290,720 have been tested for coronavirus, 88,621 have now tested positive. And, I'm very sorry to say, 11,329 people have now died from coronavirus, every one of them a tragedy, and our hearts go out to all of the loved ones who are grieving their loss at such a difficult time.

Amidst this sobering death toll, there are also some positive signs from the data that we are starting to win this struggle, but we have still got a long way to go and as those grisly figures I just read out show, we're still not past the peak of this virus.

So please continue to follow the advice, now more than ever, to stay at home, save lives and protect our NHS. This week, SAGE will review the evidence of the effectiveness of the social distancing measures we've taken, and we will consider their assessment, based on the evidence, at that point.

I should say, we don't expect to make any changes to the measures currently in place at that point, and we won't, until we're confident as we realistically can be, that any such changes can be safely made.

In the meantime, the government will continue to redouble all of our efforts to buy and deliver the ventilators so we can treat the most vulnerable in our hospitals.

To deliver the masks, the gowns and other protective equipment to protect those on the frontline, in the NHS, but also in care homes.

And to ramp up testing so that the NHS and other key staff can return to the frontline just as soon as possible. The Chancellor and Business Secretary are working round the clock to mitigate the damage that this crisis has undoubtedly done to our economy – getting support to businesses, to workers and to the most vulnerable in our society.

So please, once again, keep following the guidance to stay home, save lives and protect the NHS.

If we let up now the virus will only take full advantage.

It will spread faster and it will kill more people.

If we refuse to give into it, if we keep up this incredible team effort, we will beat this virus, and we will come through this national test.

Our plan is working.

Please stick with it, and we'll get through this crisis together.

Further information

[Our new dialogue with the public about data for public benefit](#)

This project is co-funded by the National Data Guardian for Health and Care, [Understanding Patient Data](#) and the [Sciencewise](#) programme. The dialogue process is being designed and managed by [Hopkins Van Mil](#), following a mini competition run by Sciencewise.

The planning for this project started long before the outbreak of the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, so it's not a reaction to it. However, we are already thinking about how the knowledge and attitudes of our public participants may have been affected. We will work with our partners to consider this carefully in the design of the dialogue to acknowledge this and to ensure that resultant guidance remains relevant to a wide range of data sharing scenarios.

What sort of data uses we'll be exploring

Whenever we go to a doctor or a hospital, if we receive support from social services in our own home or live in a care home, the people looking after us record information about us in our records. The main reason for this information being recorded is to make sure we get good individual treatment.

As a result, the NHS and social care services hold a lot of information about individuals and this can also be used for other things. When data from many people is linked up and pooled, it can be used by researchers and scientists to identify patterns and develop new ways to predict, diagnose or treat illness.

NHS and social care organisations do not always have the expertise needed to do this work on their own and so they sometimes work in collaboration with researchers, scientists and inventors in universities or private companies. New medicines and technologies can then be developed to treat patients. This dialogue will explore public attitudes towards the sharing of health and social care data for data-driven research and innovation in England.

Why a dialogue now?

There is significant government activity and investment to advance the life sciences sector by providing improved access to health and care data to encourage data-driven research and innovation.

Organisations which hold health and care data already assess public benefit or interest when deciding whether to allow it to be used to develop new medicines and technologies. But as demand for access to this data grows, more detailed guidance on how to make such judgements will help to ensure that decision making is consistent, and that the public can be confident that their data is being used in the public interest.

What we will look at and what difference this will make

In relation to the uses of such data for purposes beyond individuals' own care, such as research and innovation, we know that the extent to which such purposes benefit the public is the critical crucial condition for their acceptance of its use.

We know that concerns can be raised when organisations with commercial interests are involved in using data generated by our use of publicly-funded NHS and social care services. We've seen this many times in our engagement to date; previous pieces of research; and in media, social media and public discussions.

This dialogue will improve our understanding of how the public assesses and weighs the public benefits and disbenefits of proposed data uses in a range of scenarios. We will ask our public participants which benefits count as 'good enough' to make the use of data acceptable in their view.

We are keen to ensure that we explore the use of social care data as well as health data. And to look at some more complex questions: what about when a use of data might benefit some groups of people, but not others? what if it's quite uncertain what the results of a piece of research might be? what if it won't benefit the people whose data was used or their families, but instead people who are quite distant, perhaps in another country, or many years hence? How do these factors affect people's attitudes towards whether there is enough public benefit to merit data being used?

The National Data Guardian intends to develop guidance or advice that would help organisations to carry out public benefit assessments with greater consistency across the health and social care sector. This will help a range of bodies and data controllers to make decisions about whether data should be used for purposes beyond individual care. Working with Understanding Patient Data and the members of the public that we will be involving in our dialogues, we aim to ensure that what we develop is in line with the public's values.

