

Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce meeting, 14 January 2021

News story

Joint statement on progress made by the taskforce at its meeting on 14 January 2021.



The eleventh meeting of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was held yesterday, 14 January 2021.

It was chaired by Transport Minister, Baroness Vere. Attendees included the Project Director Dana Skelley plus representatives from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London (TfL), and the Port of London Authority.

Dana Skelley, speaking on behalf of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce, said:

The Taskforce held its first meeting of the New Year yesterday and reiterated its commitment to enabling Londoners to cross the river as soon as safely possible.

We were pleased to hear from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham that they have commissioned Foster & Partners and COWI to conduct a full feasibility study into their proposal for a temporary bridge as presented at the previous Taskforce meeting; we look forward to receiving the completion of this study in due course.

We look forward to discussions with LBHF's engineers Mott MacDonald and their risk consultants about their detailed analysis of the bridge's north-east pedestal, the condition of which triggered closure of the bridge last year, and about the case for continued safe operation (CCSO). It was noted that the advice given to LBHF did not recommend reopening at this time. It is recognised that the precise condition of the two western pedestals will not be known

until the blast cleaning works have been carried out. This is due to be completed by April and will enable us to identify any hidden fractures in the pedestals.

The Taskforce also heard the latest from TfL regarding the procurement for the temporary ferry service, which is well underway. We continue to expect the service to commence in the spring, although the precise operational timings will be dependent on the programme put forward by the winning bidder.

Lastly, we were pleased to hear that river users have been able to schedule and undertake controlled transits under the bridge on Sundays, when engineers are not working on the bridge.

The Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was set up by the Department for Transport in September 2020 to work towards safely reopening the Hammersmith Bridge. The taskforce is chaired by Baroness Vere and includes representatives from TfL, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority and the Port of London Authority.

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All UK travel corridors temporarily suspended to protect against new international variants

- emergency measures introduced at the border to be in place for at least one month in order to protect the UK against new variants
- all international arrivals to the UK from any country (including British and Irish Nationals) must now take a pre-departure test and self-isolate for 10 days
- passengers must continue to fill in a Passenger Locator Form and have a negative test before travelling to the UK or could face a £500 fine for each

The government has today (15 January 2021) announced emergency border measures to prevent the spread of concerning new variants of coronavirus (COVID-19) into the UK, such as those first identified in Brazil and South America, and to protect us against the risk of as yet unidentified new strains.

From Monday 18 January at 4am, all [travel corridors](#) with the UK will be

suspended – meaning that all international arrivals who have departed from or transited through any country outside the Common Travel Area in the previous 10 days will be required to both take a pre-departure test, and self-isolate immediately for 10 days on arrival. This includes British and Irish nationals.

This urgent action is in response to increasing concern over the transmissibility and virulence of new strains evolving internationally. It will also ensure that the government is able to protect the progress being made on the country's vaccination programme.

This move will be supported by increased enforcement, both at the border and across the UK, with Border Force increasing the number of spot checks on passengers that have entered the country.

International travel corridors have been in place since July 2020 for countries and territories where critical analysis suggests the risk of COVID-19 can be mitigated.

However, the level of risk associated with the emergence of new variants globally has now increased, requiring more stringent measures to block all potential avenues through which new strains of the virus could enter the UK while we consider how best to respond.

The new measures will be reviewed on Monday 15 February – while further work takes place to manage the threat posed by coronavirus variants.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

We are operating in a completely new environment in our fight against COVID-19, with several worrying new strains of the virus emerging across the globe.

Now more than ever, as we make strides vaccinating people up and down the country, we need to take advantage of all measures available to us – and these robust emergency precautions will help us protect the nation to ensure we continue to make progress.

As has been the case throughout the pandemic – the government is moving quickly in response to the latest scientific evidence, and we will continue to take swift action in banning travel from countries where new strains are formally identified, as we have done previously.

These measures are the right course of action now, to safeguard public health and prevent new strains of the virus from worsening the existing picture within the UK.

National restrictions for England introduced on 6 January 2021 remain in place, meaning that everyone must stay at home unless travelling for a very limited set of reasons.

The closure of all the UK travel corridors will ensure that for those returning from trips that fall into this limited set of exemptions, and for passengers arriving to the UK from abroad, there is a clear and robust set of measures to prevent cases of coronavirus entering the country.

Those in breach of the lockdown rules face penalties starting at £200, rising to a maximum of £6,400.

A number of exemptions to the travel corridor policy – including the need to travel for business – will be suspended from 4am on Monday 18th January, unless they are vital to maintaining the flow of critical goods, protecting essential services, protecting national security or facilitating government work.

A full list of exemptions will be available on GOV.UK shortly.

The government's [Test to Release scheme](#) will remain in place, giving passengers the option to shorten the mandatory self-isolation period to as little as 5 days.

However, they will still need to adhere to national restrictions in place upon release from self-isolation.

[CST response to Scottish Government request for additional funding](#)

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[Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 15 January 2021](#)

Good afternoon.

As you know, this country is engaged in the biggest and fastest vaccination programme in our history, and the chances are that you know someone

personally who has already received a vaccine.

But it would be fatal if this sense of progress were now to breed any kind of complacency because the pressures on our NHS are extraordinary.

On Tuesday we saw 4,134 new admissions to hospital on a single day, the highest at any point in this pandemic.

There are now more than 37,000 Covid patients in hospital across the UK and, in spite of all the efforts of our doctors and nurses and our medical staff, we are now seeing cancer treatments sadly postponed, ambulances queuing, and intensive care units spilling over into adjacent wards.

