

Armed Forces support for vaccine roll-out in Wales

Members of the Armed Forces will be deployed across Wales this winter to help set up and operate vaccination centres in the community.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart and the Defence Minister for the Armed Forces James Heapey have approved a Military Aid to the Civilian Authorities (MACA) request for the Welsh Government. The MACA provides more than 90 service personnel to support Wales' Health Boards in rapidly establishing and operating vaccination centres.

As the vaccination programme is rolled out during the rest of December and into January, military personnel will support the setting up of additional capacity as greater quantities of vaccine are made available. And for the first time since the vaccine has been rolled out, trained defence medics will also support the administering of the vaccine.

The military aid request runs between 4 January to 28 February 2021 and will see members of the Armed Forces delivering the vaccine, setting up equipment and carrying out a number of other functions.

Welsh Secretary Simon Hart said:

The roll-out of the vaccine is a considerable logistical challenge, so we have approved the deployment of Armed Forces personnel to help with its distribution in Wales.

The use of the military to help with this vital work shows how we can pull together to meet the needs of the whole of the United Kingdom as we tackle the pandemic.

With case rates high across many areas of Wales, it is important that we continue to support the Welsh Government. The huge number of vaccines that the UK Government has procured and the assistance of the Armed Forces in distributing them will help turn the tide in this fight.

Defence Minister James Heapey said:

Since the beginning of the pandemic, our Armed Forces have stepped up to support health services across the UK.

In Wales, our personnel have already helped with the distribution of PPE, construction of a temporary hospital in Cardiff and, most recently, the rollout of community testing in the South Wales Valleys.

I'm pleased we can now support the vaccine rollout and I am proud defence has responded quickly to support this urgent task.

After becoming the first country to approve a vaccine for use, the UK Government has bought vaccines on behalf of all parts of the UK and distributed them around Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland ahead of last week's (8 December) initial rollout.

Approved vaccines will be available across the UK, free at the point of delivery and according to need.

Vaccination will be managed by the health services in each nation: NHS England and NHS Improvement, NHS Wales, NHS Scotland, and Health and Social Care Northern Ireland. Armed Forces personnel have deployed to assist the NHS and the Devolved Nations with planning and logistic support for the delivery of a vaccine.

The UK Government has also invested over £230m into manufacturing a vaccine. The UK Government will also meet the cost of vaccines which will be distributed to all nations of the UK, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

The MOD currently has around 14,000 personnel held at graduated readiness as part of the Winter preparedness 2020 Package. This package will ensure defence remains ready to respond to requests for support at necessary pace, including but not limited to COVID-19 support.

ENDS

[Post-Christmas work to activate Operation Brock](#)

Operation Brock – a series of measures that improve Kent's resilience in the event of disruption to services across the English Channel – will be deployed overnight on Sunday 27 December, with the contraflow active from Monday 28 December, in preparation for the end of the EU Transition Period on 31 December 2020.

A significant part of Operation Brock is keeping the M20 open in both directions by using a contraflow road layout on the M20 London-bound carriageway between junctions 8 and 9 (from Maidstone to Ashford) and directing lorries heading for mainland Europe onto the coastbound carriageway, where they can be queued if necessary.

To make sure the contraflow is deployed safely, the M20 will be closed

overnight in both directions between junctions 8 and 9 on the nights of 27 and 28 December.

Traffic volumes permitting, the M20 will close at 10pm on 27 December with both carriageways set to reopen by 10am on 28 December, or earlier if possible. These times have been chosen to minimise disruption to road users and avoid the key Christmas travel period. The M20 will also be closed overnight on 28 December between 10pm and 10am.

Once the barrier is in place, the road will reopen in its new configuration, with HGVs and other freight heading for the Port of Dover or Eurotunnel using the coastbound carriageway on the M20, where it will be queued if necessary. All other traffic – including local freight – should follow the signs and cross over to enter the contraflow on the M20 London bound carriageway. Drivers should look out for signs directing them to either stay on the coastbound carriageway or to enter the contraflow. All cars and motorbikes should enter the contraflow.

Highways England south east operations director Nicola Bell said:

The live test last weekend went really well with the contraflow system operating as expected. It gave us and our Kent Resilience Forum partners a valuable insight into timings for deployment and was a very successful exercise. The test also gave the DVSA the opportunity to test their plans.

