

Major UK museums to collaborate with Fiji Museum

World news story

To mark Fiji's 50th anniversary of independence, the Fiji Museum and four major museums in the UK have been discussing to collaborate over knowledge exchange about historic Fijian artefacts held in the UK.



Civavonovono (composite breastplate of whale ivory and pearl shell); early 19th century, 28cm; Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology (Z 2730). This chiefly breastplate belonged to Tanoa and his son Seru Cakobau, both Vunivalu of Bau, and very likely was presented by Cakobau in 1875-76 to Sir Arthur Gordon, the first resident Governor of Fiji, who later donated it to the Cambridge museum. Fiji Museum has several high-quality breastplates of this type, some of them currently on display in Los Angeles (photo courtesy of Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology).

All four museums in the UK have specific expertise in Fijian and Pacific history. As an important first milestone to completing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), agreement has now been reached in principle to take this work forward.

With the assistance of Professor Steven Hooper of the University of East Anglia in the UK, the Fiji Museum has received offers of collaboration from the directors of the British Museum, the National Museum of Scotland, Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, and the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford.

It is proposed that support will include, among other things, providing Fiji Museum with practical and professional advice as it plans the next phase of its development. Fiji Museum staff in turn will provide advice and cultural information about Fijian artefacts held in the UK. For several years British Government-funded research has facilitated collaboration between Fiji Museum and UK museums, one of the results of which is the major exhibition, Fiji:

Art & Life in the Pacific, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which because of the pandemic has been extended until Sunday 2 May, 2021. Fiji Museum, along with several British museums, is a major lender to this exhibition, and is publisher of the associated exhibition catalogue by Steven Hooper.

The next step will be to identify reciprocal activities that will feature in the MoU and develop an Action Plan to ensure swift and dynamic implementation of the agreement. The British High Commission is delighted to support this work.

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British manufacturer SureScreen Diagnostics to supply 20 million rapid lateral flow

- New tests will support the government's drive to deliver rapid testing to those without symptoms to break chains of transmission
- New tests can return results in 30 minutes, and are the first British-made lateral flow tests validated for asymptomatic testing

The UK government has secured 20 million British-manufactured rapid coronavirus (COVID-19) tests in a new contract with Derby-based test manufacturer SureScreen Diagnostics. These lateral flow antigen tests produce a result in under 30 minutes and are the first British tests to be validated in the laboratory by Public Health England (PHE).

The SureScreen test will be used as part of the government's rapid testing programme for those without symptoms, which has seen lateral flow tests deployed across the country to test NHS and care home staff, as well as in targeted settings including schools, universities and to allow key workers to continue their vital work during lockdown.

With up to a third of individuals with COVID-19 not displaying symptoms, broadening asymptomatic testing is essential in finding positive cases who may unknowingly pass on the virus in order to break chains of transmission.

The partnerships being created with companies such as SureScreen also supports the wider resilience of the UK British diagnostics industry. The contract will create 200 additional jobs for Derby residents with roles across the whole production line as well as in the wider UK supply chain.

The tests have already been validated by PHE in the lab and are now in their final stage of validation in clinical trials. The tests have been proven to detect the B117 'Kent' variant of COVID-19, and are already CE marked and MHRA registered. Results for the test at the laboratory validation stage show sensitivity against high viral loads was 97.1% and specificity was 99.9%.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Rapid lateral flow tests strengthen our national response to the virus significantly, helping us to identify the around 1 in 3 people who are asymptomatic and break chains of transmission in our workplaces and communities. It is excellent to be working with a UK firm to deliver millions more of these rapid tests.

I am committed to bolstering onshore UK manufacturing capabilities. The brilliant work done by SureScreen, and the contribution it will make to our rapid testing programme, is another example of the home-grown talent, ingenuity and industry that exists right here in the UK.

It remains absolutely paramount that everyone follows the rules to stop the virus spreading further, and comes forward for rapid testing where it is offered. I thank every single person adapting and working to support and protect the country.

Lord Bethell Minister for Health, said:

From the very beginning of this pandemic we have worked with UK manufacturers to support the resilience of UK diagnostics.

It's fantastic that UK industry has come together to help us all respond to COVID-19 to help stop the spread of the virus.

I am hugely grateful for the considerable work that has been and will continue to be done by British suppliers, manufacturers and entrepreneurs to support our enormous scale up of testing. SureScreen's rapid tests will help prevent the spread of infection, while supporting jobs and the UK industry across the country.

David Campbell, Director of SureScreen, said:

We believe our rapid antigen tests can really help in screening people both in the community and in clinical settings. Routine testing is crucial to help business, as well as hospitals and GPs.

