

Speech: Securing HS2 for the Midlands and north

Thank you and good afternoon everyone. I'd like to thank you all for inviting me to this event.

It's a real pleasure to be here today (24 January 2019) and to see so many familiar faces from the world of transport, as well as across the political spectrum.

This government's plans for projects such as High Speed 2 will not only revitalise the north and the Midlands, they will have a transformational effect on Britain.

And many of you in this room have the responsibility of not only bringing these plans to fruition but also ensuring the entire country enjoys the full benefits.

For it's no exaggeration that good transport connections can have an extraordinary impact on people's lives. They bring communities closer together, provide [new work and educational opportunities](#) and help businesses to thrive. But I am all too conscious that the last time we built new rail links to the centres of our great northern cities, Queen Victoria was still on the throne.

Back then the north was home to some of the earliest railway innovations.

For instance, in 1830 the first modern intercity passenger railway in the world ran between Liverpool and Manchester.

The 35-mile trip was a thrilling experience for travellers, if not a rather bracing one – as many passengers sat in carriages virtually open to the north-west's weather.

But it inspired real excitement among the public about the potential offered by railways and it's my aim to create that same sense of enthusiasm towards the benefits of our modern railway projects.

However it is a great shame that half a century of underinvestment means cities in the north and Midlands don't just have poor rail connections to the rest of the UK – they have poor connections to each other.

These inefficient links have meant that opportunity is less accessible for people than in other parts of the country, such as the south-east.

I am proud to be part of a government that has called time on that trend.

And I believe the creation of HS2 will super charge economic growth for the north and the Midlands while providing the extra capacity required on busy north to south rail routes, which are currently among the most intensively

used in Europe, and encouraging employers and businesses to not just focus on London and the south-east but the country as a whole.

I've been delighted to see the progress HS2 is making.

Last autumn [I joined West Midlands Mayor Andy Street to meet the team delivering the HS2 station at Curzon Street in Birmingham](#) where the railway will help transform the city centre, and could unlock up to 36,000 jobs and 4,000 new homes.

But as people in this room know, HS2 is not just about improving train links between London and Birmingham.

It's a project that will benefit the whole country, boosting opportunity and breathing new life into towns and cities.

You may have seen media stories suggesting that the second stage of the project might not happen. Those stories are completely inaccurate.

Let me be very clear. High Speed 2 is vital beyond Birmingham and failure to deliver it would be a dereliction of our duties to improve the life chances of everyone in this country, an abandonment of our ambition for one of the most extraordinary engineering projects since the Victorian age and a huge betrayal of the people in the Midlands and the north.

Some of you may have been at the event, where I was reported to have made these remarks.

In fact I said we must keep on making the strategic case for HS2 and work hard to win over the public about its potential benefits.

Let me reiterate. We are committed to a second stage [between the West Midlands and Leeds and between Crewe and Manchester](#), completing the 'Y axis' and it is very heartening to see that the positive impacts of HS2 – both the first and second stage – are already being felt all over the UK.

So far it has already created 7,000 jobs and 100 apprenticeships. While over 2,000 contracts for the railway are being delivered by businesses large and small everywhere from Colchester to Coventry.

So HS2 is a project that will transform our country, regenerate our regions and rebalance our economy. But I want to be clear that it will not come at the expense of other transport projects for the north. And conversely nor will other railway projects come at the expense of HS2.

It's a complete misnomer to say we can only have either Northern Powerhouse Rail or HS2. We need both. In fact there are strong reasons why HS2 should actually pave the way for NPR and why the case for NPR is actually bolstered by HS2.

That's why we are integrating HS2 into the emerging proposals from Transport for the North for Northern Powerhouse Rail, as well as with our Midlands transport plans.

I'd like to conclude by thanking our hosts TFN, Midlands Connect, Core Cities and the Northern Powerhouse Partnership for organising this event.

Your help is vital in achieving our ultimate goal of a transport network that is fit for the future.

We are committed to delivering HS2 for you and the businesses, people, passengers and local authorities that you represent.

It's your work today that will help ensure the growth and prosperity of the whole country for generations to come.

We have a fantastic opportunity with HS2 to transform capacity, boost connectivity and spark even greater economic growth. Let's seize it with both hands. Thank you.

Press release: UK ELECTION VIOLENCE SANCTION STATEMENT

UK Statement

[Begins] 23 days to the Presidential and National Assembly elections and 37 days to the Gubernatorial and State Assembly elections, the British High Commission in Abuja would like to reaffirm our strong support for free, fair and peaceful elections in Nigeria.

