

UK Statement: Human Rights Council organisational meeting

Thank you Madam President

I wish to join others in warmly congratulating you on your election as President. We know that we are in extremely capable hands and you can count on our support in your difficult work ahead this year.

I would like to inform the Council about three resolutions that the UK intends to present as part of Core Groups. The Syria Core Group intends to present a resolution on the Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic during the 46th session. The resolution will seek to renew the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria, and mark the tenth anniversary of the beginning of conflict and reflect key human rights concerns

The Core Group on Sri Lanka comprising Canada, Germany, Montenegro, North Macedonia and the United Kingdom will present a further resolution on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka. The resolution will be informed by the recent report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On South Sudan, in partnership with the other Core Group members Albania and Norway, the UK will present a draft resolution at the 46th session, which we anticipate will cover, amongst other possible topics, the comprehensive report of the Commission of Human Rights in South Sudan, due to be presented to the Council in this session.

All of the Core Groups will hold informal negotiations and we hope that all Council members will be able to support the proposed resolutions.

I would also like inform all delegations that on the first day of the Council, the UK Mission will host a high-level virtual event on Girls Education and Building Back Better from COVID-19. We will inform delegations more about this event in the coming days.

Thank you Madam President

Launching the Independent Review of Construction Frameworks

Lord Agnew is pleased to announce the appointment of Professor David Mosey of King's College London to lead an objective, independent review of public

sector frameworks. This review recognises the potential of frameworks as a powerful engine-room for implementing [Construction Playbook](#) policies that include strategic planning, integrated teams, continuous improvement and the delivery of better, safer, faster and greener project outcomes.

The Framework Review will lead to recommendations for:

- the components of a ‘gold standard’ against which new proposed frameworks and framework contracts can be measured
- standard contract terms that support the new gold standard
- training packages to enable adoption of the new gold standard

This will enable contracting authorities to easily identify those frameworks which meet best practices and embody the policies set out in the playbook.

The Construction Playbook was launched on 8 December 2020 containing 14 key policy reforms to enable ‘faster, better, greener’ construction by transforming how we assess, procure and deliver public works projects and programmes.

One of these key policy reforms is ‘Effective Contracting’, designed to ensure that contracts are structured to support an exchange of data, collaboration, improve value and manage risk with clear expectations for continuous improvement and consistent with the principles contained within the Construction Playbook.

The Construction Playbook contains a commitment to undertaking a review of current construction frameworks, this is integral to achieving the aims of effective contracting.

Commercial frameworks have been proven to provide a powerful tool for strategic planning, integrated teams, continuous improvement and the delivery of better, safer, faster and greener project outcomes. Across the public and private sectors, there are a wide variety of frameworks and a lack of clear guidance as to their preferred structure and ‘best practice’ features. As a result, the potential of frameworks is not always well expressed or well understood and they are not always successful in delivering their aims.

Recommendations for the adoption and use of the most suitable framework structures and features are necessary in order to provide clear drivers that will deliver the policies set out in the Construction Playbook.

[Capacity Market auction parameters:](#)
[open letter from BEIS to National Grid](#)

ESO, January 2021

Letter from Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth to National Grid Electricity System Operator (NG:ESO) setting out adjustments to the auction parameters for the 1-year ahead (T-1) auction for the delivery year 2021 to 2022, and the 4-year ahead (T-4) auction for the delivery year 2024 to 2025.

It is accompanied by a letter from the Panel of Technical Experts outlining their view on the NG:ESO's analysis of potential impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020 Electricity Capacity Report recommendations.

£9 million fund opens to railway innovators and inventors

- First of a Kind competition offers share of £9 million prize to rail ideas of tomorrow
- previous investment has driven forward UK's first hydrogen train, live seat rebooking and technology to remove age-old challenge of 'leaves on the line'
- Rail Minister launches competition with speech at the [Rail Innovation Exhibition](#)

A new £9 million competition to find cutting-edge ideas set to transform the future of the railways has opened today, as Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris and [Innovate UK](#) launched the [2021 First of a Kind \(FOAK\) competition](#).

Focused on developing pioneering technology and exceptional ideas that can improve journeys for passengers and decarbonise the rail network, FOAK is now entering its fifth round, with a particular focus on supporting innovations that make the network cleaner, greener and more passenger-friendly.

