

# Digital revolution to bust Covid backlogs and deliver more tailored care for patients

- Rapid expansion of use of technology – including remote monitoring and virtual wards – to drive efficiency, free up hospital space and clinician time, and bust the Covid backlogs
- NHS App to be updated with new features offering more personalised care from home, such as increasing patients' access to their records and enabling notifications directly from their GP
- Digital reforms to deliver benefits over the next decade that could save billions in taxpayers' money while also promoting economic growth and private investment

People across the country will benefit from faster, more personalised healthcare, following a digital revolution to make the health and social care system fit for the 21st century.

The Plan for Digital Health and Social Care, published today (Wednesday 29 June), sets out the government's ambitious vision for transforming health and care with digital technology – which give patients access to quicker and more effective care at their fingertips and will save the health and care systems time and money.

The Plan sets out how we will improve access to information for people and their care teams through the NHS App and NHS.uk – resulting in faster, more personalised treatment. This includes bringing information together into the App and enabling people to view and manage hospital appointments, have virtual consultations, and see notifications from their GP.

It also outlines the acceleration of the use of digital technology across the NHS and social care to improve efficiency and free up frontline workers' time, helping to bust the Covid backlogs. By increasing the availability of remote monitoring – where patients can use technology to keep an eye on their condition from home – a further 500,000 people could be better supported by March 2023. Over 280,000 people already used remote monitoring at home and in care homes for long-term conditions in the last year, freeing up hospital beds and saving clinicians' valuable time. This has resulted in improvements in patient outcomes – with problems picked up earlier, shorter stays in hospital, and fewer admissions in the first place.

£2 billion has been earmarked from the spending review to help digitise the NHS and social care sector, and this Plan will help achieve that aim by rolling out electronic patient records in the NHS to drive efficiency which, in turn, will release billions of pounds back to the NHS.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We are embarking on a radical programme of modernisation that will make sure the NHS is set up to meet the challenges of 2048 – not 1948, when it was first established.

This Plan builds on our Data Strategy to revolutionise digital health and care, which will enable patients to manage hospital appointments from the NHS App and take more control of their own care at home, picking up problems sooner and seeking help earlier.

Ensuring more personalisation and better join up of the system will benefit patients, free up clinician time, and help us to bust the Covid backlogs.

To further free up clinician time, patients will be able to complete their hospital pre-assessment checks from home across the country by September 2024.

In addition to the investment in technology, the plan recognises our frontline professionals are at the bedrock of health and social care services, so it will bolster the skills in the workforce by:

- Developing a National Digital Workforce Strategy to bridge the skills gap and ensure the NHS remains an attractive place to work
- Grow the specialist data and tech workforce through graduates, apprentices and experienced hires, creating an additional 10,500 positions
- Embed digital skills development into university curriculums to support our future and incoming workforce
- Provide a digital learning offer for adult social care staff, such as offering accessible training and online resources.

The Plan will also promote the use of digital health and social care records, which will underpin more seamless information sharing between care teams, including appropriate access to GP records for people working in care homes, such as registered managers. The adoption of digital social care records and other care technologies is backed by £25 million this year, announced at London Tech Week.

Dr Timothy Ferris, national director of transformation at NHS England and NHS Improvement, said:

By harnessing the power of digital and data we can improve both how people access services and the way we provide care.

Today's plan for digital health and care sets out an ambitious vision for a future where the NHS puts more power and information at patients' fingertips, and staff have the tools they need to deliver better and more joined-up services for those who need them.

More than 28 million people now have the NHS App in their pocket. To support

patients to access more personalised care from home, new features will be added to the NHS App, enabling it to become a digital front door to NHS services.

By March 2023, NHS App users will be able to:

- Book Covid-19 vaccines through the NHS App, as well as the NHS website
- Receive NHS notifications and messaging, including reminders and alerts for Covid-19 vaccine booking and prescription readiness
- Start to see notifications and messaging sent from their GP through the NHS App
- Start to view and manage hospital elective care appointments across participating trusts
- See new information within their GP record by default, with the ability to request retrospective information at their practice
- Access a user profile where they can set and manage contact details and register with a GP practice

Further ambitions for the NHS App will see features including improving access to screening services and enabling reminders, improving ease of access to child health records for parents and carers, and improving access to relevant clinical trials.

Simon Bolton, Chief Executive at NHS Digital, said:

Technology is central in empowering patients and giving them more control when it comes to their health and wellbeing.

