

New review into use of health data for research and analysis

A new review, launched by the government today, will focus on the more efficient and safe use of health data for research and analysis for the benefit of patients and the healthcare sector.

The review will complement the forthcoming Data Strategy for Health and Social Care which will set the direction for the use of data in a post-pandemic healthcare system.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has asked Dr Ben Goldacre to undertake this rapid review and report his findings in April.

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, said:

The pandemic has demonstrated just how important health data is. Ensuring that researchers have secure, transparent and ethical access to health data has the potential to transform health and care and save lives.

Ben has a wealth of experience in working with health data and I am delighted he has accepted my invitation to undertake this review. I am looking forward to working with Ben and seeing his recommendations over the coming months.

Dr Ben Goldacre, Director of the DataLab, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, said:

The UK has a phenomenal resource in its raw data, and its people. Our challenge is now in the final lap: we need to find safe, secure, collaborative and efficient ways to turn that raw data into insights and action, to improve patient care for all. There is a wealth of expertise around the country, much of it untapped.

I'm excited to talk to people across health, social care and research about their experiences and concerns to help drive better, broader, safe use of health data.

If you would like to get in touch about the review or share your experience of using health data for research, please contact goldacrereview@dhsc.gov.uk.

Terms of reference for the review

1. How do we facilitate access to NHS data by researchers, commissioners, and innovators, while preserving patient privacy?

2. What types of technical platforms, trusted research environments, and data flows are the most efficient, and safe, for which common analytic tasks?
3. How do we overcome the technical and cultural barriers to achieving this goal, and how can they be rapidly overcome?
4. Where (with appropriate sensitivity) have current approaches been successful, and where have they struggled?
5. How do we avoid unhelpful monopolies being asserted over data access for analysis?
6. What are the right responsibilities and expectations on open and transparent sharing of data and code for arm's length bodies, clinicians, researchers, research funders, electronic health records and other software vendors, providers of medical services, and innovators? And how do we ensure these are met?
7. How can we best incentivise and resource practically useful data science by the public and private sectors? What roles must the state perform, and which are best delivered through a mixed economy? How can we ensure true delivery is rewarded?
8. How significantly do the issues of data quality, completeness, and harmonisation across the system affect the range of research uses of the data available from health and social care? Given the current quality issues, what research is the UK optimally placed to support now, and what changes would be needed to optimise our position in the next 3 years?
9. If data is made available for secondary research, for example to a company developing new treatments, then how can we prove to patients that privacy is preserved, beyond simple reassurance?
10. How can data curation best be delivered, cost effectively, to meet these researchers' needs? We will ensure alignment with Science Research and Evidence (SRE) research priorities and Office for Life Sciences (OLS) (including the data curation programme bid).
11. What can we take from the successes and best practice in data science, commercial, and open source software development communities?
12. How do we help the NHS to analyse and use data routinely to improve quality, safety and efficiency?

Dr Ben Goldacre Biography

Ben Goldacre is a doctor, researcher and author. He runs the DataLab at the University of Oxford, building tools and services from large health datasets, and advises government on better uses of data and technology.

He leads various technology projects including:

- OpenSAFELY.org, a new model of secure analytics platform that runs across unprecedented volumes of linked primary and secondary care electronic health record data
- OpenPrescribing.net, an open data explorer for NHS primary care prescribing with over 130,000 users a year
- TrialsTracker.net, an open tool that monitors clinical trial reporting performance

His books, including 'Bad Science', have sold over 700,000 copies in more than 30 countries. His online lectures have over 5 million views.

Natural England unveils plans for final stretch of coast path in Suffolk

Proposals for improved public access to a 39-mile (62km) stretch of coast between Bawdsey and Aldeburgh have been unveiled today, Wednesday 3 February 2021, by Natural England.

When established, this fifth and final stretch of the path will complete a 138-mile (222km) coastal route along the Suffolk coast. It will run from the Essex/Suffolk border near Manningtree to the Suffolk/Norfolk border at Hopton-on-Sea. Extending around the Alde and Ore estuary, it includes 3 rivers: the Ore, Butley and Alde.

There is now a period of 8 weeks for the public to have their say on the England Coast Path proposals. If approved, this route will become part of the England Coast Path – the 2,700 mile long distance walking route and England's newest National Trail currently being developed around the entire English coast by Natural England.

