

Health Secretary sees how the South West is battling the backlog

- Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid visits the South West region as part of his week-long national 'Road to Recovery' tour
- Javid opens government-funded £56.7 million ground-breaking facility at Porton Down tackling COVID-19 and future health threats
- Visits follow government and NHS publishing COVID Backlog Recovery Plan to reduce waiting times, give patients more control over care and recover from COVID-19

Innovative health and technology hubs were the focus of the Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid's visit to the South West today (17 February 2022), as he continues his 'Road to Recovery' tour across England.

Mr Javid toured three major facilities to meet amazing staff who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic and see how the region is building back from COVID-19 and working through the backlog.

This visit comes just a week after the government and NHS published their electives recovery plan to boost recovery, tackle long waits for care with a massive expansion in capacity for tests, checks and treatments.

The government will also join up health and social care services and give people access to the right care, in the right place at the right time. The Integration White Paper published last week will improve health and care systems for the 21st Century, boost the health of local communities, and make it easier to access health and care services.

The Health and Social Care Secretary's ambitious agenda on day 4 (Thursday 17 February) of his tour included visiting:

- A new £4.4 million eye care unit at Musgrove Park Hospital, where he met with staff to thank them for their work during COVID-19 and hear their feedback on the new state of the art facilities.
- Dorset Health Village, a purpose-built centre on the top floor of Beales Department Store in Poole helping to tackle COVID-19 waiting lists.
- Porton Down, where he opened a new facility that will help to tackle both COVID-19 and a broad range of emerging health security threats.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

It's been a privilege to talk with people from Somerset to Dorset and see first-hand the innovative new approaches and technological breakthroughs that will underpin our recovery from COVID-19 and help tackle the COVID backlog currently facing our NHS and social care system.

Our COVID Backlog Recovery Plan, along with the excellent work I

have seen today, are necessary to radically rethink how our health service delivers operations, treatment and checks as we look beyond the pandemic and learn to live with COVID-19.

We are committed to tackling the COVID-19 backlog and building a health and social care system that works for everyone across our country.

As part of his commitment to recovering from COVID-19 and tackling the NHS backlog, the Health and Social Care Secretary visited the newly completed £4.4 million eye care unit that has opened at Musgrove Park Hospital in Somerset. The development is one part of Musgrove 2030 – an ambitious programme to transform the hospital's facilities and ensure people are cared for in the right place to meet their health needs. He met with staff to thank them for their work during COVID-19 and to hear their feedback on the new state of the art facilities.

The Health and Social Care Secretary then travelled to Dorset Health Village, a purpose-built centre on the top floor of Beales Department Store in Poole. Using lessons learnt from the creation of the Nightingale Hospitals at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and the mass vaccination centres, the floor has been completely transformed into a clinical area, including an ophthalmology lane, a breast screening unit and 16 clinical rooms which can be adapted for different clinics. This will ensure local people will get seen more quickly, in a convenient way for them.

Finally, the Health and Social Care Secretary, alongside Dr Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency, opened a new ground-breaking facility at Porton Down . The two-storey, 22,000sqft building is one of two that make up a new £65 million Vaccine Evaluation Centre, built to help develop and licence new vaccines and cement the UK as a global leader in testing against future variants of the virus.

Here, teams are currently sequencing over 1,500 positive PCR tests every day to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and guard against new variants as we learn to live with the virus, as well as shaping our understanding of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

Technologies like those at Porton Down are vital to tackling both COVID-19 and a broad range of emerging health security threats, and this has been recognised by the government's £10 million UK aid funding to progress research into vaccines to help future-proof the world from diseases.

Professor Dame Jenny Harries, CEO of the UK Health Security Agency, said:

It was a pleasure to be able to tour these new world-class facilities, with the Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid, which will help further establish the UKHSA and its Porton Down site as a global leader of vaccine testing and variant research in the fight against COVID-19.

The work undertaken at the Vaccine Evaluation Centre will define the UK's future pandemic response as we help develop the next generation of vaccines to protect against this ever-mutating virus.

Vaccines are one of the most important weapons we have against COVID-19 and they have prevented countless deaths and hospitalisations through this pandemic. Our teams will use these new facilities to ensure we stay on the front foot in protecting against future threats.

