

Sustainable fuels to power RAF jets

Aircraft including F-35s, Typhoons and Wildcat helicopters currently use conventional fuel, but could use up to 50 per cent sustainable sources in the future, after MOD's changed aviation fuel standards came into effect in November 2020.

Known as 'drop-ins,' sustainable fuel sources include hydrogenated fats and oils, wood waste, alcohols, sugars, household waste, biomass and algae.

As aviation currently accounts for nearly two thirds of fuel used across defence, the new standards will lead to a significant reduction in emissions and improve defence's carbon footprint.

It is estimated that by substituting 30 per cent of conventional fuel with an alternative source in a jet travelling 1,000 nautical miles could reduce CO2 emissions by 18 per cent.

As well as cutting emissions, using diverse and readily available materials such as household waste including packaging, grass cuttings and food scraps will prevent waste being sent to landfill.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

"The UK is leading the way in sustainability and by refining our aviation fuel standards we are taking simple yet effective steps to reduce the environmental footprint of defence.

"As we strive to meet this Government's Net Zero carbon emissions target by 2050, it is right that we step up to spearhead these positive changes across both military and civilian sectors."

Today the UK is co-hosting the Climate Ambition Summit with the UN and France, where more than 70 world leaders will make bold commitments to cut emissions, fund climate finance and adapt to climate change ahead of COP26 in Glasgow next year.

The MOD's move to allow up to 50 per cent sustainable fuel marks a huge shift in global fuel consumption and opens the door for thousands of civilian and military aircraft to be fuelled with Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAFs).

Not only do Australia and several NATO countries rely on the UK's standards to influence what fuel they use, but civil and commercial airlines in the UK follow the defence standard as there is no commercial equivalent.

UK suppliers are also more likely to offer the same standard for commercial aircraft if they are already developing and importing sustainable fuel to supply defence. The Compania Logistica de Hidrocarburos-Pipeline System (CLH-PS), which is based in Madrid and provides fuel to several military airfields as well as Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester airports, has welcomed the MOD's new standards as an opportunity to pursue sustainable fuel use.

Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps said:

“Making all forms of transport more sustainable is critical if we are to meet our ambitious Net Zero target.

“From powering RAF Jets to the passenger planes which get us from A to B, sustainable fuels will play a huge part in decarbonising aviation and I’m excited to explore the possibilities as we make transport cleaner, greener and more efficient.”

Luke Robbins, Commercial Director, CLH-PS said:

“CLH-PS welcomes the announcement by MOD to begin accepting sustainable aviation fuel blends, which will allow use of SAF in the UK’s critical pipeline infrastructure and downstream distribution network.

“As part of CLH’s sustainability strategy we are committed to contributing to the growth of SAF in particular and this change will enable us to work with our partners, including the MOD, to facilitate its wider use in the UK aviation market.”

Lieutenant General Richard Wardlaw OBE, Chief Defence Logistics and Support said:

“The Defence Strategic Fuels Authority has been working tirelessly with industry partners to change the Defence Standard for Aviation Fuel, allowing SAF deliveries to the MOD. This is a significant change for Defence, enabling us to take a key step towards reducing our CO2 footprint, consistent with our wider ambition for achieving NZ50. And this is only the beginning.

“With the Defence Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy, due for release later this year, we are at the start of a journey to adopt a range of greener policies and new greener technologies, so that we can reduce our environmental impact while enhancing our operational capabilities.”

Adopting greener technology in the MOD’s aircraft fleet is part of the department’s strategy to reduce its contributions to carbon and greenhouse gas emissions. Measures like this will be reflected in the department’s ongoing Climate Change and Sustainability Review, led by Lt Gen Richard Nugee.

The review will focus on a range of initiatives from the MOD’s NZ50 strategy to setting the right baseline for defence’s emissions and carbon footprint, with findings set to be published in early 2021.

First wave of targeted Tier 3 community testing initiatives announced

- First 67 local authorities confirmed to start community testing programmes as part of government's COVID-19 Winter Plan
- More than 1.6 million rapid-turnaround lateral flow tests will be immediately deployed to detect asymptomatic cases and drive down transmission in highest risk areas
- Over 100 local authorities are expected to run programmes in the new year
- Taken together with existing restrictions, community testing will help put Tier 3 areas on a route out of toughest restrictions

The first wave of Tier 3 areas to receive the government's community testing offer have been confirmed today. When combined with existing measures, this will help put Tier 3 areas on a route out of the toughest restrictions.

