

[News story: DVLA gives a shout out on Alexa](#)

From today motorists across the UK can access up-to-the-minute information from the DVLA on their vehicle tax through Amazon's Alexa.

DVLA is trialling an Alexa product, known as a 'skill' which allows customers to check their vehicle tax and MOT status.

Free to download on the Alexa Skill Store, it works by customers reading out the vehicle registration to an Alexa-enabled device such as an Echo. 'Alexa' then reads the information back, letting the customer know when their vehicle tax is due.

This information, which is also available on gov.uk/check-vehicle-tax, helps customers to check the date their vehicle tax is due, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Oliver Morley, DVLA's Chief Executive said,

We're really excited about trialling an innovative skill that gives customers access to information about their vehicles.

Providing choice in how people use our services is important to DVLA and by trialling this skill we are giving customers another way to get information quickly and easily – helping them to keep on top of their vehicle tax.

This is another example of how we are always looking to test new ways of providing digital services to make things simpler and better for the UK's motorists.

The DVLA skill is available to download via amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_2?url=search-alias%3Dalexa-skills&field-keywords=DVLA

[Press release: Welsh Secretary meets Welsh Veterans in Cardiff](#)

Commonly known as Passchendaele, the battle is remembered as one of the bloodiest campaigns of the First World War.

Units of the 38th Welsh Division, which had fought bravely in the actions at Mametz Wood a year previously, found themselves on the front line at Passchendaele. The renowned Welsh language poet, Hedd Wyn was also killed in battle here on 31 July 1917 and is buried at the nearby Artillery Wood cemetery, close to Ypres.

Ahead of his visit to Belgium this weekend, the Welsh Secretary has taken the opportunity to meet with veterans at Royal British Legion's Cardiff Pop In to underline the gratitude and respect the people of Wales have for the sacrifices they made

Mr Cairns recognises the importance of honouring Welsh Veterans:

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The First World War centenary commemorations are playing a crucial role in educating and connecting current and future generations with the stories of every man or woman whose lives were touched by this significant event in our history.

We are privileged to have a long and proud military history in Wales and it is a huge honour today to meet with Welsh veterans that have lived through a range of conflicts over the years. The sacrifices that they and so many others made to ensure our future security cannot be forgotten and it is crucial that it is understood and appreciated by those growing up today.

The work that the Legion does to improve the lives of the armed forces community cannot be underestimated. It plays such a critical role from awarding grants, offering emotional support and comradeship and ensuring the nation comes together to remember. These veterans truly are an inspiration. They gave so much and for that we owe them a great deal.

Ant Metcalfe, Wales Area Manager, The Royal British Legion said:

We look forward to welcoming the Secretary of State and members of our veteran community to the Pop In today to discuss current veterans issues as well as the importance of remembering the fallen from past conflicts. As the nation's biggest Armed Forces charity and the custodians of Remembrance the Legion work to provide care and support to all members of the British Armed Forces past and present and their families.

Notes to editors

Welsh forces in Passchendaele

- The Third Battle of Ypres is of particular resonance for Wales as it claimed the lives of many Welsh soldiers including the renowned Welsh language poet, Hedd Wyn. Hedd Wyn was killed on 31 July 1917 and is buried at the nearby Artillery Wood cemetery, close to Ypres.
- Units of the 38th Welsh Division, which had fought bravely in the actions at Mametz Wood a year previously, found themselves on the front line at the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). The 38th (Welsh) Division were heavily involved at Pilckem Ridge. Alongside the experienced troops were who had seen action in the Battle of the Somme were new recruits who had been conscripted in early 1917.
- During the action three Welshmen won the Victoria Cross, Sergeant Ivor Rees 11th South Wales Borderers, Corporal James Llewellyn Davies 13th Royal Welsh Fusiliers and Sergeant Robert Bye 1st Welsh Guards. The 38th (Welsh) Division sustained a total of 2,922 casualties during the actions of 31st July and 2nd August.

[Press release: Sports Minister Tracey Crouch praises governing bodies for reforms that will 'collectively strengthen sport'](#)

Tracey Crouch announced her plan for the new code in the government's sport strategy 'Sporting Future' in December 2015 in a move to ensure that sports bodies in the UK lead the world with the highest levels of governance and transparency.