The NHS App has changed the way millions of adults in England access healthcare services in the three years since its launch and these new features will go further to improve how patients can manage their health and to reduce the burden on the frontline.

We are committed to working with our partners across health and social care to deliver the digitally enabled transformation of the NHS and create a system which provides better outcomes and access for patients.

The publication of the Plan for Digital Health and Social Care follows the publication of [Data Saves Lives: Reshaping Health and Social Care with Data](#).

### **Supportive quotes**

Professor Vic Rayner, CEO at National Care Forum said:

I welcome the focus the government has on supporting digital transformation across the social care sector. There are many opportunities that digital can offer plan brings together a range of initiatives, setting out a pathway that talks ambitiously of a future where digital supports people and communities to live the

lives they want. It is vital that this programme of change continues to listen, adapt and work with the care sector so that the opportunities it presents are available for all.

Dr Layla McCay, director of policy at NHS Confederation, said:

NHS leaders welcome the digital health and care strategy and see it as an important step in joining up health and social care records digitally under one roof. This is essential for enabling better system working and will allow vital data to be shared more widely, helping staff to deliver better care for patients.

The plan presents an exciting opportunity not only to expand access to care via digital channels, but to accelerate the adoption of evidence-based technologies that will help make care more preventative, personalised and empowering for patients.

The task ahead will be challenging and must be done carefully not to exacerbate inequality. It's important that investment in IT infrastructure for the NHS continues and that systems are supported to implement these changes as they work hard to tackle the care backlogs. We hope that the forthcoming digital workforce strategy will help address recruitment and retention issues whilst making the NHS an attractive place to work for digital professionals.

Sarah Sweeney, Head of Policy at National Voices (National Voices is the leading coalition of health and social care charities in England), said:

We welcome the ambition to use technology as an enabler for joined up, personalised care. We haven't yet realised the full power of digital tools to help achieve person centred, inclusive and accessible care for people and we have lots more to discover. We look forward to working with health and care leaders, health and care charities and people living with ill health and disability to explore how digital tools can be used to make what matters to people matter in health and care.

Responding to the publication of the government's Digital Health and Care Plan, Dr Malte Gerhold, Director of Innovation and Improvement at the Health Foundation, said:

This Plan is a welcome consolidation of the myriad of workstreams on tech and digital going on across the NHS and social care – which if properly aligned could add up to a good deal more than the sum of their parts. Steps like making better use of technology and data to support clinical decision making and manage population health could make a big difference to improving both quality of care and

the way in which the health and care system uses its resources.

The Plan's focus on inclusion is welcome. Health Foundation research has found that, while most patients had a positive experience of the increased use of technology during the pandemic, for some groups, including those with a carer, the experience was less positive. Addressing these issues will be important to ensure that those who face particular barriers get the benefits from the increased use of technology.

Achieving the Plan's ambitions will mean learning the lessons of previous initiatives that have struggled to deliver. Many of the new service models proposed are about changing the way staff work and patients interact with services – so it is critical that local services are supported to redesign pathways and implement these changes in practice. Realising this vision will depend on a range of factors beyond the scope of the Plan itself, not least tackling workforce and capacity pressures. If the NHS is to recover from the pandemic and become more resilient it will need significant resources, including a fully funded, long-term workforce strategy, and boosted capital investment to support new ways of working.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the Local Government Association's Community Wellbeing Board said:

Digital technology has great potential to support those who draw on care services, and the launch of the Digital Health and Care Plan is a positive step in enabling people to live the lives they want.

We look forward to working with NHS to ensure digital transformation occurs in parallel across both social care and health. Only by ensuring that care has an equal footing with health are we able to achieve the best outcomes for people and communities.

The interim chief executive of NHS Providers, Saffron Cordery said:

We welcome this plan which rightly signals digital transformation as a high priority within the NHS, and aims to set out a clear national vision for a digital future, consolidating previous national guidance.

It also provides a much needed and clearer plan of action for trust leaders as they progress digital transformation within their trusts and support digital transformation within systems.

Julian David, techUK CEO, said:

The UK's response to COVID-19 has shown that the scale of opportunities that digital, data and technology offer to address the challenges faced by health and social care is enormous, and the UK needs to capitalise on this potential.

The Digital Health and Care Plan sets out a clear vision for fostering an ecosystem that has collaboration at its core and where innovation can truly thrive. As the document makes clear, to deliver this vision on the ground, the NHS and social care will need to work closely with industry as true partners. Only by doing so will we realise the true benefits of digital transformation.