Over 100 local authorities are engaged in the community testing programme with more rollouts due to begin in the new year.

Roughly one in three people have the virus without symptoms so could be spreading the disease without knowing it. Broadening testing to identify those showing no symptoms will mean finding positive cases more quickly, and break chains of transmission.

With its targeted approach, community testing aims to reduce the prevalence of the virus in the highest risk areas. Based on their in-depth knowledge of their local community, local authorities have created community testing plans, taking into account detailed prevalence data and demographics.

These include:

- Oldham will start increasing access to rapid testing for coronavirus. The initial plan will focus on those communities most significantly affected by the virus, higher risk supported living settings, health and social care staff, schools and colleges.
- Lancashire plans to start testing with large manufacturing sites, and businesses with workforces greater than 200, as well as more vulnerable groups.
- Kirklees plans to undertake whole borough community testing starting in areas of persistently high infection rates and targeting high risk workplaces.

More than 1.6 million lateral flow tests will be immediately delivered for use in December with many more to follow.

Government support will be provided to support community testing programmes for a minimum of 6 weeks, with more Tier 3 local authorities due to join the

community testing offer over the coming weeks and into 2021.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I am really pleased to announce the first areas embarking on enhanced community testing programmes – after the successful work in Liverpool. With one in three people with coronavirus showing no symptoms, increased community testing is a vital additional tool at our disposal to help identify those who are infected and infectious, but unaware that they might be spreading the disease.

Community testing will be very important in helping the areas where levels of the virus are highest to drive down infection rates and ultimately will help areas ease tougher restrictions.

This is just the start, and we are working quickly to roll out community testing more widely as soon as more local teams are ready. I urge all those living in areas where community testing is offered to come forward and get tested.

General Sir Gordon Messenger, Chief of Operations, said:

We want to extend our thanks to the more than 100 local authorities who have engaged so quickly and comprehensively, allowing us to take forward the first stage of the community testing programme, and our operational team will begin to roll these out from as early as next week.

We continue to work extensively with Local Authorities on their proposals to expand the programme to more areas over the coming weeks and months, increasing testing services available to communities.

Local authorities can bid for this additional testing and support capability on an ongoing basis, enabling them to create a bespoke testing programme for their community, using a model of local delivery supported by central resource.

Community testing builds on the nearly 1.5 million lateral flow test kits which have already been delivered to 90 local authorities across all levels of tier restrictions to date, through the [Directors of Public Health programme](#). Extensive clinical evaluation has been carried out on the lateral flow tests by Public Health England and the University of Oxford which show these tests are accurate and sensitive enough to be used in the community.

Asymptomatic testing works hand in hand with the existing PCR testing service for those with COVID-19 symptoms as part of the comprehensive NHS Test and Trace testing offer. With over 700 test centres across the country, including 79 drive-through sites, 386 local test sites, 20 satellite test sites, 258

mobile testing units, and home testing, the average distance a person travels to visit a test site is now just 2.3 miles.

The government's [COVID-19 Winter Plan](#) sets out ambitious steps to drive down transmission of the virus, reduce its prevalence and so reduce the number of deaths and serious illnesses. Alongside the vaccine rollout which has now begun, tiering restrictions, and investment in NHS capacity, continued developments in our testing programme make it possible to reduce cases in the areas where the need is greatest.

The list of LAs that have submitted proposals and have an ambition to begin testing in December are listed below.

The community testing offer remains open to all LAs in Tier 3.