The [code was published](#) by Sport England and UK Sport in October 2016. Sports governing bodies are working with Sport England and UK Sport to become compliant by 31 October 2017.

If sports bodies do not adhere to the code and cannot demonstrate full commitment to becoming compliant with its requirements they will not be eligible to receive public funding. Governance requirements include:

- Greater transparency
- Increased skills and diversity in decision making – with a target of at least 30 per cent gender diversity on boards – and a commitment to greater diversity more generally
- Constitutional arrangements that make boards the ultimate decision-

makers

The changes will mark the single, biggest collective step forward in sports governance in the UK, and will set a template for global best practice.

Significant progress is being made, with 50 sports bodies including the Football Association, England and Wales Cricket Board, Lawn Tennis Association, Rugby Football Union and British Cycling all having plans already agreed on how they will become compliant.

The FA's board, council and shareholders have agreed to reduce the board in size from 12 to 10 members, introducing term limits of 3 x 3 years for both the board and the FA Council while also ensuring that the inclusive and diverse nature of English football is better reflected.

The Lawn Tennis Association agreed all article changes to become compliant with the code in May. This includes reducing council term limits and confirming the primacy of the board as the decision making body.

The RFU has formed an action plan that includes making changes to the composition of the board, including ensuring primacy of the board and the introduction of maximum term limits for council members. The proposals are to be formally presented to the Council in October 2017.

The ECB has committed to reducing the size of its Board and ensure its appointment process and term limits of directors are compliant with the code. The ECB has also initiated its own governance review to ensure that it is best in class for sports bodies.

British Cycling's National Council agreed at its recent EGM to make the necessary changes to enable it to become compliant with the Code by October. This includes an increase in the number of openly recruited independent board members and an independent chair. The reforms also include a limit for directors of three, three-year terms, with six of the eight current elected members of the board who have exceeded that maximum due to stand down in the autumn.

Sports Minister Tracey Crouch said:

I am really pleased with how governing bodies have responded to the introduction of the code. I appreciate for many sports this is not an easy task, due to the complexities of current governance structures, but virtually all of them have stepped up, understand the importance of this work and have changes in the pipeline that will collectively strengthen sport in this country.

Good governance and transparency in sport is absolutely paramount – not just for effective decision making but to increase diversity, maintain sport's integrity and ensure millions of sport fans have complete faith in those that run sport.

UK Sport CEO Liz Nicholl said:

Our funded sports, in receipt of support from Government and The National Lottery, have all embraced the new code for sport governance, with 100% of the summer Olympic and Paralympic sports with funded World Class Programmes having agreed detailed action plans with us to be compliant by October.

The changes that are required do present some challenges as they represent a transformational step up for sports governance in this country. It's time to focus energy on the opportunity to develop a modern sporting system that can grow and adapt to the challenges of the 21st century.

Sport England CEO Jennie Price said:

Implementation of the Code has been a huge undertaking but we are very pleased with the progress NGBs have made. A lot of change is now happening in a relatively short period of time. Despite the hard work involved, sports bodies have embraced the Code, recognising that better governance means better decision making, and have welcomed the chance to bring their business processes in line with best practice in other sectors. We think these changes will pay off for years to come, with British sport leading the world.

Progress is also being made throughout Olympic and Paralympic sport governing bodies. This includes:

British Gymnastics having strong gender diversity on its board, with 50 per cent of it female, while article changes to ensure the sport is code compliant are due to be agreed at its AGM in October

Royal Yachting Association – board committed to implementing the code in full and “create a world class solution” to its governance.

Boccia UK – already adheres to the majority of the code with 43 per cent of its board being female. The sport is committed to improving transparency through better communication of how it operates.