The estuaries in southern Suffolk define the character of this part of the county, and the proposed route sits entirely within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is also an important area for wildlife.

This stretch of the England Coast Path uses parts of the existing Suffolk Coast Path, and starts at the mouth of the northern side of the Deben.

Along the way it takes in Bawdsey's military history and Shingle Street, then goes around the Butley River estuary with views of Orford Ness. A few miles on, it passes Snape Maltings, then across the marshes in to Aldeburgh.

From cliffs to grassed banks, this stretch has some interesting sites in view. These include the Radar Museum and Martello Towers at Bawdsey, Orford Castle and the old military buildings on Orford Ness. Snape Maltings is also an internationally famous venue for music and the performing arts.

Walkers can enjoy remote beauty spots along the route, such as Boyton Marshes

Hannah Thacker, Natural England's Area Manager for Suffolk, said:

We have had discussions with landowners and key organisations along

the proposed route. Their input has been essential and helped shape the proposals. We thank everyone for their time and input so far.

Over the next 8 weeks, we are inviting all organisations, farmers, local residents, visitors and businesses to have their say. It's important that all responses are taken into account and we look forward to hearing people's views.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs, said:

I am very pleased that Natural England is publishing the final report, which is the last piece to reveal the route that the England Coastal Path will take in Suffolk.

This is a very exciting time for all those who love the Suffolk coastline and enjoy the peace and solitude it provides. We very much look forward to continuing to work with Natural England and launching Suffolk's first fully fledged national trail.

Anyone may make representations to Natural England about the reports during the 8 week period. Owners and occupiers of affected land may make objections about the reports on specified grounds, which will be considered by a Planning Inspector before the Secretary of State makes a final decision.

All representations and objections must be received by Natural England no later than midnight on 31 March 2021. The full reports, and all the forms and guidance on how to make a representation or objection within the next 8 weeks, are also available on [GOV.UK](#).

England Coast Path

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places a duty on the Secretary of State and Natural England to secure a long distance walking trail around the open coast of England, together with public access rights to a wider area of land along the way for people to enjoy.

Natural England is working on the entire coastal route, with new sections also opened in Cumbria, Norfolk, Dorset, Kent, Somerset, Yorkshire, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, the Tees Valley and Lincolnshire.

- [A map shows a timetable for the work](#).
- The England Coast Path will be our longest, newest and most challenging National Trail, passing through some of our finest countryside and coastal locations.
- It will secure legal rights of public access for the first time to typical coastal land including foreshore, beaches, dunes and cliffs.

As well as recommending new sections of route, the proposals outline

improvements to existing access to the coastline, with proposals:

- To identify a clear and continuous way-marked walking route along this part of the coast, bringing some sections of the existing coastal footpath closer to the sea and linking some places together for the first time.
- To allow the route to 'roll back' if the coastline erodes or slips, solving the long-standing difficulties of maintaining a continuous route along the coast.

Further information – Bawdsey to Aldeburgh coast path

The Radar Museum helps explain Bawdsey's key role in developing radar technology. The cliffs soon give way to the grassed banks that protect much of this coast from the sea. Three Martello towers along this stretch defended the coast from a different threat.

The remote hamlet of Shingle Street was once the home of river pilots. Here the route leaves the open coast to continue alongside the rivers that partly flow parallel to the sea because of Orford Ness.

A route around the Butley River has been proposed but the part-time ferry has been operating for hundreds of years and now relies on volunteers to row people across the river.

Along this stretch there will be glimpses of the strange buildings on Orford Ness that show its military history. All is quiet now and the National Trust is custodian of the area that is a National Nature Reserve, with boat trips from Orford. One of England's most complete keeps at Orford Castle gives good views across to Orford Ness.

Walk a few miles further and the trail passes Snape Maltings that has become an internationally famous venue for music and the performing arts. As well as the concert hall, the Maltings offers shops, places to eat and boat trips along the River Alde.

On the northern bank the route partly follows the Sailors' Path, traditionally a route between Snape and Aldeburgh. The path now crosses Aldeburgh Marshes and gives one last chance to walk alongside the river and see the boats and sailing clubs. There's one last view south to Orford Ness and the final Martello Tower before discovering the delights of Aldeburgh.

About Natural England

Established in 2006, Natural England is the government's independent adviser on the natural environment. Our work is focused on enhancing England's wildlife and landscapes and maximising the benefits they bring to the public.