The Health and Social Care Secretary will use this regional tour to help focus these existing plans for recovery and reform, and inform future plans which are expected within the coming months.

[Foreign Secretary statement – Duma requests Putin recognises Donetsk and Luhansk as independent](#)

Press release

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has criticised the Duma's request that Vladimir Putin recognises the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent.



Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

The Duma's request that Vladimir Putin recognises the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent shows flagrant disregard for Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements. If this request were accepted, it would represent a further attack on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, signal an end to the Minsk process and demonstrate a Russian decision to choose a

path of confrontation over dialogue.

We urge Russia to end its pattern of destabilising behaviour against Ukraine and to implement the commitments it has freely signed up to, including the Minsk agreements.

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[Environment Agency warns communities to stay safe and be prepared as Storm Eunice approaches](#)

- The Environment Agency is calling for public to take action to stay safe during Storm Eunice
- Public urged to sign up for flood warning alerts on GOV.UK

The Environment Agency is urging people living in flood risk communities in the Severn and Wye estuaries to take immediate action to prepare for flooding from a forecast tidal surge caused by Storm Eunice this Friday.

The tidal surge is expected tomorrow (Friday) morning, and the Environment Agency is urging people to take steps to protect themselves and their property from the risk of flooding.

The Agency has issued 9 Severe Flood Warnings along the Severn and Wye due to the high risk of flooding from Avonmouth and up the Severn into Gloucestershire and along the Wye from Chepstow to Monmouth. Severe Flood Warnings indicate that there is a risk to life. A further 20 Flood Warnings are also in place.

Flood barriers have also been deployed further up the region in Shrewsbury, Frankwell and Beales Corner in Bewdley and officers are ready to deploy barriers at Ironbridge if needed.

Residents are urged to sign up to Environment Agency Flood Warning messages and to make sure they are prepared for flooding by following the 'Prepare, Act, Survive' guidance:

- Prepare a bag that includes medical and insurance documents
- [Check the latest flood situation online](#)
- Know how to turn off your gas, electricity and water
- Check your insurance to make sure you are covered for flood damage. If you rent your home, it is your responsibility to have insurance for your belongings.

- If you are flooded, call 999 if in immediate danger and follow advice from emergency services.

Kay Champion Area Incident Duty Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

The arrival of Storm Eunice overnight on Thursday has the potential to cause severe flooding with overtopping of defences, very strong winds and high waves. There is potential for record water levels along the Severn and Wye estuary.

We are closely monitoring the situation and working closely with our partners. Our incident response staff are checking defences.

We urge people to make sure they are prepared by signing up to Flood Warnings and making sure they are in a safe place by following guidance from emergency services.

We also strongly urge people to stay away from the coast during the storm as there is a real risk to life during these severe high winds.

You can check your flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest situation at <https://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk>, call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or follow @EnvAgency on Twitter for the latest flood updates.

The Met Office has issued a red warning for strong winds from Storm Eunice. This could cause a storm surge and flooding from large waves, potentially affecting communities in the Severn and Wye estuaries on Friday.

Flooding is possible from Sharpness and up the River Severn into Gloucestershire and along the Wye to Chepstow. With the Met Office weather warning in place people should take extreme care near the estuary and any coastal areas. We are urging people to stay safe and warn wave watchers against the unnecessary danger of taking 'storm selfies'. Please avoid low lying roads and footpaths during this time. There is potential for high water levels between 7:30 and 11:30 am on Friday morning.

[E-seminar: NGS \(part 2\), Instruments, Methods and Implementation](#)

News story

This e-seminar provides an introduction to NGS instrumentation and

applications employed with food safety, authenticity, and quality analysis.



The e-seminar provides guidance and best practice on establishing an in-house NGS capability, including Instrument selection and placement, supporting equipment, and staffing requirements. The e-seminar also considers other factors in setting up an NGS facility, such as the need for adequate data storage and data streaming capabilities.

The information presented will equip the viewer with the necessary knowledge and skills to broaden their scope of food safety, authenticity, and quality testing, and is essential viewing for any molecular biologist working in the area of foods analysis, who is considering extending their knowledge into this technique.

The e-seminar is intended for individuals currently working within the food allergens testing arena, the food industry, and those involved with the UK official control system.