We and our international partners remain committed supporters of Nigeria's democracy. We do not support any party or individual and believe that the Nigerian people should be able to choose their leaders in an environment free from hate speech and insecurity.

We continue to provide significant support to Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission and to Nigerian civil society to help them deliver credible elections. We also regularly engage with actors across the political spectrum to encourage them to respect electoral rules and maintain an atmosphere of peace and calm. We will be deploying an extensive observation mission for the forthcoming elections, including coordinating with the EU's Election Observation Mission. Our monitors will in particular be looking out for any attempts to encourage or use violence to influence the elections, including on social media. We would like to remind all Nigerians that where the UK is aware of such attempts, this may have consequences for individuals. These could include their eligibility to travel to the UK, their ability to access UK based funds or lead to prosecution under international law.

The UK is a friend and partner of Nigeria. We hope our continued support will play a role in helping Nigeria take a further step towards consolidating the

progress made since democracy returned in 1999. [ends]

U.S. Statement

[Begins] The conduct of the upcoming elections in Nigeria is important not only for Nigeria, but for the African continent.

The United States government does not support any specific candidate or party in Nigeria's upcoming elections. The United States supports the Nigerian democratic process itself. We support a genuinely free, fair, transparent, and peaceful electoral process.

We, and other democratic nations, will be paying close attention to actions of individuals who interfere in the democratic process or instigate violence against the civilian population before, during, or after the elections. We will not hesitate to consider consequences – including visa restrictions – for those found to be responsible for election-related violence or undermining the democratic process. Under U.S. immigration law, certain violations may also lead to restrictions on family members.

We welcome the signing of peace pledges by Nigerian candidates and their commitment to a peaceful electoral process. [Ends] _____

[Press release: New research to encourage more shoppers to register their household appliances](#)

- Registering products enables customers to be more easily contacted if a fault has been identified and this research will look at how to boost registration rates
- Announcement comes as the OPSS marks its first anniversary on national Register My Appliance Day

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is marking its first anniversary by launching new research into the reasons why many consumers don't register their household products, and what more can be done to boost rates.

Registering products enables manufactures to more quickly contact customers if a fault occurs and could improve the long-term reliability of appliances if an issue has been identified or a product is recalled. At present, less than a third of people have registered their large appliances according to the Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Appliances (AMDEA).

OPSS wants to better understand the reasons why some people do not register their devices in order to develop mechanisms to improve rates. Ideas such as making registration mandatory will be tested on almost 5,000 product purchases.

Following the research, manufacturers and retailers will get guidance on the best ways to increase rates of product registrations.

Consumer Minister Kelly Tolhurst said:

Registering your fridges, freezers and other every day appliances only takes a few minutes and makes it easy for manufacturers to get in touch in the unlikely event there is a problem.

This research will build on a fantastic first year for the Office for Product Safety and Standards. It has helped build on the UK's already world leading consumer protection regime, raising awareness of faulty products and keeping in place the strong protections we will need after EU Exit.

Today also marks Register My Appliance Day, which has been organised by AMDEA to raise awareness of the benefits of registering household products.

Douglas Herbison, Chief Executive of AMDEA, said:

We congratulate OPSS on its first anniversary and have been particularly grateful for its support of our Register My Appliance campaign. All AMDEA members are committed to product safety and we have been pleased to share our technical and standards expertise with the new teams in OPSS and look forward to working with them in the future.

The new research is one of several science-based research programmes planned by OPSS. Other activity over the past year includes:

- reaching more than two million people with public awareness campaigns about the dangers of products such as flammable costumes, fireworks and laser pointers
 - strengthening the UK's ability to stop unsafe products at the border after EU exit
 - funding testing-houses for potentially hazardous products such as cosmetics, ladders and toys
-

[News story: UK-China partnerships against antimicrobial resistance get funding](#)

On the day that the UK Government publishes its strategy to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK is announcing winners of two research competitions to address the issue of infections resistant to antibiotics both in humans and in animals.

On behalf of the [Department of Health and Social Care \(DHSC\)](#), Innovate UK has completed two research competitions that will award £20 million of research funding for AMR research. This includes a bilateral research competition between DHSC's Global AMR Innovation Fund (GAMRIF) and the [Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology \(MoST\)](#), and a competition as part of the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI).

GAMRIF's UK-China research competition supports new innovations to address antimicrobial infections in both humans and animals, which together constitute a significant threat to human health. Successful projects are a partnership of UK companies and research organisations, with Chinese companies and research organisations. £10 million of UK aid funding has now been awarded to UK partners, with MoST providing funding for the Chinese partners who will receive up to a total of 60 million RMB.