List of local authorities

- Amber Valley
- Bolsover
- Chesterfield
- Derbyshire Dales
- North East Derbyshire
- South Derbyshire
- Darlington
- Stockton on Tees
- Ashford
- Canterbury
- Dartford
- Dover
- Folkestone and Hythe
- Gravesham
- Maidstone
- Sevenoaks
- Swale
- Thanet
- Tonbridge and Malling
- Tunbridge Wells
- Medway
- Blackburn with Darwen
- Blackpool
- Burnley
- Chorley
- Fylde
- Hyndburn
- Lancaster
- Pendle
- Preston
- Ribble Valley
- Rossendale
- South Ribble
- West Lancashire
- Wyre

- Bolton
- Bury
- Manchester
- Oldham
- Rochdale
- Salford
- Stockport
- Tameside
- Trafford
- Wigan
- Barnsley
- Bradford
- Kirklees
- Birmingham
- Dudley
- Sandwell
- Cannock Chase
- East Staffordshire
- Lichfield
- Newcastle-under-Lyme
- South Staffordshire
- Stafford
- Staffordshire Moorlands
- Tamworth
- Stoke-on-Trent
- North Warwickshire
- Nuneaton and Bedworth
- Rugby
- Stratford-on-Avon
- Warwick
- Wolverhampton
- Solihull

Decision on local authorities selected to receive support immediately to start community testing based on the local infection rate, readiness of their plans, and other logistical and commercial considerations to ensure testing delivers the best possible value for money.

Anyone with one or more of these symptoms – a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – should [book a test at nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) or by calling 119.

Transport Secretary announces up to £3

million for coach services to meet Christmas travel demand

- up to £3 million funding to be made available to provide up to 80,000 more seats on coach services over the Christmas travel window (23 to 27 December 2020)
- this is in addition to recently announced measures to support safe journeys over the festive period
- passengers urged to plan carefully, book ahead and follow guidance if they decide to travel

A support package worth up to £3 million that will enable coach operators to provide additional scheduled services over the Christmas travel window, has today (12 December 2020) been announced by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps.

The government is working with the coach industry, including National Express, megabus and Snap – who together provide a network of coach services covering Great Britain – to ensure extra scheduled services are provided over the Christmas travel window (23 to 27 December), including on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

People are reminded that however they choose to travel this Christmas, they must plan carefully and book ahead where possible to avoid disappointment, as availability could become limited and they may not be able to travel on their preferred service.

They should also make sure they:

- regularly sanitise their hands
- wear a face-covering unless exempt
- social distance where possible while travelling

Coach operators are currently running reduced networks due to the impact of COVID-19 on demand. The funding announced today will enable scheduled coach operators to boost services to up to 75% of pre-pandemic services – helping more people travel safely to their Christmas bubble should they wish. The move will make up to an additional 80,000 seats available.

The government has set out that people can travel to form a Christmas bubble, composed of no more than 3 households, between 23 and 27 December. Anyone travelling to or from Northern Ireland may travel on the 22 and 28 December.

To minimise disruption and help people travel safely to their bubble, the government set out a series of measures last week, including:

- lifting 100s of miles of roadworks
- enhancing rail services
- postponing and accelerating rail engineering works
- cutting ticket charges

The new support for scheduled coach services builds on this and ensures that, should there be pressure on rail services, people will have alternative travel options.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, said:

We've already set out important measures so journeys can run as smoothly as possible this Christmas. Today's funding announcement for the coach sector goes one step further, ensuring there are more options available for people wanting to travel to celebrate with loved ones and friends.

We remind everyone that it's essential to plan their journey and book ahead, be considerate of other passengers and staff across our transport network, and follow the guidance, including keeping space and wearing a face covering, unless exempt, on public transport.

Christmas travel co-ordinator Sir Peter Hendy said:

This is very welcome, as it gives additional and flexible COVID-safe public transport capacity for the Christmas period. I'll continue to assure transport provision so we can get everyone to their Christmas bubbles safely. Please book early to help achieve that.

Alison Edwards, Head of Policy at The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK, said:

The pandemic has made it challenging to run scheduled coach services. It's welcome to see this recognised by government. Coaches provide a vital means of transport during the Christmas period and will be running throughout the festive period, including on Christmas Day. This funding will mean more coaches on our roads to help people travel safely and ease overall pressure on public transport.

Chris Hardy, Managing Director, National Express Coach, said:

Maintaining the UK's largest network of scheduled coach services has been challenging but we've worked hard to provide safe, low-carbon travel over the festive season.

This funding will allow us to increase the frequency of some routes, introduce new direct services and add more locations on our 23 to 27 December timetable.

We'll initially be doubling the mileage of the network and will

further increase the number of vehicles and seats available on routes as necessary. The flexibility of coach travel means we can respond to demand and quickly and safely increase capacity with covid-secure measures in place.