- We establish and care for England's main wildlife and geological sites, ensuring that over 4,000 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest are looked after and improved.
- We work to ensure that England's landscapes are effectively protected,

designating England's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and advising widely on their conservation.

- We run green farming schemes that deliver over £400 million a year to farmers and landowners, enabling them to enhance the natural environment across two thirds of England's farmland.
- We fund, manage, and provide scientific expertise for hundreds of conservation projects each year, improving the prospects for thousands of England's species and habitats.
- We promote access to the wider countryside, helping establish National Trails, including the England Coast Path, and ensuring that the public can enjoy and benefit from them.

For more information, visit [England Coast Path: improving public access to the coast](#).

Improved Countryside Stewardship scheme opens for 2022 agreements

Farmers and land managers are being encouraged to apply for [Countryside Stewardship \(CS\) agreements](#) to help them protect and improve the natural environment, as the new scheme opens today (Tuesday 9 February).

Through CS, farmers can apply for funding to improve their local environment – from restoring wildlife habitats and creating woodlands to managing flood risk. Following close working with industry, changes have been made to the scheme this year to broaden out the options available and make it easier to apply.

CS will eventually be replaced with the new Environmental Land Management scheme and by entering an agreement now, farmers will be best-placed to benefit from the new agricultural policy once it is fully rolled out in 2024.

Farming Minister Victoria Prentis said:

An improving and expanding Countryside Stewardship scheme is a great opportunity to deliver environmental benefits on your land and receive financial incentives for doing so. I strongly encourage farmers to apply for 2022 agreements.

We are guaranteeing that anyone who enters a new Countryside Stewardship agreement will be able to leave early in order to join the Environmental Land Management scheme once fully rolled out in 2024, so there is no reason not to apply today.

Following ongoing work with industry leaders and customer feedback, some changes have been made to the available schemes this year, including:

- New options to help improve air quality, reduce ammonia emissions and improve water quality. Advice will be available from Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers to ensure these environmental actions are targeted to where they can best benefit priority habitats
- An improved Countryside Stewardship capital grant offer, making 67 options available which can sit alongside a Countryside Stewardship Wildlife offer
- New wood pasture options in the uplands, at payment rates suitable for upland application, providing a mosaic habitat of grassland, scrub and trees
- The Countryside Stewardship capital offer to be available to Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement holders, where the options are compatible
- Improved woodland options, including bringing bracken control and stone wall options into woodland management and combining Woodland Creation and Woodland Maintenance grants
- Increased number of capital items that farmers can apply for using the Rural Payments service, covering water capital, hedgerows and boundaries and air quality
- Expanded eligibility criteria for the upland option UP2 (management of rough grazing for birds), enabling more land managers to access this option and further improve the upland offer

Following customer feedback, the Rural Payments Agency has further built on simplifications to the scheme and introduced more functionality to make it easier to apply online, simplified Mid-Tier options to make them easier to understand and changed the focus of Countryside Stewardship inspections for domestic agreements to support the delivery of environmental outcomes, offering advice and allowing things to be put right or paid on smaller areas without additional penalties.

Rural Payments Agency Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

It is easier than ever to enter into an agreement. We have worked hard to make CS simpler to apply for and for us to administer, which has seen the number of farmers who enter into agreements improve year on year. I'd urge everyone to complete their applications promptly and ensure that they don't leave things to the last minute.

CS is an opportunity to get into an agri-environment scheme which rewards farmers and land managers for their vital work to protect our countryside and enhance the environment for generations to come.

Farmers and land managers who are new to taking on environmental work or with expired or expiring Environmental Stewardship agreements can apply for:

- Mid-Tier – Farmers and land managers can enter five-year agreements – for revenue and capital payments and Wildlife Offer revenue-only agreements. These grants will provide a range of management options and capital items together in order to help deliver on a wide range of environmental benefits.
- Higher Tier – Applicants managing more complex land in environmentally significant sites, commons or woodlands which requires support from Natural England or the Forestry Commission. These are five or 10-year agreements.
- Capital Grants Manual – for two-year agreements. This includes an expanded offer with 67 capital items now available covering boundaries, trees and orchards. Water quality and air quality items can also be applied for if you have a Mid-Tier Wildlife Offer.