And with 55,761 positive cases since yesterday and, very sadly, 1,280 deaths, this is not the time for the slightest relaxation of our national resolve and our individual efforts.

So please stay at home, please protect the NHS and save lives.

And please remember that this disease can be passed on not just by standing too near someone in a supermarket queue, but also by handling something touched by an infected person.

And remember also that 1 in 3 people with Covid have no symptoms, and that is why that original message of hands, face and space, washing your hands, is as important now as it has ever been.

And it is precisely because we have the hope of that vaccine and the risk of new strains coming from overseas that we must take additional steps now to stop those strains from entering the country.

So, yesterday we announced that we are banning flights from South America and Portugal.

And, to protect us against the risk of as yet unidentified new strains, we will also temporarily close all travel corridors from 0400 on Monday.

Following conversations with the devolved administrations, we will act together so that this applies across the whole of UK

This means that if you come to this country, you must have proof of a negative Covid test that you have taken in the 72 hours before leaving and you must have filled in your Passenger Locator Form, and your airline will ask for proof of both before you take off.

You may also be checked when you land and face substantial fines for refusing to comply

And, upon arrival, you must then quarantine for ten days – not leaving your home for any reason at all, or take another test on day 5 and wait for proof of another negative result.

And we will be stepping up our enforcement – both at the border and in-

country.

And it is vital to take these extra measures now when day by day, hour by hour, we are making such strides in protecting the population.

We have now vaccinated over 3.2 million people across the UK, doubling the numbers of last week.

That's 2.8 million in England, 225,000 in Scotland, 126,000 in Wales and 115,000 in Northern Ireland.

Yesterday alone, we vaccinated around a quarter of a million people in England, and that is still far more than any other country in Europe.

And with almost 45 per cent of our over 80s now vaccinated and almost 40 per cent of care home residents, we are steadily protecting those most at risk.

And I pay particular tribute to the vaccination efforts going on in Cockermouth, in Cumbria, Yateley and Cheltenham, where they have vaccinated around 90 per cent of their over-80s in their communities. And I'll also pay tribute to North West Lincolnshire, to Sunderland and Morecambe Bay, where vaccination teams have protected over 80 per cent of their care home residents.

And it's thanks to that amazing constellation of the vaccination teams: doctors and nurses

armed forces, local authorities, pharmacies and volunteers that we are steadily building up that immunity, that protection for the vulnerable, for the NHS and for us all.

So, when the call comes, please do get a jab and, in the meantime, stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

Consultation launched on 2021 exam replacement

Students who were due to sit exams this summer will receive grades determined by teachers, as part of proposals published today (Friday 15 January) to maximise fairness and help young people progress to the next stage of their education or training.

Following the cancellation of this year's summer exams, the Department for Education and Ofqual have launched [a consultation](#) seeking views on how to award grades in a way that reflects students' performance accurately, recognising the disruption they have faced this year.

Grades will be based on teacher assessment, with teachers supported in making decisions with guidance and training from exam boards.

The consultation will consider the range of evidence teachers use to award a grade, which could include coursework, other forms of assessment and papers provided by exam boards, to support consistency and fairness across schools and colleges.

The proposals ensure students are given the opportunity to demonstrate the standard at which they can perform and incentivise them to continue learning throughout the rest of the academic year.

The consultation will also seek views on results being issued to students earlier than usual to allow enough time for appeals to be processed ahead of the start of the new term.

The government has been clear that while cancelling exams was a last resort, it remains committed to ensuring that students receive a grade that reflects their hard work throughout the year and supports them to progress through their careers.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Fairness to young people has been and will continue to be fundamental to every decision we take on these issues, and I'm determined that despite all the challenges posed by this pandemic, they will not prevent students getting on with and making a success of their lives.

These proposals should give young people confidence that despite exams being cancelled, they will still receive a grade that reflects their ability. This is quite rightly an issue of great public interest and concern and it's important that those working in education alongside students, parents and employers are able to have their say.

Interim Chief Regulator Simon Lebus said:

We know that everyone wants clarity on the way ahead quickly. Above all, we need to support students to carry on with their education for the remainder of the academic year. Students and learners will carry with them for the rest of their lives the grades they are given on the basis of these arrangements, so we must make sure they are as fair as they can be in these difficult circumstances.

The consultation asks whether externally set papers should be mandatory or optional for schools and colleges. Where they are used, they would form only

one part of a teacher's wider assessment of a student.

Students should be assessed on what they have learnt, rather than against content they have not had a chance to study. There are proposals to give teachers flexibility to choose the papers they use for assessment based on the areas of the curriculum their students have covered.

Teachers' assessments would be subject to quality assurance checks by exam boards.

A range of options for private candidates to be assessed and make sure they receive a grade are also part of considerations.

[Similar alternative arrangements are proposed](#) for students taking vocational and technical qualifications, such as BTECs and Cambridge Technicals, to ensure students are treated fairly and are equally able to progress. For qualifications where a practical demonstration of skills is needed, assessments would continue to be able to take place.

The consultation builds on of months of joint contingency planning between the Department and Ofqual and sets out the government's position in making sure young people receive a grade that reflects their ability and lets them progress.

During this period of national lockdown strengthened remote education expectations are in place, with schools expected to provide a set number of hours of high-quality remote education for pupils. Schools, colleges and young people are supported by deliveries of laptops and tablets for those who need them most, with the Government now providing 1.3 million devices, and work to make sure families have the mobile and internet data they need to access key education sites.

Vocational qualifications with written exams scheduled in February and March, will not go ahead as planned, alternative arrangements will be put in place.