The production of this e-seminar was co-funded by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Food Standards Agency, Food Standards Scotland and the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, via the Government Chemist, under the Joint Knowledge Transfer Framework for Food Standards and Food Safety Analysis.

[Next Generation Sequencing Part 2, Instruments, Methods and Implementation](#)

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[Foreign Secretary gives keynote speech in Ukraine: 17 February 2022](#)

Introduction

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

The spectre of Russian aggression has long hung over Eastern Europe.

Today it menaces our friends in Ukraine, and threatens security and stability for us all.

We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukraine.

Despite Russia's claims, the military build-up shows no signs of slowing down. There is currently no evidence that forces are withdrawing.

Russia must step back from the brink.

The Kremlin has had every offer of diplomacy – the Normandy process, proposals for further talks in the NATO-Russia Council, transparency mechanisms through the OSCE, and countless bilateral discussions.

Time after time they have chosen not to engage with these proposals but to obfuscate and object.

When President Putin spoke at the Munich Security Conference 15 years ago, he said that NATO expansion “represents a serious provocation.”

Since then NATO has not expanded its membership closer to Russian territory. But Russia has invaded two sovereign states and continues to undermine their territorial integrity.

Russia faces no threat from NATO or Ukraine.

But accommodating illegitimate Russian concerns would not make their threats disappear. Instead, Russia would be emboldened.

Bullies only respond to strength.

I urge Russia to take the path of diplomacy. We are ready to talk. We can talk at the UN as fellow members of the P5, at the OSCE at the Nato-Russia council. Russia can talk bilaterally with the United States as well as with other Nato allies. I say to Russia: now is the time to deescalate and choose diplomacy.

But we are very clear – if they decide to continue down the path of aggression, there will be massive consequences bringing Russia severe economic costs and pariah status.

Challenging Russia's arguments & actions

For years now, Russia has been building its capabilities, violating its commitments and probing our weaknesses.

The West needs to wise up. We need to work together to discredit their arguments in public.

We should use our intelligence strategically to challenge their narrative – as we did last month, exposing the Kremlin's plans to install a pro-Russian

leader in Kyiv and exposing their military build-up on the border.

And we should take on falsehoods – like Russia’s claim that the 2014 Revolution of Dignity was a coup d’état, or when they talk about the “indivisibility of security” as if it means that security is a zero sum game.

Russia argues that increasing one state’s security can only come at the expense of another’s. And with this perverse philosophy they falsely claim that countries on Russia’s borders should not be able to defend themselves or join defensive alliances like NATO.

I challenged Foreign Minister Lavrov on this in Moscow last week.

The commitment to “indivisibility of security” runs through the Helsinki Accords and the OSCE summits in Istanbul and Astana. And it means the precise opposite of what Russia claims. It’s actually a message of mutual dependence – that our security is inseparable – and that a threat to one imperils the security of all.

Russia claims that it’s being threatened. But what is the real threat? It’s not NATO’s defensive alliance. The real threat is the more than 100,000 battle-ready troops massed on the border of this sovereign state.

Russia thinks NATO shouldn’t expand. The truth is that countries want to join Nato. People want insurance and they see safety in numbers. And this is only accelerated by Russia’s belligerence.

Their aggression is driving NATO to strengthen its resolve. It turns the people of Ukraine and others against Russia. And it forces customers of Russian gas to question the reliability of their supplier.

Russia’s aggression is not just targeted at Ukraine.

Their campaign of hybrid warfare across Europe has brought cyber attacks, attempts to undermine elections, and the use of chemical and radiological weapons on the streets of London and Salisbury. They are supporting destabilising mercenaries across Africa.

They have chipped away at the architecture that makes us all more secure. I mean everything from developing missiles in violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, to breaking the commitments they made to Ukraine in Helsinki, Budapest and Minsk.

And now they have deployed their new generation of intermediate range missiles, which can launch nuclear and conventional warheads.

This is one of the most destabilising developments of the last decade.

No going back

We will be strong and we will act together.

And even if Russia pulls back from the Ukrainian border, the problem will

have not have gone away.

The free world needs to draw the line under a decade of drift.

That means investing in defence and deterrence, and pressing on with NATO's rapid modernisation.

If we hang back, that would only embolden the bullies in their campaign against sovereignty and the right to self-determination.

This is a litmus test for the West.