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## Government launches review into short-term tourist accommodation

- Open call for evidence aims to understand impact of increase in short-term holiday lets in England following the rise in use of rental booking websites and apps
- Review will look at the market and the opportunities and challenges presented for consumers and tourism communities
- Airbnb listing data showed a 33 per cent increase in UK listings between 2017 and 2018

A review into the effect of short-term holiday lets will seek to improve the holiday letting market for those living in popular tourism destinations.

The scheme, proposed in a new government review looking at the impact of increases in short-term and holiday lets in England, could involve physical checks of premises to ensure regulations in areas including health and safety, noise and anti-social behaviour are obeyed.

Further measures the Government is considering include a registration 'kitemark' scheme with spot checks for compliance with rules on issues such as gas safety, a self-certification scheme for hosts to register with before they can operate, and better information or a single source of guidance setting out the legal requirements for providers.

Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

We've seen huge growth in the range of holiday accommodation available over the last few years.

We want to reap the benefits of the boom in short-term holiday lets while protecting community interests and making sure England has high-quality tourist accommodation.

While no decisions have been taken, this review will help us work out the options to look at so we can protect our much-loved communities and thriving holiday industry.

Housing Minister, Rt. Hon Stuart Andrew, said:

Holiday let sites like Airbnb have helped boost tourism across the country, but we need to make sure this doesn't drive residents out of their communities.

We are already taking action to tackle the issue of second and empty homes in some areas by empowering councils to charge up to double the rate of council tax.

This review will give us a better understanding of how short term lets are affecting housing supply locally to make sure the tourism sector works for both residents and visitors alike.

Airbnb listing data showed a 33 per cent increase in UK listings between 2017 and 2018 and the rise in the use of online platforms for short-term letting has brought many benefits – from an increase in the variety and availability of options to allowing people to make money from renting out spare rooms and properties.

Almost three quarters of people (72 per cent) told Airbnb in its green tourism [report](#) that the environmental benefits of home sharing played a role in their choice to travel using that platform. A separate [report](#) by the firm in 2018 said a typical UK host on their platform earns an average of £3,100 a year.

But the Government understands there can be an impact on housing supply and price in these areas and there are fears caused by [evidence](#) of a rise in anti-social behaviour including noise, waste and drunken behaviour in local communities. Lower protections for guests caused by negligence of health and safety regulations are also amidst concerns.

The review will also consider the operation of the provisions in London under the Deregulation Act 2015 to allow for measures to be taken against anti-social behaviour, whilst allowing Londoners to rent out their homes.

The devolved administrations have taken steps in this area. The Scottish government set out legislation requiring all local authorities in the country to establish a licensing scheme by October 2022. In Northern Ireland tourist

accommodation cannot be provided without a valid certificate issued by the national tourist board. Wales has [publicly stated its ambition](#) to establish a statutory registration or licensing scheme.

And in other countries, anyone wishing to advertise and provide guest accommodation in Portugal must register electronically before doing so, Greece requires anyone renting out their home to paying guests to register, and, in parts of Ireland designated 'Rent Pressure Zones', hosts are only allowed to short-term let their primary residence after having registered.

David Weston, Chairman of the Bed & Breakfast Association, said:

We are pleased that the Government is launching this call for evidence. It is the right time to consider how we protect all consumers, regardless of an accommodation owner's business model, and level the playing-field between traditional business and those on newer platforms.

The call for evidence will help the Government strike the right balance between achieving those aims, yet avoiding imposing disproportionate new burdens or costs on small businesses.

We will be playing a constructive role in helping the Government develop a proportionate solution, and we call on all tourism accommodation owners to take part in the call for evidence, and ensure your views are heard.

Merilee Karr, Chairperson, Short Term Accommodation Association, and Founder and CEO, Under The Doormat said:

The STAA is pleased to be able to contribute to the call for evidence on short-term lets and holiday accommodation in England, announced today by DCMS. Short term and holiday rentals play an increasingly important role in the English tourism economy by contributing significant numbers of jobs in local communities and generating valuable sources of income for local homeowners and businesses.

Any new regulatory solution should recognise this contribution and seek to support the industry as an important part of the wider UK tourism sector. As an industry we look forward to working with DCMS to ensure that a simple, cost-effective regulatory solution is found, which takes into account the needs and benefits to communities, and supports owners to rent out properties that would otherwise sit empty. We are glad to hear that the UK Government is committed to a solution which gets the balance right, and we look forward to sharing our insights and thoughts on practical solutions with policymakers.