To date, the competition has seen the Department for Transport (DfT) and Innovate UK invest around £25 million to develop projects including:

- HydroFLEX – the first mainline testing of a hydrogen train
- inspection drones capable of rapidly assessing the safety of rail infrastructure
- controlled water addition to remove the notorious problems caused by leaves on the line
- concrete slabs that automatically heat up to prevent icy platforms and passengers slipping
- a 'sound-bending' wall to minimise the noise of passing trains in urban

areas

- hydrogen-based steam turbines to drive zero-emission, low-noise rail freight

To mark the launch, Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris addressed the Rail Innovation Exhibition and reaffirmed the continued efforts that are being made to drive innovation within the rail industry and establish new technologies to build the railway of tomorrow.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

This country pioneered the railway, and that spirit of innovation and ingenuity has never been more vital as we look to build back better from this pandemic.

Our railways will underpin this country's economic recovery and help realise our ambitions of a carbon-neutral future. Through initiatives like the First of a Kind competition, we are investing today to build the railway of tomorrow.

Simon Edwards, Deputy Executive Chair and Chief Business Officer at Innovate UK, said:

A greener railway, easier for everyone, with a better experience for users is the aim of this competition.

Delivered by Innovate UK on behalf of the DfT and through the [Small Business Research Initiative](#), it seeks the best and brightest ideas.

Innovative companies all over the UK have proved their mettle in previous rounds of this scheme. Now we call again for even more fresh thinking to help deliver a better and greener railway that delivers for passengers and freight users.

Organisations have until 10 March 2021 to bid for funding. In 2020, 25 projects received a share of £9.4 million of funding.

Past winners who have benefitted from investment include HydroFLEX, who used funding received from FOAK in both 2019 and 2020 to develop the UK's first full-size hydrogen-powered train to be run on the mainline railway. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps visited the site in September 2020 to see the project, which is now developing the first hydrogen-powered passenger train.

Another previous winner is Seatfrog for their project 'Train Swap', enabling passengers to quickly and remotely update their seat reservation to an alternative service, and giving train operating companies the ability to move passengers proactively, managing load across the network. This innovation could help the industry adapt to the pandemic and ensure appropriate social

distancing on services.

Dr Stuart Hillmansen, HydroFLEX's Technical Lead, said:

It is fantastic to see our early fundamental research on the application of fuel cells in the railway sector being implemented and delivering real benefits for today's railway.

James Eyton, Seatfrog's Chief Financial Officer, said:

The DfT and Innovate UK are incredible supporters of technology start-ups and scale-ups in the UK, providing funding to drive innovation that enhances passenger experience.

At Seatfrog, this funding has enabled us to fast-track our product development of Train Swap, delivering the fastest and easiest way to change your train in the UK.

NHS COVID-19 app alerts 1.7 million contacts to stop spread of COVID-19

- Analysis suggests approximately 600,000 cases have been prevented by the app since September
- The app notifies contacts as quickly as 15 minutes after a user inputs a positive test result

Over 1.7 million app users across England and Wales have been advised to isolate by the NHS COVID-19 app following a close contact with someone who goes on to test positive, new data published today shows.

The NHS COVID-19 app has been breaking chains of transmission to protect users and their communities since its launch in September.

The app is the fastest way to notify the public they have been at risk of contracting the virus, sending alerts to close contacts to tell them to isolate as quickly as 15 minutes after an app user enters a positive result into the app.

The app has now been downloaded 21.63 million times, representing 56% of the eligible population aged 16+ with a smartphone and was the second most downloaded free iPhone app on the Apple App Store in 2020.

The more people who download the app the better it works. Research conducted

by scientists at The Alan Turing Institute and Oxford University shows for every 1% increase in app users, the number of coronavirus cases in the population can be reduced by 2.3%.

Research by the Turing/Oxford team into the epidemiological impact of the app also points to a causal link between app use and reduced case numbers, with their analysis suggesting the NHS COVID-19 app has prevented 600,000 cases since it was launched.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The NHS COVID-19 app is an important tool in our pandemic response. We know it has instructed hundreds of thousands of at-risk people to self-isolate since it launched in September – including me – and this analysis shows it has been hugely effective at breaking chains of transmission, preventing an estimated 600,000 cases.

Isolating and knowing when you have been at risk of catching coronavirus is essential to stopping the spread of this virus, and the app is the quickest way to notify you if you are at risk.

I want to thank all those who have played their part by downloading and using the app, and urge those who haven't to take the simple step to protect your communities and loved ones and download it.

The app has been designed with privacy in mind so it tracks the virus not people utilising the latest in data security technology to protect privacy while notifying users when they are at risk.

As well as contact tracing and booking a test the app allows users to check their symptoms via the symptom checker. Coronavirus symptoms have been reported into the app over 1.4 million times in England and Wales since 24 September.

