

New UK Government Covid testing site opens in Kilmarnock

The UK Government has today (Wednesday 16 December), opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre at the Grand Hall in Kilmarnock (KA3 7AA). The centre is easily accessible for people without a car.

The test centre is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises of six drive through sites, 21 walk-through sites, 21 mobile units, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

In Scotland, the UK Government is providing all COVID testing and test processing outside of the NHS. Around two thirds of all daily tests are provided by the UK Government, in support of Scotland's health services.

Tests must be booked in advance at: [NHS Inform](#) or by calling 0800 028 2816. People should only book a test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste).

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

"To respond to the coronavirus, we have built a major testing and tracing system from scratch. We are constantly working to expand and improve it with new technologies and innovations so everyone with symptoms can get a test.

"New walk-in sites like this one makes it even easier to get a test no matter where you live. If you have symptoms of coronavirus, I urge you to book a test today and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted to protect others and stop the spread of the virus."

Baroness Dido Harding, Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection, said:

"Walk through sites offer communities better access to coronavirus testing, so everyone with symptoms can get a test. This new site is part of our ongoing work to expand our testing network across the UK which now has the capacity to process more than 500,000 tests a day. We will continue to expand capacity to improve test turnaround times and push forward testing innovations to make sure anyone who needs a test can get one.

"Please book a test if you have coronavirus symptoms: a new continuous cough, a high temperature and a loss or change in sense of smell or taste, and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted."

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart, said:

"The UK Government is helping all parts of the UK fight the coronavirus pandemic.

“Testing is vital, helping to manage local outbreaks and protecting people’s livelihoods. The UK Government is providing the bulk of Covid testing in Scotland, and this new walk-through centre is just the latest in our extensive testing network.

“We are pleased to be working with local and commercial partners. These sites are not possible without the hard work of many people. I would like to thank everyone involved for their incredible efforts for the good of the country at this difficult time.”

Lynne McNiven, Joint Director of Public Health for NHS Ayrshire & Arran, said:

“This testing centre in Kilmarnock will ensure those living in East Ayrshire have access to tests as quickly and easily as possible. This is vital so that we can identify cases quickly, allowing them to self-isolate and limit the spread of COVID-19.”

Simon Venn, Mitie Chief Government & Strategy Officer, said:

“Our priority during the pandemic is to support the nation’s efforts to fight COVID-19 and help keep the country running. Testing is a critical part of the UK’s strategy to combat coronavirus and we’re proud to support the UK Government with this vital task. A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline heroes in Kilmarnock, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.”

Defence Secretary visits British troops defending NATO’s eastern flank in Estonia

News story

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace gave his personal thanks to British troops deployed in Estonia over the Christmas period, during a visit to the Baltic state.



Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Estonian defence minister Jüri Luik have lunch with troops in Tapa

At Tapa base, the HQ of the UK's largest overseas deployment, Mr Wallace discussed with members of the 5 Rifles battlegroup the vital deterrence and defence they provide in Estonia as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP).

Members of the battlegroup also provided the Defence Secretary with a visual demonstration of the fearsome capability of the Challenger II battle tanks deployed on the mission.

The UK is the lead nation of the multinational NATO eFP Battlegroup in Estonia with over 900 British troops deployed alongside Danish and Estonian forces. In meetings with Estonia's Minister for Defence Jüri Luik, Prime Minister Jüri Ratas and parliamentarians of Estonia's National Defence Committee, the Defence Secretary reaffirmed that the United Kingdom would maintain its persistent presence in the country for as long as necessary.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

While we celebrate Christmas at home, over 6400 of our Armed Forces personnel will be working away from their families to protect the people of the United Kingdom and its interests.

So I was delighted to be able to pass on all our thanks to troops in Estonia. Their presence provides a concrete deterrence to an increasingly assertive Russia and is a demonstration of the United Kingdom's unwavering commitment to European security.