Notes to Editors:

Angling Trust, Archery GB, England Athletics, UK Athletics, Badminton England, Baseball Softball UK, British Amateur Boxing Association, British Basketball Federation, England Basketball, Boccia UK, Bowls Development Alliance, England Boxing, British Canoeing, England and Wales Cricket Board, British Cycling, British Equestrian Federation, Exercise Move Dance UK,

British Fencing, Football Association, Goalball UK, English Golf Union, British Gymnastics, England Handball, GB Hockey, England Hockey, British Judo, English Lacrosse, England Netball, British Orienteering, Modern Pentathlon Association of Great Britain, Rounders England, British Rowing, Rugby Football League, Rugby Football Union, British Shooting, British Swimming, Snowsport England, England Squash, Swim England, GB Taekwondo, British Triathlon Federation, British Weightlifting, Lawn Tennis Association, Disability Table Tennis, Volleyball England, British Waterski and Wakeboard, Great Britain Wheelchair Basketball, Wheelchair Rugby, British Wrestling, Royal Yachting Association

- There are two sports governing bodies that do not have action plans agreed to become code compliant with Sport England and UK Sport. These are: Table Tennis England and the British Mountaineering Council.
- Table Tennis England has called an Extraordinary General Meeting for 12th August to consider its Board's proposal on governance changes to become code compliant.
- The British Mountaineering Council is undertaking an independent governance review and Sport England will continue to work with them to agree an action plan.

Quotes from National Governing Bodies

FA Chairman Greg Clarke said:

Good corporate governance is essential for any successful organisation and The FA is delighted to have agreed the changes necessary to meet the best practice outlined in the code. I would like to thank Sport England for striking a considered balance between constructive engagement and commitment to excellence in governance

We have started putting the new governance structures in place. This month, the newly structured Council will meet for the first time with new members ensuring better diversity and representation across football. From next year the Council will be subject to term limits too. We have also started to change the structure of Board, reducing the size and ensuring we have at least 30% female representation. It is great to see that the code is helping improve governance across all sports and I am delighted that everyone in football is embracing its principles.

ECB Chairman Colin Graves said:

We look forward to continuing to work with the Government and Sport England to ensure good governance across the sports sector. For ECB, ensuring good governance is an integral part of making sure that we have the right structures and plans in place to be able to make the right decisions to grow cricket across England and Wales.

LTA Chairman David Gregson said:

The Lawn Tennis Association believes that world-class governance is essential for any sport to thrive, and as a result has warmly welcomed the new Sports Governance Code. Over the last decade, we have made wide-ranging governance reforms, enabling us to become SGC compliant earlier this year with a small number of additional changes. We look forward to working closely with Sport England to continue improving our corporate governance for the benefit of tennis in Britain.

RFU Chief Executive Officer Ian Ritchie said:

The RFU has been focusing on strengthening our governance for some time. Good governance is a core part of any well run organisation – the RFU council has been reviewing a series of governance reforms which are in line with the Sport England Code recommendations, which will be put to the members for approval later this year.

[News story: Louisa report and flyer published](#)

Sinking of fishing vessel Louisa while at anchor off the Isle of Mingulay with the loss of 3 lives.

MAIB report on the investigation of the foundering of the fishing vessel Louisa while at anchor off the Isle of Mingulay in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland on 9 April 2016 resulting in three fatalities is now published.

The report contains details of what happened, subsequent actions taken and recommendations, [read more](#).

A [safety flyer for the fishing industry](#) summarising the accident and detailing the safety lessons learned has also been produced.

Statement from the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents

In a statement, Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents Steve Clinch said:

The scope of this safety investigation has been necessarily broad. It has required the MAIB to raise the wreck of Louisa, and to conduct a thorough examination and a number of tests aimed at determining what caused the vessel to sink while at anchor. In the absence of any identified material defect, we have concluded that the vessel probably foundered as a result of its deck wash hose flooding the hold while the skipper and crew were all asleep. A previously disconnected bilge alarm sounder prevented them from being alerted to the flooding until just before the vessel foundered. These factors highlight operational deviations from best practice and an underestimation of the risks involved.

A failure of Louisa's liferaft to inflate and a delay in the arrival of search and rescue assets meant that, after abandoning the vessel, the skipper and crew depended on their lifejackets for survival. A lifejacket should turn an unconscious person onto their back and keep their airway clear of the water. It is therefore of concern that the skipper and two crew were tragically found unresponsive and face down in their lifejackets when the rescue services arrived on scene. The results of lifejacket trials undertaken by the MAIB and of lifejacket testing commissioned by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) following the accident strengthen that concern. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, I am recommending the MCA to conduct further research to confirm or otherwise the suitability of historical and extant lifejacket water performance test protocols.