Over 3.1 million test results have been entered into the app across England and Wales, of which 825,388 were positive. This is a combination of both tests booked through the app and test results manually entered into the app. As users are more likely to manually enter a positive test result in order to trigger contact tracing than a negative result, these figures cannot be used to calculate a positivity rate for the NHS COVID-19 app comparable to manual contact tracing.

Baroness Dido Harding said:

There can be no doubt the NHS COVID-19 app is a vital tool in stopping the spread of coronavirus, having sent over 1.7 million notifications to tell people who have been exposed to the virus to self-isolate since launch.

The app, which works as a part of the wider NHS Test and Trace

programme in England, helps us to reach more people quickly to protect communities, by notifying contacts as quickly as 15 minutes after a user enters a positive result.

The app continues to protect our essential workers during this lockdown, and will continue to play an important role in the future as we come out of national restrictions.

Director of Product for the NHS COVID-19 app, Gaby Appleton, said:

It is great that over 56% of the eligible population have already downloaded the NHS COVID-19 app.

The more people who download the app the better it works, and now more than ever every new user makes a difference. For every 1% of additional users who download the app, we can potentially reduce the number of cases in the community by up to 2.3%.

If you have already downloaded the app, I would like to thank you for helping to keep your loved ones safe, and please check that you always have the latest version of the app downloaded, as we make ongoing improvements to the app to help keep people even safer.

Figures on the app's wider features show users have checked into a venue over 103 million times. A total of 253 venues were identified as 'at risk' as a result of an outbreak since 10 December, triggering 'warn and inform' alerts to app users who had checked into those venues, protecting app users by letting them know as quickly as possible when they may have been at risk so they can monitor symptoms. A 'warn and inform' notification will only be sent if an outbreak is identified at a venue and is not equivalent to an instruction to isolate.

The app operates on a principle of continual improvement and has had a series of updates since its launch in September 2020, including an update to the risk scoring algorithm to utilise GAEN API Mode 2 which better estimates distance based on Bluetooth signal strength, increasing its accuracy and making this the first contact tracing app worldwide to harness this technology.

Professor Mark Briers of the Alan Turing Institute said:

We have created a world-leading app, the first of its kind to be built on the latest GAEN API Mode 2 technology, which works to break chains of transmission and protect users against the spread of the virus while maintaining privacy and anonymity.

Using the NHS COVID-19 app is the fastest way to know when you have been at risk of catching the virus and our analysis shows when more people download the app they can have a disproportionately positive

impact on driving down case numbers in the community.

I urge those who have not yet downloaded the app to look at the data and our analysis and see for yourself the benefits using this app can bring to protecting not just yourself, but your families and communities.

Christophe Fraser, Professor of Pathogen Dynamics at the University of Oxford's Nuffield Department of Medicine said:

Our analysis shows that the NHS COVID-19 app is sending exposure notifications to relevant contacts.

Isolating when receiving a notification from the app has and continues to prevent the spread of the virus. We analysed the impact of the 1.7 million notifications sent by the app, and our statistical analysis showed that approximately 600,000 cases were averted.

The impact of the app could be increased by more people using it: for each increase in users of 1% of the population, the number of cases can be driven down by approximately 2.3%. The epidemiological outlook remains concerning, and using the app can contribute to reducing infections until we are all vaccinated.

The app is now also interoperable meaning it is compatible with other contact tracing apps across the UK, protecting users who travel to Scotland, Jersey, Northern Ireland or Gibraltar. As of December, self-isolation support payments have been available to users in England who have been instructed to isolate, without compromising the privacy protecting nature of the app. In Wales NHS COVID-19 app users have been eligible to apply for the SISS since 1 February.

App users will only be notified to isolate if they are assessed to be at risk of having caught the virus so it is essential users comply with self isolation to stop the spread of the virus and protect the NHS.

Wolfgang Emmerich, CEO of Zuhlke UK, said:

The NHS COVID-19 app now runs on tens of millions of phones, making it one of the world's most downloaded medical software products. It provides a powerful, cost-effective and continuously updated instrument to help control the evolving pandemic.

Ronan Harris, MD & VP, Google UK and Ireland, said:

We built this technology with Apple to help public health authorities fight COVID-19. People up and down the country are

contributing to this fight, with record numbers choosing to download the app across England and Wales, supporting the NHS as it continues to do heroic work.

Data on the NHS COVID-19 app will be published weekly alongside NHS Test and Trace data from Thursday 18 February.

App download data is from 13 August, venue alert data is from 10 December when the process for venue alerts became semi-automated.

[Find information about the NHS COVID-19 risk scoring algorithm](#)

[Data including methodology](#)

Data on the number of cases prevented is subject to peer review.