Both Mr Wallace and Mr Luik agreed that the UK and Estonia see eye-to-eye when it comes to identifying the threats to regional security and would continue to deepen a tight knit defence relationship that has grown in strength since the UK first took the lead of eFP in the country nearly four years ago.

As well as being trusted NATO Allies, the UK and Estonia are both members of

the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force and the Northern Group of north European nations. In addition to the Army's persistent presence, the RAF have deployed to Ämari air base in the north of the country for NATO Baltic Air Policing in 2016 and 2019. The UK also contributes around 150 personnel to the US-led NATO efP battlegroup in Poland.

Our soldiers have fought side-by-side in Afghanistan and both are currently contributors to international efforts to bring security and stability to the Sahel region in Africa.

The strength of our defence relationship was also clear this July when the Ministry of Defence loaned four Jackal vehicles to the Estonian Defence Forces until next March for elite soldiers of the Estonian Armed Forces to use on their counter-terror deployment in Mali.

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Spring start for Ulverston's new Cross-a-Moor roundabout

Highways England is constructing the new roundabout along the A590 at Cross-a-Moor south of Ulverston. It is expected to cost around £7 million with partnership funding from Highways England, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and South Lakeland District Council.

The new roundabout will replace the existing staggered junction with Main Road running south off the A590 and Pennington Lane running north of it. Preparation work is scheduled to start in spring with the main construction work following in the summer.

Steve Mason, Highways England senior project manager, said:

"This new roundabout is a significant investment in the infrastructure of the Furness peninsula. It will reduce congestion and improve safety on the A590 and local road network as well as supporting the creation of new jobs and homes. We're aiming to keep the road open during construction – certainly during the daytime – and minimise any inconvenience to drivers and other road users."

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government Luke Hall MP said:

We're supporting transport improvements in Ulverston by backing this project with a Local Growth Fund investment of over £900,000.

It's great news that the roundabout will solve ongoing congestion

problems, as well as unlocking new homes and jobs, which will improve quality of life for the community.

By investing in transport infrastructure across the country, we're making all our towns great places to live, work and visit.

Councillor Keith Little, Cumbria County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, said:

I'm delighted with this announcement. We've worked closely with the LEP, South Lakeland District Council and Highways England on this over a number of years, and it's fantastic news for Cumbria that this funding is now secured. If the county is to meet the demands of our growing population, attracting more new businesses and welcoming more visitors, we need to improve and enhance our infrastructure. The new roundabout will make big difference, and is vital to unlocking the economic and commercial potential of Ulverston and surrounding areas.

Steve Curl, Board Member for the Cumbria LEP, added:

We are delighted to provide Growth Deal and Cumbria Infrastructure Fund subsidy to support this project, which will generate significant economic benefits in Ulverston, South Lakeland and more widely, South Cumbria. It will unlock much needed new housing for our residents. It will importantly help our recovery from the economic impacts of COVID-19 by making Cumbria an even more attractive place for people and businesses to locate and grow.

South Lakeland District Council portfolio holder for Economy, Culture and Leisure Councillor Robin Ashcroft said:

The council's contribution to the junction improvements demonstrates our commitment to support growth in the local economy, deliver new employment opportunities and improve the lives of people living in this area.

We have a key council commitment to help create new affordable homes for rent in South Lakeland by 2025 and the housing being planned for that area of Ulverston represents about 20% of all the new homes to be built in the entire district. Improving the Cross-a-Moor junction will be a critical component in unlocking these developments by improving accessibility to help SLDC to deliver its wider plans and ambitions.

Improving safety on this busy stretch of the A590 will also help ensure that the local transport infrastructure is better protected,

which is vital for maintaining strategic connectivity to the M6 corridor, attracting new investment and supporting business growth.

Highways England's contribution to the project has come from the Government's growth and housing fund, a special fund earmarked to support the creation of new homes and jobs by tackling congestion 'hotspots' acting as a brake on economic investment. The fund is part of the Government's £27.4 billion investment in the country's motorways and major A roads in the five years from April 2020.