Mark Venables, Managing Director for megabus, said:

Public transport continues to play a vital role in helping to connect communities, and that's even more important this year as people travel to reunite with their families and loved ones for Christmas.

We're pleased to have worked in partnership with the UK Department for Transport to provide thousands of additional seats on our megabus coaches this Christmas, and we'll be running right throughout the festive period, including on Christmas Day.

Seats are selling fast, so we're urging people to plan ahead and book their travel as soon as possible. Our megabus services offer safe, environmentally friendly, easy, hassle-free and flexible travel and provide a great alternative to travelling by car.

Thomas Ableman, Founder & CEO of Snap, said:

We're thrilled to be able to help people see their family at Christmas. Our network of incredible quality local coach operators are ready to get people to where they need to go with safety, security and a smile. We know people have really valued their local small businesses this year, so are sure they'll continue to do so by booking their travel with a local coach operator through Snap.

Ban on keeping primates as pets moves step closer

The government has today (12 December) launched proposals to ban keeping primates as pets in England, inviting the public to have their say on the issue over the next eight weeks.

This [public consultation](#) on the government's manifesto commitment to ban keeping primates such as capuchins, lemurs and squirrel monkeys forms part of a renewed push to cement the UK's position as a world leader on animal welfare.

Primates are highly intelligent wild animals with complicated welfare needs, and require open spaces, varied diets, social contact and plenty of warmth and light. Findings from a recent [call for evidence](#) found that these complex needs cannot be met in a home environment.

Under these new plans, it will be an offence to keep a primate as a pet in England. Only those keeping primates to zoo level standards will be permitted to keep primates.

Animal Welfare Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

Primates are hugely intelligent and socially complex animals. When they are confined in tiny cages, often alone and with little stimulation, their lives are a misery.

It's important that we take action to prevent the suffering caused to them when they are kept as pets, and so I am delighted that we are moving a big step closer towards banning the practice. These proposals will ensure that we have the strongest protections in place for our animals.

We have some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world, and these plans form part of a range of measures we are taking to raise the bar even further, such as ending live animal exports and cracking down on illegal puppy smuggling.

The government anticipates that up to 5,000 primates are currently kept outside of licensed zoos in the UK. Marmosets are by far the most commonly held primates in the UK, with capuchins, squirrel monkeys, lemurs and tamarins also among the most common species.

Monkey World, a sanctuary for abused and neglected primates in Dorset, have taken in over 100 primates from the UK pet trade, with 78 primates rescued in the last 10 years alone and now have a waiting list of over 100 more.

The new proposals mean that specialist primate keepers who do not hold a zoo licence will need to obtain a new specialist private primate keeper licence to ensure they are meeting the required high welfare standards. These plans will also place welfare restrictions on the breeding and transferring of primates.

Monkey World Director Dr Alison Cronin said:

Monkey World has rescued primates from the UK pet trade for more than 30 years, and we have experienced a dramatic increase in the numbers recently.

Current laws are not protecting the monkeys from abuse or neglect, as they arrive at the park malnourished, with rickets, mobility problems and psychologically damaged as a result of living in

solitary confinement, inside people's houses.

We are asking people to take part in this consultation to signal that this trade is unacceptable and the current legislation is not working. The laws must change.

Dr Ros Clubb, Senior Scientific Manager at the RSPCA said:

We warmly welcome the government's proposals to ban keeping primates as pets in England. We look forward to reading the government's proposals in detail and hope that the legislation will deliver an end to the keeping and trade of primates as pets.

The RSPCA has been calling for a complete ban on the keeping and trade of primates as pets for some time, because their needs simply cannot be met in a domestic environment. They are intelligent, sentient and highly social animals with complex needs.

Just like humans, primates can become depressed without adequate stimulation. They need a spacious and enriched environment that challenges their intelligent brains and allows for them to behave like primates should, yet we are still finding them kept alone in indoor bird cages in living rooms.

This announcement marks the start of renewed efforts from the government to raise standards on animal welfare even further now we are outside the EU, including taking [steps to end live animal exports](#) and crack down on the illegal smuggling of dogs and puppies, with further proposals to improve standards and eradicate cruel practices expected to be set out in the coming months.