These partnerships will enable novel research to be conducted that neither country could carry out alone within the same time frame.

In total, 14 projects were selected and will run over the next three years. These projects include a diverse range of innovations, such as novel diagnostics, therapeutics, and animal feed, as well as opportunities from traditional Chinese medicine for treating or preventing infectious bacterial disease.

The results of this research will have global implications including in China and across emerging and developing countries.

Among these projects, are a collaboration between [The Vaccine Group](#), based in Plymouth and the [Shanghai Veterinary Research Institute \(SHVRI\)](#), [Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science \(CAAS\)](#), which plans to use a bovine virus as a safe, inexpensive, single dose vaccine to control *Streptococcus suis* infection in domestic pigs. Also working with SHVRI, CAAS is [GAMA Healthcare Ltd](#) in Watford, who have collaboratively proposed to develop a non-antibiotic treatment of multi-drug resistant organisms in poultry.

Professor Dame Sally Davies, England's Chief Medical Officer, said:

Drug resistant infections claim hundreds of thousands of lives across the globe. An innovative and international response is vital

– this latest collaboration between the UK and China guarantees much needed research to address the complex and world-wide issue of AMR

Dr Kath Mackay, Interim Director – Ageing Society, Health & Nutrition, Innovate UK said:

Antimicrobial resistance is one of the biggest global challenges in healthcare. It has been estimated that the AMR threat could lead to 10 million extra deaths a year and cost the global economy up to £75 trillion by 2050.

This partnership between China and the UK's world-leading bio-industry is a vital contribution to tackling this issue through international co-operation.

A further £10 million has been awarded to UK organisations as part of the SBRI to develop solutions to AMR in humans. This competition focuses on two strands of research; new therapies and infection prevention and control.

Of the 13 projects selected across business and academia, 9 are led by small and medium enterprises who will translate AMR research into industry.

Winners include a project from Surrey-based Clean Blue Ltd that will develop an anti-infective medical device. [Medisieve](#), based in London, has also received funding to use magnetic blood filtration to treat antibiotic resistant bacterial sepsis.

[Press release: MHRA recalls more blood pressure and heart medication from pharmacies as a precaution](#)

Today's recall affects 3 batches of Irbesartan 150mg and 300mg tablets which reached the UK market, supplied by Macleods Pharma UK. Information on which batches are affected can be found [here](#).

The pharmacy-level recall is being undertaken as a precaution as testing revealed possible N nitrosodiethylamine (NDEA) contamination.

There is no evidence at present that the impurity has caused any harm to patients and not all Irbesartan products are affected. People should continue to take their medication and should speak to a doctor or pharmacist if they have any concerns.

[Earlier this month](#), MHRA advised pharmacies to recall all affected batches of Irbesartan containing medicines made by Actavis.

In 2018, the Agency twice recalled batches of Valsartan to pharmacy level in 2018. Valsartan containing medicines from Dexcel and Actavis (now Accord) were recalled in [July](#) and batches of Valsartan containing medicines made by Mylan and Teva, were also recalled to pharmacy level [in November](#).

The initial recall occurred after an impurity, N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), was identified as part of the manufacturing process in a Valsartan active substance manufactured at one facility based in China. A second impurity, NDEA, was later discovered.

The MHRA continues to thoroughly investigate the issue alongside the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines (EDQM). We will continue to monitor the situation in the UK and consider what actions are necessary to protect public health.

Dr Sam Atkinson, MHRA's Director of the Inspection, Enforcement and Standards Division, said:

Our most important concern is the safety of the medicines you take.

As today shows, we continue to investigate potential contamination of sartan containing medicines such as Irbesartan. We will continue to act and provide updates when appropriate.

Currently, there is no evidence that medicines containing NDMA or NDEA have caused any harm to patients.

Because of the risk associated with suddenly stopping high blood pressure medication, continue to take your medicines as prescribed by your doctor.

If you have any concerns about your medicine, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

Notes to editor

1. [In July, MHRA advised pharmacies](#) to recall affected batches of Valsartan containing medicines made by Mylan and Teva as a precautionary measure. 2. [In November, we advised pharmacies](#) to recall batches of valsartan from Dexcel and Actavis as a precautionary measure. 3. Earlier this January, MHRA advised pharmacies to recall all affected batches of Irbesartan containing medicines made by Actavis as a precautionary measure. More information [here](#). 4. Find out more about our [Yellow Card Scheme](#).