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.

Change of UK Permanent Representative to the WTO, UN and other International Organisations in Geneva: Simon Manley

Press release

Mr Simon Manley CMG has been appointed the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organisation, United Nations and other International Organisations



Mr Simon Manley CMG has been appointed the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organization, United Nations and other

International Organisations based in Geneva, in succession to Mr Julian Braithwaite CMG who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Manley will take up his appointment during Spring 2021.

Full name: Simon John Manley

Married to: Maria Isabel Fernandez Utges Manley

Children: Three Daughters

2020 FCO/FCD0, Director General, COVID-19
2013 to 2019 Spain and Andorra, Her Majesty's Ambassador
2011 to 2013 FCO, Director Europe
2007 to 2011 FCO, Director Defence and Strategic Threats
2006 to 2007 FCO, Head, Counter-Terrorism Policy Department
2003 to 2006 FCO, Head, EU Economic, Ireland and Central Europe Team
2002 to 2003 FCO, Deputy Head, EU (Internal) Department
1998 to 2002 Seconded to the EU Council Secretariat's Asia Unit
1993 to 1998 New York, Second, later First Secretary (Political), UK Mission to the United Nations
1993 Seconded to DG Competition, European Commission
1990 to 1993 FCO, United Nations Department
1990 Joined FCO

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[Army develops spray to kill coronavirus](#)

News story

A novel disinfectant spray developed by the Army that can eliminate 99.99% of the Covid-19 virus will now be made available to the public and used by military personnel on the frontline as they support the battle against the virus.



Virusend can kill 99.99% of the pandemic strain of Covid-19 in under a minute.

Virusend will complement the existing range of protective products available currently in the UK that help keep people safe, with bottles available for the public to purchase online and in stores, with talks ongoing to up-scale the commercial rollout of the product.

Co-developed by innovation experts in the British Army, the Virusend spray formula is proven to be highly lethal against SARS-CoV-2, the pandemic strain of the coronavirus. Extensive tests by the Centre of Excellence for Infectious Disease Research and the Liverpool School for Tropical Medicine proved that Virusend kills 99.99% of the virus in under 1 minute.

50,000 bottles of Virusend disinfectant are being deployed to personnel across the country who are working alongside the NHS at coronavirus testing stations as part of the military's ongoing support to civil authorities. It is already being used at testing sites in Medway and Preston.

The spray's quick kill-time makes it ideal for use on a variety of surfaces within high footfall areas such as the mass testing and vaccination sites. The disinfectant is also being tested for wider use in the NHS including within clinical environments.

The product was developed to provide the Army with enhanced protection in addition to a range of PPE and social distancing measures whilst operating Covid testing facilities

Lt Col James Cackett, CO 35 Engineer Regiment (EOD&S) and commanding the Medway Resilience Unit said:

The troops who are now working in Medway have welcomed the deployment of this additional force protection measure. Virusend is proving easy to use and will help us keep our work areas safe for everyone.

Lt Col Christopher Warhurst, Virusend Project Manager, Manoeuvre Support

Plans, said:

I am truly privileged to be at the centre of this amazing partnership and work with such talented and dedicated people. What started out as a good idea has developed into an amazing product that has the potential to have a real impact against the virus. The Army is proud to have been involved in this incredible project.

Virusend boasts a quick kill time and high lethality to the Covid-19 virus. Virusend is supplied through the 'Anyway Spray' bottle, a system developed by Pritchard Spray Technology Ltd.

The innovative bottle covers a wide surface area and can be used upside-down, eliminating any wastage. The bottle uses compressed air instead of flammable gasses and is also fully recyclable and re-useable.

Michael Pritchard MBE, CEO Pritchard Spray Technology Ltd. said:

This pioneering spray will change the way we combat this and all future pandemics. This has been a truly unique collaboration that showcases what we the United Kingdom can achieve. We want to give the UK the tools it needs to defeat coronavirus and get back on its feet as soon as possible.

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