You can respond to the eight-week consultation by clicking [here](#).

Meeting global humanitarian needs in 2021

2020 has been a year like no other.

Many have tragically died and fallen ill as a result of COVID-19 and the virus has triggered a global recession not seen since the 1930s. We risk losing decades of human progress. Extreme poverty is rising for the first time in over 20 years.

And, as the UN's Global Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2021 laid out in

stark terms, 235 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. That's 1 in 33 people across the globe.

But the story of 2020 is not just about COVID-19. The main drivers of humanitarian crises have not gone away.

Conflict continues to take a heavy toll on civilians and violence against humanitarian workers remains rife. The impact of climate change and weather-related disasters continues to grow. The most vulnerable, including women and girls, are being hit hardest.

As a result, we are now facing the daunting prospect of famine and acute food insecurity in multiple contexts. The UK is particularly worried about the risks in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

As we look ahead to 2021, how do we meet the humanitarian needs of 235 million people? How can we slow increasing funding requirements? And how can we support humanitarians in field?

The UK remains committed to the global humanitarian cause. In September we appointed our first Special Envoy on Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs. His immediate focus is building the necessary alliances to drive up levels of humanitarian funding and to develop political solutions to prevent the most acute food security crises.

The UK continues to be a leading humanitarian donor. We have provided \$1.8 billion over the course of 2020. And in the last week alone, we announced almost \$90 million in funding for the CERF and \$18 million to Yemen.

It is no secret that budgets are under pressure around the world. But it is staggering that the top ten donors account for 83% of humanitarian funding. Words are not enough. Major economies, outside of that top ten, need to step up.

The trajectory of ever-increasing funding needs, \$28.8 billion needed at the start of 2020 leaping to \$35 billion for 2021, simply isn't sustainable. So we need to be better at anticipating crises. Investing in a more proactive response to avert humanitarian crises could reduce the cost by as much as 30%. This means using early warning analysis and data more effectively, but crucially ensuring data is linked to plans in advance of crisis and tied to practical early action.

But a humanitarian response alone is not enough. Humanitarian crises require political solutions. We need to ensure that the UN is making the full use of all the levers at its disposal – development, peace and political actors all have role to play in preventing crises.

We also need to ensure humanitarian assistance reaches those in need – and is not obstructed or frustrated – and that civilians and civilian objects are not the targets of violence. International Humanitarian Law must be respected and we need to unequivocally support the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. A weakened normative framework helps no one.

Mr President, amid these unprecedented challenges, I want to finish by celebrating the successes of the international humanitarian community and, indeed, the successes of multilateralism.

Humanitarian workers, at great personal cost and risk, have adapted and innovated to ensure the delivery of aid and services to 98 million people worldwide. And I congratulate the World Food Programme on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for their commitment to tackling global starvation.

These are extraordinary achievements that we must all build on to overcome the grave challenges we will face in 2021. On this basis, we offer our full support for consensual adoption of the resolutions before us today.

Thank you.

Explanation of Vote at UN General Assembly Plenary Session on Humanitarian Affairs

Mr President, the United Kingdom is grateful to facilitators for their leadership on the draft resolutions before us and we welcome the approach taken not to re-open the text.

We would like to express our disappointment at the calling of a vote by the United States that seeks to delete agreed language on access to sexual and reproductive health services.

The UK is unwavering in its commitment to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights for all and we are concerned about the repeated attempts to pushback against these long-standing rights.

The UK is concerned by attempts to curtail access to sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls, particularly as access to these vital services have been diverted during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Sexual and reproductive health services are often life-saving, and women and girls affected by conflict and crisis need sexual and reproductive health services more than ever. These needs are particularly acute in crisis, conflict and humanitarian settings.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights – which includes access to quality, comprehensive health services – are critical to the empowerment of women and girls everywhere. We will not achieve the Global Goals if we do not ensure all people have access to and can realise their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

So it is essential that the international community reaffirms its long-standing resolve to defend and implement its commitments on gender equality and the rights of women and girls. We cannot accept this attempt to walk back previously agreed language. And this is why the UK will vote in support of the paragraphs on which a vote has been called and we urge all member states to do the same.

Thank you.