How will the dialogue be structured?

Public dialogue workshops will take place in autumn 2020 at four locations around the UK: Reading, Stockport, Great Yarmouth and Plymouth. A report will be published in spring 2021 summarising the findings of the initial workshops. This will be used by the National Data Guardian and Understanding Patient Data to develop public benefit guidance and a further dialogue workshop will be held that spring with a number of the original workshop attendees to test whether this meets their expectations.

An Oversight Group is being formed to bring independent oversight to the process and development of materials. The Group includes stakeholders with a range of different perspectives on the topic, including patients. We are also currently holding a process to appoint an independent project evaluator.

We're excited to be launching this project and will let you know more as it

progresses.

[Appointment of Keith Fraser as Chair of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.](#)

The Secretary of State has announced the appointment of Keith Fraser as Chair of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB). Mr Fraser – formerly a police Superintendent – will start today, 14 April 2020, for a period of three years.

The YJB is a non-departmental public body, responsible for overseeing the youth justice system in England and Wales.

Keith Fraser said:

Having dedicated my career to creating opportunities for children and working in the justice system, I am honoured to be appointed Chair of the Youth Justice Board.

The role will enable me to have a continued focus on improving outcomes for children and I look forward to working closely with Ministers, board members, staff and partners to deliver our vision.

The recruitment of the YJB Chair is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and has been made in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Biography

In January 2018, Keith Fraser was appointed as a member of the Youth Justice Board. Keith is also the Non-Executive Director/Trustee at The Work Force Development Trust Limited, Advisor for the National Police Chiefs Council Digital Engagement Project for Young People, and Chair of Employability UK. Prior to this, Keith was a Superintendent and Chief Inspector in the West Midlands Police, having joined as a Constable, during which time he produced the 2016-19 Preventing Gang Involvement and Youth Violence strategy.

Keith also produced the business plan for City of Wolverhampton council where he was the Chair of the authority's statutory Youth Offending Management Board. He led an innovative preventative project, targeting over 7,000 young people, working with Sport England and was the Strategic Police Lead for the

Princes Trust across the West Midlands.

Homes England ramps up development pipeline to support the housing market

- Homes England has acquired 19 sites in the last financial year worth £180 million.
- The land has the capacity for 5,000 new homes across the country.
- Several major acquisitions were completed in the lead up to financial year-end, demonstrating how the agency is taking a long-term view of housing demand in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Homes England, the government's housing agency, has revealed that it acquired 19 sites in the last financial year worth £180 million, with the land having the capacity for 5,000 new homes across the country.

Of these, several major acquisitions were completed in the lead up to financial year-end, demonstrating how the agency is taking a long-term view of housing demand in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing to develop a strong pipeline of projects to support the recovery of the housebuilding sector.

In its role as a master developer, Homes England is able to acquire challenging or stalled sites which have been unable to progress without public sector intervention and use its resources and expertise to unlock them for development and bring them back to market, ultimately resulting in much-needed new homes.

The recently acquired sites include the 37-hectare Panshanger Aerodrome in Welwyn Garden City, which will bring forward one of the region's largest housing developments with the capacity for 815 homes. It is expected that 30% of the new homes will be affordable and the development will also include a new primary school, a community centre and self-build plots. Homes England will deliver the infrastructure on site before marketing the site to developers in parcels, accelerating the delivery of new homes.

In Birmingham, the agency has acquired a 2.5-hectare parcel of land in Digbeth from Birmingham City Council. The Montague Street site is the final acquisition the agency has made of four land parcels in the area, which will create one of the largest development sites in Birmingham city centre with the total capacity for 1,000 new homes and 25,000 square metres of employment space.

In Bristol, the 10-hectare Brislington Meadows has been brought into the agency's ownership from the local authority and private landowners, with the

capacity for 300 much-needed new homes. Allocated in Bristol's Local Plan since 2014, the site had been stalled until Homes England's intervention to unlock development. The site is expected to deliver a minimum of 30% affordable housing.

Additionally, the acquisition of 81 hectares of land in Darlington will see construction of 800 new homes as part of the Burtree Garden Village. Representing just under half of the total proposed Garden Village site, Homes England has entered into a collaboration agreement with lead developer Hellens Group and will work together with adjacent landowners on site-wide infrastructure to enable delivery of the entire scheme.

And, just south of Rugby, Warwickshire, the agency has acquired land totalling 65 hectares from Warwickshire County Council, which is expected to deliver over 900 homes. Delivery of infrastructure and a link road, which is crucial to the wider South West Rugby expansion, will accelerate the pace of construction of the new homes.