The commitment to consult on tourist accommodation was first made in the government's Tourism Recovery Plan published in June 2021.

We have already taken action to give communities greater ability to manage the impact that second homes can have in some locations. These include closing tax loopholes, introducing higher stamp duty and permitting councils to apply higher council tax on second homes.

This call for evidence will allow the government to gather the evidence and data to inform any future steps and it wants to hear the views of all parties, including hosts, online platforms, accommodation businesses and local authorities.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- The call for [evidence](#) will run for 12 weeks.
- [Airbnb listing data](#) showed a 33 per cent increase in UK listings between 2017 and 2018, from 168,000 in 2017 to 223,000 in 2018.
- The Bed & Breakfast Association ([www.bandbassociation.org](http://www.bandbassociation.org)) is the UK trade association for owners of B&Bs, guesthouses and small family-run hotels: a sector of some 35,500 small businesses with combined sales of £3.6 billion [ONS, 2019].

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## Government launches country's first ever investigation branch focused on road safety

- Road Safety Investigation Branch (RSIB) will investigate incidents on country's roads and provide insight into what needs to change to help save lives
- move will ensure some of the highest road safety standards in the world continue to be met as we modernise the road network
- latest effort to reduce casualties and fatalities, boost safety and reduce the cost of road traffic collisions to our NHS and economy by around £30 billion annually

The government will recruit a specialised team of inspectors to join the country's first ever Road Safety Investigation Branch (RSIB), looking at how and why incidents happen and to provide real insight into how new technologies – such as self-driving and electric vehicles – can be rolled out on our roads.

The branch will investigate themes in the causes of collisions, as well as specific incidents of concern, to learn valuable road safety lessons. It will make independent safety recommendations to organisations, such as government and police forces, to better shape the future of road safety policy and provide better, greener and safer journeys for people right across the country.

The specialised unit will also provide vital insight into safety trends related to new and evolving technologies, which could include self-driving vehicles, e-scooters and electric vehicles (EVs), to ensure the country maintains some of the highest road safety standards in the world and exciting new technology is deployed safely.

A [decision to establish a new branch follows a public consultation](#), which showed overwhelming support for the creation of such a branch, as well as for its powers and responsibilities.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

The UK may have some of the safest roads in the world, but tragedies still happen and any injury or death on our road network is one too many.

That's why we're establishing the road safety investigation branch, so we can boost safety for road users even further and also bring safety measures in line with other modes of transport and the future of travel.

Road collisions lead to significantly more deaths in Great Britain than those caused by other modes of transport, yet there is currently no independent body to investigate road incidents and their causes. The move taken by government today (29 June 2022) will bring road safety into line with similar independent bodies that already exist for air, maritime and rail accidents.

Currently, data and evidence is collated using in-depth study programmes, the Collision Reporting and Sharing System (CRASH), Forensic Collision Investigation reports and Prevention of Future Death reports.

Government expects the RSIB to use this data alongside that from insurance companies, vehicle manufacturers, the emergency services and the NHS to deepen the body of evidence on incident causes and improve road safety interventions even further nationwide.

RAC Foundation Director, Steve Gooding, said:

Over the past 4 years, the Foundation has run the Road Collision Investigation Project with funding from government and National Highways. Working with 3 police forces and many other experts, we have demonstrated the strong case for a fresh way of investigating death and injury on the road network, which is why we are delighted

with this announcement.

We look forward to working further with the government to get the branch set up and make our roads safer still.

The branch will not identify blame or liability and so does not replace police investigation. It will instead draw on all the available evidence to make recommendations to improve road safety and mitigate or prevent similar incidents in the future.

The Department for Transport expects to include measures to enable the creation of the branch in the forthcoming Transport Bill.

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## PM to tell NATO: Allies must dig deep to prepare for a more dangerous decade ahead

- Allies will discuss future of NATO at Madrid Summit, as the Alliance seeks to agree a plan for a new decade of growing threats and great power competition
- UK defence spending projected to reach 2.3% of GDP this year due to UK defence industry investment and £1.3bn of extraordinary support for Ukraine
- PM will announce new UK military commitments to NATO, protecting people throughout the alliance in the face of the evolving threat from Russia
- Defence budget currently sustains 390,000 industry jobs across the UK, with the UK invested more in defence than any other European country

The PM will urge NATO allies to invest more to modernise defence and restore deterrence in Europe, warning that the decade ahead is likely to be more dangerous and competitive than the last, at the Summit of NATO leaders beginning in Madrid today (Wednesday).