[Press release: £10 million National Lottery support to redevelop Wales's oldest university college](#)

More than £10 million has been earmarked for a major restoration of Aberystwyth University's iconic Old College, the birthplace of university education in Wales.

The Grade I listed Old College is synonymous with Welsh nation-building following its purchase by the University of Wales for just £10,000 in 1867 using money donated by the local community.

After first opening its doors to students in 1872, for almost a century the Gothic seafront building saw thousands of students come and go, before focus shifted in the 1960s when the university moved to a newly built campus.

Now, funds generated by National Lottery players will see this much-loved building reclaim its place at the heart of Aberystwyth and the local community. Aberystwyth University has initially been granted development funding of £849,500 by the Heritage Lottery Fund, allowing it to progress with its plans and ultimately unlock the full £10,581,800.*

UK Government in Wales Minister Guto Bebb visited Aberystwyth to mark the announcement.

Guto Bebb said:

This National Lottery funding secures the future of the Old College, meaning it can continue to play a vital role in the future – not only of the university but the town itself. As an alumnus myself, I am pleased to see such a worthwhile and exciting project as this being supported to help secure a sustainable future for a building of which I have very fond memories.

John Glen MP, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Arts, Heritage and Tourism said::

Aberystwyth Old College is a treasured local building that is recognised as one of the UK's most significant pieces of Gothic revival architecture.

This fantastic scheme is so much more than a restoration project. Thanks to the £10.5 million contribution from National Lottery Players, it will create a thriving visitor and learning destination that will provide new cultural and community resources for Aberystwyth and West Wales and boost the wider Welsh economy.

Baroness Kay Andrews, UK trustee and chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Wales, said:

These exciting plans to breathe new life into one of Wales's best loved historic buildings provide a significant and timely boost for the culture and economy of Aberystwyth and well beyond.

Like many Aberystwyth graduates, I have fond memories of Old College. Now, for the first time, this unique building – the signature of Aberystwyth – will be open for the whole community to enjoy and profit from, including visitors to West Wales. This is great news for Aberystwyth and for Wales as a whole.

Aiming to complete Old College's transformation in time for the university's 150th anniversary in 2022, work is now underway to develop plans for the building as a performance and gallery space for artists, exhibitions and musicians, a centre for entrepreneurs and new businesses, as well as café and community rooms. It will also house a university museum, allowing some of the 20,000 items normally in storage to be shown the light of day and a new science centre will showcase cutting edge interactive displays alongside a planetarium and 4D facility, highlighting the university's links with the European Space Agency.

Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University, added:

Old College has played a starring role in the provision of higher education in Wales and the wider world. Built with the legendary pennies of the people, it seems fitting now that funding from National Lottery players is playing a vital role in regenerating the building and the economy of this beautiful part of Wales.

Our hope now is that Old College will become a showcase for the excellent research, teaching and treasures of Aberystwyth University, while providing vibrant new facilities for visitors and the local community who are key partners in this venture.

As well as creating new jobs, apprenticeships, work placements, training and volunteer opportunities, the revitalised Old College will also encourage graduates from the university to stay within the town and establish new businesses.

The total cost of the redevelopment is estimated to be around £22m, with the university planning other sources of financing for the project including a major fundraising appeal.

Notes to Editors

Heritage Grant applications are assessed by the Heritage Lottery Fund in two rounds. A first-round pass is given when HLF has endorsed outline proposals and earmarked funding. A first-round pass may also include an immediate award to fund the development of the project. Detailed proposals are then considered by HLF at second-round and as long as plans have progressed satisfactorily and according to the original proposal, an award for the project is confirmed.

About Old College

Old College is one of Wales's most remarkable buildings. Home of Wales's first University, this rare Grade I listed building is of national significance, synonymous with Welsh nation-building and on a prominent site on Aberystwyth's promenade.

Aberystwyth University's ambition is to open up and reveal the hidden and inaccessible heritage of Old College and transform the building into a welcoming and vibrant cultural and creative centre for the community and a major catalyst for economic and social regeneration. For local people, Old College will be a source of skills and job creation, inspiration, learning and entertainment. For visitors, it will be a new Welsh heritage destination with international appeal.