Simon Dudley, interim Homes England Chair, said:

"It is testament to the hard work and dedication of colleagues and our partners that we've met such a strong year-end at this challenging and unprecedented time.

"I want to reassure the sector that Homes England is very much open for business and investing in a long-term pipeline of development opportunities to support market recovery.

"The need for new housing will remain a priority, so we will continue to do business with partners across the sector to create opportunities for future development and support the government's housebuilding objectives."

Stephen Kinsella, Chief Land and Development Officer at Homes England, said:

"As a master developer, it's crucial that we continue to create development opportunities and provide a pipeline of sites for housebuilders of all sizes, despite the challenging situation the industry is facing.

"In the long-term we will still have a housing shortage, so by continuing to acquire difficult sites and addressing the barriers which have previously stopped them moving into production, we're making sure we can deliver on the agency's mission to accelerate the construction of new homes while addressing the short-term disruption caused by the impact of coronavirus."

ENDS

[£10m to boost tree planting in second auction of Woodland Carbon Guarantee](#)

The Forestry Commission has today (Tuesday 14 April) announced that £10m will be available in the second auction of the Woodland Carbon Guarantee. Land managers across England are encouraged to [sign up to the scheme](#) by 5 June, ahead of the next auction which will take place online from 8 to 19 June.

Launched in November 2019, the Woodland Carbon Guarantee is a £50 million scheme that aims to help accelerate woodland planting rates and permanently remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Successful participants will be offered the option to sell Woodland Carbon Units to the government over 35 years at a guaranteed price set by auction and protected against inflation, providing new income for land managers who help businesses compensate for their carbon emissions.

This announcement follows the success of the first auction which closed in February 2020 and saw 18 contracts offered by the Forestry Commission to help stimulate the creation of 182 hectares of new woodland, specifically to help combat climate change.

Sir William Worsley, Chair of the Forestry Commission, said:

The Woodland Carbon Guarantee is the first scheme of its kind to provide land managers with long-term certainty of a guaranteed payment rate for carbon, which their trees lock up and store.

I'm excited to announce that the first auction has successfully encouraged projects in parts of the country where new planting has been lower in recent years, and across a good range of woodland types.

There is no reason to delay applying and to plant trees now – I strongly encourage all land managers thinking about planting to sign up ahead of the second auction in June.

The outcome of the first exploratory auction in February paves the way for larger scale projects to secure funding in forthcoming auctions. A series of auctions will take place every six months for up to five years.

Speaking of the benefits of the Guarantee, Forestry Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

Trees are a precious natural asset and, as a natural carbon sink, are a vital part of the fight against climate change.

In addition to providing long-term income support to land managers for creating new woodland, it is our hope that this Guarantee will play an important role in developing the domestic carbon market in future.

Greg Beeton, Divisional Partner & Agricultural Business Consultant from project developer Brown & Co, said:

We have a long standing involvement in woodland creation so it was great that we were able to help identify landowner clients of ours which could benefit from the Woodland Carbon Guarantee.

We were excited to see that a number of our clients were successful in the first auction and will now be able to capitalise on the support that the scheme provides, by planting woodland to replace areas of unproductive farming land for example.

I would certainly encourage landowners to consider the many benefits of the Guarantee. The support provided by the Forestry Commission was fantastic and the scheme could potentially provide new longer term income streams for landowners that can complement more traditional farming incomes.

The government manifesto commits to increase planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025. This spring a new English Tree Strategy will be consulted on, looking at policies to expand, support and increase public engagement with woodlands.

[Apply for the Guarantee here.](#)

ENDS.

- We are continuing to hold the auction on 8 – 19 June 2020 and currently will close applications on 5 June, but we will keep this under review.
- All application forms including the auction process are completed online in line with [latest government guidance](#).
- The successful applicants of the second auction will not be expected to plant their trees until the next tree planting season (winter 2020/21).
- The Woodland Carbon Guarantee can be used alongside other grants and funds available to plant new woodland as long as Additionality rules under the Woodland Carbon Code are met.
- The Woodland Carbon Guarantee is a long-term contract and recipients won't receive immediate payments. Instead, land managers will receive a guaranteed income for delivered carbon units at agreed dates over 35 years if they wish to sell carbon units to the government.
- Before you apply for the Guarantee, you will need to have registered with the [Woodland Carbon Code](#), which provides the tools and information required to plan your woodland and calculate the amount of carbon that it will remove from the atmosphere. The woodland will also need to comply with the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard.

- [More information on the scheme and how to apply can be found here](#). For frequently asked questions please see this [Q&A](#).