The UK has played a key role in shaping the new NATO Strategic Concept which will be agreed at the Summit. The strategy highlights the evolving and growing threats which the Alliance faces and sets out how NATO can meet them and keep our people safe.

This builds on the work of the UK's Integrated Review, published last year, which underscored the need to modernise our Armed Forces and develop UK and NATO defence and security capabilities across land, sea, air and cyberspace and invest in new technologies.

On the back of that review the Prime Minister announced the biggest increase

to UK defence spending since the Cold War – an investment which has kickstarted a wholesale transformation programme for our military to meet new threats.

Speaking at the Madrid Summit, the PM will argue that NATO allies will need to commit the resources need to deliver on the new Strategic Concept as the security environment is more dangerous since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Since 2006 the UK, along with other NATO members, has committed to spend 2% of GDP on defence in order to protect our people and work to ensure peace and prosperity.

The UK has met the 2% NATO target every year since its inception and remains the leading defence spender in Europe. At the Wales NATO summit of 2014, allies agreed to work toward the 2% target by 2024. The PM has welcomed the fact that many allies are now stepping up with increased commitments, including support for Ukraine. But the PM has warned that there is more to be done in the decade ahead as NATO begins work on setting new targets for the future.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has shattered peace in Europe, and permanently reconfigured the geopolitical contours of our continent. Both the UK and NATO must adapt to meet new and increased threats to our shared security. That means ensuring that there is long-term investment but also being ready to surge defence spending to adapt to crises and urgent needs.

In addition to long-term investment, since the start of the war the UK has so far provided £1.3bn in extraordinary military support to Ukraine for its self-defence, and deployed more troops to NATO's eastern flank and increased our contributions to NATO's air policing and standing naval groups.

Today at NATO the Prime Minister will announce a number of new UK commitments to strengthen the Alliance, including expanding our national headquarters in Estonia to ensure we could provide rapid reinforcements with our high readiness forces if needed, and further increasing the lethality of our forces already based in Estonia through the deployment of capabilities such as artillery, air defence and helicopters.

The PM will also commit to reinforce NATO's New Force Model through the UK's world-leading capabilities in land, air and sea – including almost all our maritime forces, extra Fighter and Bomber Air Squadrons and increasing the number of Land Brigade-sized units. This will help NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe plan for any eventuality, knowing that he has the weight of UK defence capability behind him.

These investments, plus the unprecedented surge of support to Ukraine, are projected to increase the percentage of GDP the UK spends on defence this year to around 2.3% – making the UK again the leading European defence spender this year.

As well as keeping us safe, the UK's defence budget creates and sustains 390,000 UK jobs, including through nearly £20 billion of investment into UK

industries every year. 1 in every 130 UK jobs are created by our defence budget. Most of these are high-paying, skilled jobs with an average salary of £45,000.

This includes:

- 29,800 jobs across the UK, including 13,500 in the Northwest of England, created by the Dreadnought submarine programme
- 24,000 jobs supported by our shipbuilding industry
- 300 jobs in Rosyth and elsewhere created by a £30m contract to maintain our two aircraft carriers
- More than 100 jobs created in Stevenage, Cowes, Bristol and Bolton by a £300m project to make the UK the first European nation to operate a Maritime Ballistic Missile Defence detect and destroy capability

Our proud record on defence has also built a thriving UK defence export industry, which exports an average of £3.75bn worth of equipment around the world – helping to keep our allies safe.

Addressing NATO today, the Prime Minister is expected to say:

The NATO Alliance keeps our people safe every day. But over the next ten years the threats around us are only going to grow. We need allies – all allies – to dig deep to restore deterrence and ensure defence in the decade ahead. The 2% was always meant to be a floor, not a ceiling and allies must continue to step up in this time of crisis.

I remain incredibly proud of the immense contribution Defence makes to the UK and the world. Defence of the realm is the first order of any Government. But more than that, defence lies at the beating heart of the United Kingdom.

Almost every family knows someone who has served our country or worked in our thriving defence industry. Moments of national joy are observed from the skies by our incredible Red Arrows, moments of national mourning are flanked by our men and women in uniform.

And as we think about crafting a future in which the people of the UK are safe and prosperous, we must again turn to defence. To neglect the needs of our Armed Forces is to neglect our country.