We are delighted to be working with DHSC on this project and that our tests have been recognised by the government and its scientists. We look forward to doing all we can to help the UK going forward in 2021.

SureScreen is a member of the UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium, a growing coalition of industry scientists and manufacturers, who have come together to secure lateral flow tests and manufacturing capability for the UK. A secure supply line for the UK for these tests is vital for ensuring the continuation and expansion of rapid regular testing programmes which, alongside vaccine roll-out, will be key for getting people back to work, education and friends and family.

Professor Chris Molloy, Chair UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium, said:

The UK lateral flow diagnostics industry has come together with intense purpose and the help of government to generate new UK tests and manufacture them at a scale never considered possible.

Their willingness to leave competition at the door in the national service should be celebrated as yet another example of what the UK can do with shared purpose, innovation and drive. This work lays a strong foundation for how the diagnostics industry as a whole will flourish in the UK to improve our future healthcare.

The kind of large-scale community testing that these tests facilitate is part of the government's COVID-19 winter plan to identify those who may be infectious with coronavirus earlier in order to break the chains of transmission and keep the virus under control. Alongside the rollout of vaccines, rapid regular testing will be key in time to getting people back to doing the things they love.

Lateral flow antigen tests work by taking a sample from the nose or back of the throat and testing that sample for the presence of antigens, the signature proteins of the virus. They show results visually, in the same way as many pregnancy tests. Antigen testing can tell someone whether they currently have the virus that causes COVID-19, and produce results in under 30 minutes.

Response to points raised in Road Haulage Association letter to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Thanks to the hard work put in by hauliers and traders to get ready for the end of the Brexit transition period, there are no queues at the Short Straits, disruption at the border has so far been minimal and freight movements are now close to normal levels, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a responsible government, we made extensive preparations for a wide range of scenarios at the border, including the reasonable worst case. However, it appears increasingly unlikely that our reasonable worst case scenario will occur.

We know that some businesses are facing challenges with the new rules, which is why we are operating export helplines, running webinars with policy experts and offering businesses support via our network of 300 international trade advisers. This is on top of the millions we have invested in the customs intermediaries sector.

We are committed to ensuring that businesses get the support they need to trade effectively with Europe and seize new opportunities as we strike trade deals with the world's fastest growing markets.

That is why we will continue to work constructively with the Road Haulage Association and other business representative organisations, including through the weekly Brexit Business Taskforce, to get them the tailored support to tackle any outstanding issues.

CLAIM:

According to a RHA survey "Exports going through British ports to the EU fell by 68% last month compared with January last year" (Observer, 07/02/21)

RESPONSE:

We do not recognise this figure and further details from the survey have not been shared.

Flows are monitored on a daily basis by the Border Operations Centre. In the last full week (30 Jan to 5 Feb) both outbound and inbound flows (across all UK ports) were close to normal, at 95% outbound and 96% inbound, in spite of the impact of COVID lockdowns on trade.

For the same week, flows outbound specifically across the Short Straits were at 82%.

The Port of Dover's own data confirms that volumes are close to normal.

CLAIM:

Richard Burnett, Chief Executive of the RHA “told the Observer that in addition to the 68% fall-off in exports, about 65%-75% of vehicles that had come over from the EU were going back empty” (Observer, 07/02/21)

RESPONSE:

This does not reflect the data from our French counterparts, which puts the figure at closer to 50%.

It is an entirely normal part of freight flows to have empty lorries on the outbound leg from the UK into the EU – this has always been the case.

Indeed, estimates suggest that prior to 1 January, around 30% of all outbound lorries were empty.

Taking the impact of Covid-19 on economic activity into account, the current levels are not surprising when compared to normal outbound flows.

CLAIM:

“On several occasions we have offered to facilitate a roundtable with affected businesses which so far has been ignored” (Richard Burnett letter to CDL, 01/02/21)

RESPONSE:

We have had intensive engagement with the road haulage industry over many months, including through the weekly CDL-led Brexit Business Taskforce, and we are still facilitating regular calls with representative groups.

The RHA’s letter references a meeting on 24 January during which these issues were discussed.

A separate working group on the Northern Ireland Protocol has also been established to drive forward key actions, such as the very successful groupage pilot on which DEFRA and DAERA partnered with Logistics UK.

CLAIM:

“The shortage of customs agents to support the intermediaries market shows no sign of improvement... we estimate that as many as 50,000 customs brokers will be required and so far, there are only 10,000 in place” (Richard Burnett letter to CDL, 01/02/21)

RESPONSE:

We do not recognise this claim.