We must stand up and defuse Russian aggression now, because if we don't, it will embolden not only the Kremlin, but aggressors, authoritarians and autocrats right around the world.

What matters here in Eastern Europe matters for the world – and it matters for the future.

We have a duty to make sure that the next ten years are better than the last.

And of course, threats exist far beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. Our security is also indivisible from what is going on in Asia-Pacific.

Asia-Pacific

Beijing is increasing its assertiveness and expanding its armed forces at breakneck speed. They are upending the rule of law to create no go areas in the South China Sea, and conducting military flights near Taiwan.

But China is not the same as Russia.

They claim a policy of non-interference.

That's why it's surprising to see China's leaders aligning themselves with the Kremlin.

They didn't object to the 2014 invasion of Crimea. They now talk about who should or shouldn't be able to join NATO. And last month they joined Russia in resisting a Security Council discussion on Ukraine.

If China wants to be seen as a responsible global actor they should be doing everything possible to ensure that Russia steps back. The world is watching to see whether their actions contribute to peace and stability, or to fuelling aggression.

So how can we deal with this growing questioning of security norms and frameworks?

How can we make sure that Ukraine – and all of us – are safer in the years to come?

I think there are three areas that we should focus on

Updating arms control

Firstly, alongside deterrence, we must recommit to arms control.

Much of the architecture we have now arose in the 1990s. It reflects what Mrs Thatcher called “yesterday’s vision of the future.”

In the 21st century we need to take account of new technologies and take a more global approach.

We call on Russia and China to work with us on agreements that will keep our citizens safe.

In the long run, we can’t have a situation where the US is limited to arms control agreements but others can act unconstrained.

We have to strengthen accountability for breaches of agreements, calling out non-compliance – as we have in the abhorrent use of chemical weapons by Russia and Syria.

And we must improve transparency and trust-building measures.

We need to act together on nuclear disarmament, where the UK has long taken a lead.

We made an historic affirmation last month, together with the rest of the P5.

We committed to the Reagan-Gorbachev pledge that a nuclear war could not be won and should not be fought.

We must build on that and put in place concrete measures to reduce the risk of nuclear war. And with that in mind, we must redouble our shared efforts to stop Iran’s nuclear programme.

New domains

Secondly, we need to manage those areas where the rules are weakest, or where clashes and escalation are most likely to break out. Namely space, cyber space, the information space and the high seas.

Ukrainians know all too well how damaging cyber attacks and disinformation can be.

That’s why the UK is working with our partners to set standards in these areas – including the use of new technologies.

That’s why we’re leading work in the UN to broker an international consensus on responsible behaviour towards space.

And that’s why we are establishing a new government Information Unit in the UK.

This will be an agile, fully-equipped team tasked with rebutting false

narratives and countering the disinformation that malign actors use to target and undermine democratic societies.

Deepening ties with allies

Finally, we must strengthen our ties with friends and partners – and strengthen our shared capabilities.

We want to see democracies across Europe and beyond stepping up to the plate. We will work more closely with our allies, friends and partners, including the EU.

We want to see NATO accelerate its modernisation and seize the opportunity of the new Strategic Concept to strengthen defence and deterrence.

We are already putting our money where our mouth is as NATO's biggest defence spender in Europe.

We are joining with our Baltic and Nordic partners in the ground-breaking UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force.

We are providing defensive weapons to Ukraine and have trained 22,000 members of the Ukrainian army.

And we are taking the lead in developing new security ties – like our new AUKUS partnership with the US and Australia, and our growing partnership with Poland and Ukraine.

In dangerous times, we have to take a hard-headed approach.

That includes being ready to accept short-term pain for long-term gain, whether through imposing tough sanctions or cutting strategic dependence by opposing Nord Stream 2.

This is how we will ensure the next ten years are defined not by danger and drift, but by strength and stability.

Conclusion

We want to live in a world where people are in charge of their own future, free from aggression and coercion, where security is truly indivisible, and where nations respect the sovereignty of others, and live up to their commitments.

That means working together with our friends in Ukraine and beyond to face down malign threats.

It means leading the charge to ensure that the architecture of peace stands the test of time.

And it means making the hard choices to keep our people safe and build a better, more secure future for all of us.

That is our mission. And together we can make that happen.

Thank you.

ENDS