To fully address the threats of the future the UK is investing in long-term strategic projects like AUKUS and Future Combat Air System. These involve cutting-edge technologies which the UK defence industry will be tasked with developing for years to come – bolstering alliances and creating and sustaining jobs across the UK.

In 2014, at NATO's Wales Summit, allies committed to the Wales Defence Investment Pledge to invest 2% of GDP in defence by 2024. Between 2014 and 2022 European allies and Canada are expected to spend a total of \$350 billion

extra in real terms on defence. The UK has led the way, from securing the Wales Pledge to investing \$34,741 million more in defence since 2014.

But, as the Government recognised in the Integrated Review, the costs of staying safe and secure are rising. At the NATO Summit today, the Prime Minister will urge allies to start discussions on a new target for defence investment from 2024.

In recent weeks a number of NATO members have agreed to increase their defence spending in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. They include Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Romania and Poland. Poland will spend 3% of its GDP on defence from next year.

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## £1 billion technology investment to bring railway into 21st century

- government makes £1 billion digital signalling investment on one of UK's busiest rail routes
- will deliver safer, more reliable and more resilient services on East Coast Main Line
- new technology will mean fewer delays while creating around 5,000 jobs

More than £1 billion of government funding will be used to replace outdated Victorian infrastructure with cutting edge digital signalling technology.

One-third of the nation's population live within 20 minutes of a station on the East Coast Main Line and, together, produce more than 40% of the UK's GDP, making it one of the UK's busiest rail routes while also playing a vital role in the prosperity of the nation's economy.

The technology, which will be rolled out across the entire southern section of the line – from London's King's Cross to Stoke Tunnels, just south of Grantham – will mean faster, safer and more regular trains for millions of people.

A week after union leaders brought much of the nation's railway to a standstill with strikes, this investment is a key example of how the government wants to bring the industry into the 21st century.

Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps said:

While union bosses waste time touring television studios and standing on picket lines, I am busy getting on with the job at hand and modernising our railway.

This £1 billion investment will allow us to replace unreliable Victorian infrastructure with cutting-edge technology which will mean fewer delays and more regular services for millions of passengers.

The world is changing and, despite the best efforts of unions, I am determined to help our railway change with it.

### [£1 billion technology investment to bring railway into 21st century](#)

The funding will remove outdated lineside signalling and replace it with the European train control system (ETCS), which brings signalling into train drivers' cabs and provides them with real-time, continuous information throughout their journey.

The new in-cab technology will create a more responsive, more resilient railway and, crucially for passengers, one that can recover quicker when journeys don't go to plan. Most importantly, as the system will constantly monitor the train's speed, it will also create a safer railway.

Toufic Machnouk, Director, Industry Partnership for Digital Railway, Network Rail, said:

We are delighted to have been given the go ahead for this ground-breaking programme that will transform the capability and resilience of the East Coast Main Line and be a key enabler for the wider network.

The East Coast Digital Programme (ECDP) is uniquely bringing together all elements of track and train through a pioneering industry partnership that is working beyond boundaries in a deep collaboration.

We will upskill our people and use new technology to improve the way we work for the benefit of passengers and freight customers.

As well as the many passenger benefits, the ECDP will deliver a much-needed financial boost to the industry and, over its lifetime, is 42% cheaper than the current system.

It will also help the government towards its net zero goal by decreasing carbon emissions by 55,000 tonnes – the equivalent of more than 65,000 one-way flights from London to New York.

David Horne, Managing Director at London North Eastern Railway (LNER), said:

Digital signalling will allow the full potential of our Azuma fleet technology to be realised and means our customers will benefit from even more reliable and sustainable journeys in the future.

Tom Moran, Thameslink and Great Northern Managing Director, said:

We're delighted with this announcement, which will mean better services in the future for our passengers on the East Coast Mainline.

This massive investment builds on our work to implement digital signalling on the Northern City Line into Moorgate in the City of London and it means we can continue to roll out the technology on some of our key routes.

The ECDP follows more than £350 million of prior investment to fit other services on the route with the new technology, with over 80% of passenger rolling stock on the East Coast Mainline South already using the ETCS.

Network Rail will prioritise the request for a further investment of £427 million as part of the next control period settlement, bringing the overall investment to just under £2 billion.

Maggie Simpson OBE, Director General, Rail Freight Group, said:

Freight customers throughout supply chains are dependent on reliable rail services to deliver goods to people.

We welcome this investment in digital signalling that will provide a more flexible and resilient railway, unlocking future growth potential in rail freight traffic supporting both decarbonisation and economic growth.