Recent survey data has shown the sector expected to see a near fourfold increase in their ability to process declarations and that there are intermediary businesses who currently have spare capacity.

50,000 is an arbitrary industry calculation – it is not and never has been a Government target.

The Government has also invested £84million so that customs intermediary businesses could boost their capacity.

CLAIM:

The RHA has repeatedly “warned repeatedly that there was a lack of clarity over how the new arrangements would work” and called for an extension to the transition period (Richard Burnett letter to CDL, 01/02/21)

RESPONSE:

The RHA suggested in the run up to December that key Government systems and infrastructure would not be ready in time.

In fact, all IT systems and infrastructure were ready in time and are operating effectively.

Similarly, trader and haulier readiness has been significantly higher than planned for or anticipated. This is evidenced by the excellent levels of compliance with our Check an HGV and Kent Access Permit requirements, with around 85% compliance and by the very low turnback rate at Dover and Eurotunnel, where turnbacks have been consistently below 5%.

CLAIM:

“Government is not doing enough to address” the “devastating consequences” on critical supply chains (Richard Burnett letter to CDL, 01/02/21)

RESPONSE:

The Cabinet Office monitors critical supply chains daily. Currently, all critical supply chain indicators are within normal tolerances.

While traders on the whole are managing the changes well, the government knows that some businesses are facing challenges with some of the new rules that are now in place. That’s why the government is:

- Meeting businesses from specific sectors across all parts of the UK weekly through the Brexit Business Taskforce chaired by Michael Gove
- Increasing staff and opening hours for HMRC exporting telephone and online helplines. The number is 0300 322 9434 and businesses can also speak to an adviser online at [tax.service.gov.uk](https://www.tax.service.gov.uk)
- Running regular webinars with policy specialists
- Providing the [Brexit Checker Tool](#) on gov.uk which gives businesses a personalised list of actions that they need to take
- Offering face-to-face support for exporters in delivered via a network of around 300 International Trade Advisers (ITAs);
- Setting up a taskforce with businesses and the devolved administration in Scotland to understand and address any practical issues facing Scottish businesses, including the seafood sector

- Offering support to businesses moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland through its Trader Support Service

CLAIM:

New guidance on groupage (where lorries pick up multiple consignments of SPS relevant products from different locations) was drafted following “limited engagement with the industry and feedback from operators” and the new model has “not been stress tested” (Richard Burnett letter to CDL, 01/02/21)

RESPONSE:

This is wrong. Industry participated in workshops with DAERA and Defra to develop the guidance. They were also involved in pilot runs into NI with the final guidance reflecting that experience. The guidance itself was shared with stakeholders for comments well in advance of publication and will continue to be refined in the light of experience.

The new guidance gives much needed clarity on what is required to be compliant with EU law and provides options as to how they meet the required SPS checks.

CLAIM:

New groupage guidance “falls well short of addressing the many issues being experienced by traders, hauliers, manufacturers and consumers” (Richard Burnett letter to CDL, 01/02/21)

RESPONSE:

We have been clear that there are outstanding problems with the Northern Ireland Protocol that need to be resolved to ensure trade continues to flow smoothly and there is as little impact as possible on the everyday life of communities.

We will continue to work constructively and pragmatically with the European Commission to restore confidence in the operation of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

[Government boost to rapid workplace testing](#)

- New government drive to increase workplace testing in sectors open during lockdown, to detect coronavirus (COVID-19) in people who are not showing symptoms

- Government departments tasked with ensuring targeted, rapid testing is set up in all key workplaces to ensure vital public and economic services can continue
- Criteria for joining the workplace testing programme is reduced to businesses with more than 50 employees, boosting the availability of rapid testing further

Cabinet ministers have been tasked to encourage their sectors to take up the offer of rapid workplace testing, marking efforts to normalise testing in the workplace across both public and private sectors.

The government is working closely with organisations across different sectors that are vital to the running of our country and where employees cannot work from home during lockdown, from transport networks to food manufacturers, to sign up to rapid testing programmes that identify cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in employees who are not showing symptoms. This will help stop the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and ensure vital public and economic services can continue.

Many employers have already taken up the offer of rapid, regular workforce testing, with 112 UK organisations across almost 500 sites joining government backed rapid testing. Today, the government can confirm that it has widened the criteria for joining the workplace rapid testing programme from businesses with more than 250 employees, to businesses with more than 50 employees.

This hugely increases the number of different businesses that are able to sign up, so that small and medium size companies can benefit from rapid testing as we work to Build Back Better.