The two moveable barrier machines worked exceptionally well with over 14,000 tonnes of concrete blocks being moved in just a few hours, together with more than 8,000 cones.

Head of Kent Resilience Team Mark Rolfe said:

To help keep the county moving, the Kent Resilience Forum has brought together Department for Transport, Highways England, Kent Police, and Kent County Council to agree a single plan to minimise the impact of any cross-Channel disruption.

Ensuring the M20 moveable barrier is in place ahead of Transition Day is part of this plan and our joint commitment to keep Kent's transport network running safely and providing reliable travel information.

About Operation Brock

Operation Brock is a series of measures which crucially keeps the M20 open in both directions using a contraflow system. As with previous deployments in 2019, Operation Brock has stages that can be deployed sequentially, scaling up or down to meet demand. When Operation Brock is in force it is a legal requirement to use the signed routes only for HGV journeys to Port of Dover

and Eurotunnel. Depending on the scale of disruption, and whether HGVs are travelling to Port of Dover or Eurotunnel, they will be directed to a holding site. Failure to comply with instructions may result in fines and further delays. Kent Police take decisions on when to use the different phases of the system. Options include:

- A20 Dover TAP: A queuing system which holds lorries until space becomes available at the Port
- M20 Moveable Barrier: A concrete barrier than can be deployed quickly between junctions 8 and 9 of the M20 to install a contraflow. HGVs bound for Dover and/or Eurotunnel will be held on the coastbound carriageway
- Manston Airfield: an off-road site designed to hold traffic heading for the Port of Dover. Border readiness checks will take place here to ensure hauliers have the correct paperwork
- Ashford Sevington Inland Border Facility: an off-road site next to junction 10A of the M20, likely to be used if the M20 contraflow approaches capacity

For more information on Operation Brock and other contingency measures in Kent, visit:

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration remit letter: 2021 to 2022](#)

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[Alister Jack responds to October 2020 Scottish GDP figures](#)

News story

Scottish Secretary responds to Scottish GDP figures for October 2020



Commenting on today's Scottish GDP figures for October 2020, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Today's figures show again the significant challenge we face to recover from the economic shock of the covid pandemic.

The UK Government continues to take unprecedented action to support jobs and business in Scotland. Yesterday, the Chancellor announced a further extension of furlough and business loan schemes, and we continue to support self-employed people and hardest-hit sectors with VAT cuts. The direct support is on top of £9.5 billion in additional funding from the UK Government to the Scottish Government.

As we look ahead to the new year, we will continue investing billions in our Plan for Jobs, supporting City and Region growth deals in Scotland, and driving green recovery and jobs.

The strength of the Union and the support offered by the UK Treasury have never been more important. Together, we will continue to get through these challenging times.

Background:

- The UK Government furlough scheme, paying 80 per cent of wages, will run UK-wide until the end of April. The scheme also offers employers flexibility to bring employers back to work part time with the UK Government continuing to pay 80% of salaries for the hours they do not work.
- The self-employed support scheme will run till the end of March, paying 80% of average profits up to £7,500.
- At their peak in the summer the UK Government furlough and self-employed support schemes were supporting more than 930,000 jobs in Scotland. They will continue to provide a vital safety net for businesses and their employees over coming months.
- More than 76,000 businesses in Scotland have benefitted from UK Government loan schemes, worth more than £2.9 billion.
- The Scottish Government has been allocated an additional £9.5 billion from the UK Government for its COVID-19 response. This is on top of the block grant and in addition to direct UK Government support to people and businesses in Scotland.
- The UK Government is investing billions to help people back into work, including through our £2 billion Kickstart scheme to get young people into jobs, expansion of our sector-based work academy programme, and recruitment of thousands of Work Coaches in Jobcentres helping

unemployed people of all ages back into work.

- At the Budget in March the Chancellor will outline the next phase of our plan to provide certainty and growth in the months ahead.
- The UK Government is providing the bulk of covid testing in Scotland including drive through and walk through test centres and providing the Scottish Government with one million lateral flow tests for mass community and student testing.
- The UK was the first country in the world to approve Pzifer/BioNTech vaccine with 40 million doses secured by the UK Government for distribution across all parts of the UK.

Published 18 December 2020