Woodland support:

- Woodland Tree Health Manual and Woodland Management Plan Manual: These will sit alongside wider woodland creation offers available outside of CS. The Woodland Tree Health grant offers help to restore and improve tree health. The Woodland Management Plant Manual grant helps to create a UK Forestry Standard compliant management plan.
- Woodland Creation and Maintenance Manual: An integrated 2+10-year agreement to help ensure trees planted under the woodland creation grant in the first two years of the agreement are maintained for a further 10 years. This grant is to support new woodland and its longer-term maintenance. The maintenance element of this scheme is not automatic – the customer would have to be eligible.

The RPA announced in January its [best-ever performance](#) which saw more full CS payments issued earlier than before.

Those new to Countryside Stewardship can find out more by attending farm advice events, with a schedule of local events due to be available on GOV.UK.

Some items in Mid Tier and the Capital Grants Scheme require support from a Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer. Check the scheme requirements to see when this applies. The Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) partnership will support those applications that offer the greatest environmental gains in high priority water areas to improve water and air quality. If your holding is in a high priority water area, download and complete a [Request for CSFO Approval Form](#) and send it to your local CSF Officer, at least six weeks before the deadline.

To apply and find out more visit [GOV.UK](#). Information manuals can be downloaded online from [GOV.UK](#), or you can request to receive an application pack in the post by contacting Rural Payments Agency (RPA).

Joint statement on announcement of date for Somaliland's parliamentary and local council elections

The below statement was signed by Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States.

The international partners supporting Somaliland's democratisation process welcome the announcement that parliamentary and local council elections will take place on 31 May 2021.

These elections present a significant opportunity for Somaliland to reaffirm its democratic credentials and to further the progress that has been realised in Somaliland's democratisation process since the last parliamentary election in 2005.

We commend the National Electoral Commission and the three political parties for the successful completion of a transparent and inclusive voter registration between December 2020 and January 2021. We observed and welcomed the large numbers of young men and women across Somaliland registering to vote for the first time. It is the sustained transparency, independence and impartiality of these technical processes, and the institutions supporting them, which underpins the credibility of Somaliland's democratic processes.

We encourage the government and the political parties to continue to ensure that candidates at all levels not only have the personal qualities to carry out the role required of them but that they are also truly representative of Somaliland's internal diversity. We welcome the 3 September 2020 commitment signed by the three political parties to collectively "nominate 18 women candidates" and "three candidates from the minority clans" for the parliamentary elections. We call on all parties to extend this commitment to the local council elections and to take further steps to ensure greater political representation of women, youth and minority clans after the May elections.

We look forward to the agreement of electoral Codes of Conduct for political parties and the media. We hope both agreements will reflect a commitment to inclusivity in addition to underlining the importance of transparency on candidate nomination, an equal playing field for campaigning, prevention of intimidation or harassment, including safety of women candidates, equal access to the media and a commitment to press freedom.

We remain committed to work with Somaliland to support the delivery of transparent, secure, credible and inclusive elections on 31 May. We commend the Somaliland government for its commitment to ensuring elections are delivered on time, and to providing the majority of the funding for these elections. The international community has provided financial support to the

NEC for the voter registration phase (from EU, Sweden and UK), and we look forward to providing further financial and non-financial support for remaining stages of the election process.

Rapist has sentence increased after intervention by Attorney General

News story

Michael Smith has had his sentence increased following an intervention by the Attorney General, Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP



A rapist from South Gloucestershire has had his sentence increased following an intervention by the Attorney General, Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP, who presented the case at the Court of Appeal.

Michael Smith, 26, raped a woman after a party in August 2017. When the victim threatened to report him, Smith made false allegations about her to the police. Smith later admitted to work colleagues that he had raped the victim and the matter was reported to the police.

During the course of the investigation, police also found four extreme pornographic images on Smith's phone; one of which had been distributed by Smith to a WhatsApp group.

On 20 October 2020, Smith was sentenced to 3 years and 9 months' imprisonment at Bristol Crown Court. Following a referral to the Court of Appeal by the Attorney General, on 9 February the sentence was found to be unduly lenient and has been increased to a sentence of 5 years and 6 months' imprisonment.

After the hearing at the Court of Appeal, the Attorney General said:

Smith's repulsive actions, and the extent to which he lied to cover up his guilt, were truly shocking and caused severe harm to the

victim. I am pleased I was able to personally present this case and I welcome his sentence being increased.

Published 9 February 2021