Testing is key to breaking the chains of transmission. More than 2.5 million tests have been distributed across the public and private sectors so far, and [an online portal has been launched to make it even easier for business in the private sector to get involved and find out more about offering rapid testing in the workplace](#). All those who can work from home should continue to do so.

Around one in three people who have coronavirus (COVID-19) have no symptoms and may be unknowingly spreading the virus. This expansion of testing will find more positive cases, keeping workers who cannot work from home unknowingly passing on the virus and protecting vital public services. It's essential we still continue to use tests to safeguard the population and prevent the spread of the virus.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“To save lives and protect the NHS, we have again asked for everyone to work from home. But we know that for some this is not possible, which is why the workplace rapid testing programme is so important.

“Employers should regularly test their staff, and this drive across

government to raise awareness and encourage more businesses to introduce rapid testing for employees is incredibly important. When you consider that around one in three people have the virus without symptoms and could potentially infect people without even knowing it, it becomes clear why focusing testing on those without symptoms is so essential.

“We are already working with many employers to scale up workforce testing, spanning the food industry, retail sector, transport network, and across the public sector too. I strongly urge businesses and employees across the country to take up this offer of rapid testing to help stop this virus spreading further.”

Case studies

The Department for Transport is working with organisations including Transport for London (TfL), the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and Network Rail on rapid testing to help keep the transport network safer. TfL opened 4 asymptomatic test sites across London, and have been offering testing to frontline operational employees in London Underground and surface transport, including station staff, train operators and revenue inspectors. The rapid testing programme has been protecting teams working on the frontline, operating the railway so that key workers can continue to travel to work. As of 29 January, NHS Test and Trace had provided TfL staff with 2,173 tests, identifying 28 positive cases that would have otherwise continued working alongside colleagues.

The Home Office has worked with police and fire services throughout the pandemic to ensure emergency workers have access to testing. This has included working with the National Police Coordination Centre to identify appropriate locations for asymptomatic testing sites. The Metropolitan Police is rolling out asymptomatic testing across 7 sites from 25 January. Other forces are due to get asymptomatic testing running in the coming weeks, including Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, and Dorset. 60,000 tests have been given to fire and rescue services since November to ensure their staff can carry out coronavirus (COVID-19) support roles.

The Ministry of Justice is rolling out rapid workforce testing for prisons staff, as well as assessing how it could work in courts, to help ensure that the vital work of the justice system can continue.

The Business Department has been engaging with a wide range of businesses across the country, with companies in the energy, manufacturing, life sciences and retail sectors, already ordering mass testing kits for their workforces.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) continue to work closely with businesses in Defra sectors, including food, waste, water, and veterinary medicines, to support them in setting up testing for their workforces or hauliers and protecting supply chains. All major supermarkets are now planning to offer rapid testing to their workforce.

Border Force has also rolled out rapid testing to ensure that staff are able

to carry out their critical role of protecting the UK border. The Border Force asymptomatic testing programme currently has 3 live sites with testing available for over 900 officers. These sites have seen over 2,100 people tested so far. Border Force officers at Heathrow Airport have access to the airport's extensive testing capacity, and more than 120 officers have already volunteered to be involved in the asymptomatic testing programme with further sites for asymptomatic testing being identified and brought online in the coming weeks.

The government has opened (Monday 1 February) an asymptomatic testing facility in the Queen Elizabeth II Centre to provide rapid testing for essential civil service staff working in key departments involved in the coronavirus (COVID-19) response. The testing centre is one of several measures implemented by the government, including remote working and Covid-secure workplace measures, to help prevent the spread of the disease, keep civil servants safe and ensure the ongoing smooth running of government operations during the pandemic.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

"Businesses across the country have been working extremely hard to keep their workforces safe during the pandemic, with retail, manufacturing and energy companies among those already taking up the offer of workplace testing.

"I urge even more employers to do the same to help stop the spread of the virus and protect our NHS. We want to be able to reopen the economy and recover our way of life as soon as it is safe to do so, and large-scale workplace testing will complement our work in getting the British people vaccinated."

The Transport Secretary said:

"Our frontline transport workers have kept the country moving, allowing key workers to get to work, and ensuring vital services remain accessible throughout this incredibly difficult time.

"This is why it's so important the government ramps up the rolling out of mass testing, providing them with an extra level of protection and confidence. We've already set up a number of pilots to conduct mass testing for transport workers, and I'll continue to work with organisations to rollout similar schemes right across the transport network."

Dr Samantha Phillips, Head of Health and Wellbeing at Transport for London, said:

"We have been part of a Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) pilot whereby employees can volunteer to do twice weekly rapid antigen testing.

"We have had an enthusiastic response to the pilot and employees are finding it reassuring, particularly if they have vulnerable relatives at home or family members who are also key workers. Identifying asymptomatic employees has also helped us in our efforts to protect the welfare and safety of all our team members working on the frontline."

Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary Robert Buckland QC MP said:

“From the outset of the pandemic we have been clear that justice must continue to be delivered for the public, victims and defendants.

“So I am delighted we are ramping up the provision of rapid tests for prison staff across the country while exploring how it could work in courts.

“I want to thank all those working across our justice system who, in collaboration with health professionals, are making this possible.”

Alex Chisholm, Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office, said:

“I am delighted we have opened an asymptomatic test centre in Whitehall for those civil servants and contractors who need to go into their workplace. This test centre contributes to ensuring the safety of our staff and smooth running of our operations, while helping to break the chain of transmission.”

Notes to editors

Lateral flow tests used by the UK government go through a rigorous evaluation by the country’s leading scientists. Tests detect cases with high levels of virus, making them effective in finding infectious individuals who are not showing any symptoms and are the most likely to transmit the disease.

[See further information on rapid workplace testing](#)

[See latest testing statistics](#)

NHS Test & Trace will support organisations to deliver scalable asymptomatic testing through provision of a digital solution, clinical protocol, supply of tests kits, guidance, training and framework for delivery.

Tests are currently being provided free to both public and private sector employers until at least 31 March. The government’s support will be kept under review and we will engage with employers before any changes to the support offer are made.

Extensive clinical evaluation from Public Health England and the University of Oxford research shows lateral flow tests are specific and sensitive enough to be deployed for mass testing, including for asymptomatic people. The [Oxford University and Public Health evaluation is available](#).

[More information on getting tested is available](#).

£40 million government funding to help polluting businesses clean up

- £40 million government investment to help polluting industries including steel, pharmaceuticals and food and drink to find new ways to reduce their carbon emissions
- solutions including using heat recovery technology to generate electricity and replacing gas with hydrogen fuel will help businesses cut energy costs, protect jobs, and improve air quality across the UK
- funding supports the government's mission to build back greener and eliminate the UK's contribution to carbon emissions by 2050

Some of the UK's most polluting industries will benefit from £40 million funding to help them cut their carbon emissions, while reducing their energy bills, the government announced today (Sunday 7 February).

Businesses in energy-intensive sectors, including pharmaceuticals, steel, paper and food and drink, will be able to apply for grants worth up to £14 million through the government's [Industrial Energy Transformation Fund](#) – totalling £289 million in funding up until 2024.

In this second competition window, the minimum grant has been lowered to £100,000 for deployment projects, offering more flexibility for small businesses to receive funding so they can speed up getting their ideas to market.

With potential projects taking place across the East and West Midlands, North East, North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber as well as Wales and Northern Ireland, the government grants will enable businesses to use new technology to improve the efficiency of industrial processes and reduce energy demand.

They will drive them towards a cleaner, more sustainable future as part of our green industrial revolution by 2030 and mission to eliminate our contribution to climate change by 2050.

This includes factories installing electric motors and heat pumps to replace their natural gas-fired boilers and steam turbines, manufacturers using heat recovery technology to recycle waste heat and generate renewable electricity, and industries such as the food and drink sector carrying out studies to replace natural gas with hydrogen as their primary fuel.

Doing so will create and support thousands of British jobs, cut carbon emissions and lead to cleaner air for the people of the UK.

Energy Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan said

We can only achieve our ambitious plans to tackle climate change if everyone plays their part, including businesses large and small.

That's why our £40 million investment will not only help some of the highest polluting industries like steel, paper and pharmaceuticals build back greener by finding innovative ways to reduce their carbon emissions but will also create more opportunities for growth and jobs by levelling up and making industry fit for the future.

The fund supports the UK government's mission to build back greener and level up the country's industrial heartlands by allowing them to lay the path for economic growth.

The government's Industrial Energy Transformation Fund is worth £289 million with funding available across England, Wales and Northern Ireland up until 2024. The fund supports heavy industry as the UK transitions to a low-carbon economy.

Today's announcement follows an initial launch in June 2020 which saw 39 applications approved for funding in the first window, totalling £31 million.

It is calculated that as a result of these projects carbon emissions will be reduced by 2.6 million tonnes over their lifespan, which is equivalent to taking 38,000 fossil-fuelled cars off the road over a 30 year period.

The Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) window opens for applications on Monday 8 March and closes on Wednesday 14 July: