

Let's talk about data quality



Last week, we published our [framework for data quality in government](#). We developed the framework in collaboration with the [Government Digital Service](#), using best practice drawn from across and outside government. We're holding a series of events to support its roll-out.

The launch event

On 3 December, we held a virtual launch event to introduce the framework. We discussed the content of the framework, why it's important, and what it sets out to achieve.

We also heard from a range of guest speakers. [Alison Pritchard](#), Director General for Data Capability at the [Office for National Statistics](#), explained that data is a high priority in government, and highlighted how the framework sets the foundations for this. [Lisa Allen](#), Head of Data and Analytical Services at [Ordnance Survey](#), discussed the benefits that come from establishing a data quality culture in an organisation. Finally, [Nicola Askham](#), Director at the [Data Management Association of the UK](#), explained that everyone has a role in achieving good quality data. The event was chaired by the Head of the Government Data Quality Hub, [James Tucker](#), and included an opportunity to ask questions of the panel.

We'd like to thank everyone who joined us for making the event a massive success. If you didn't manage to attend, the recording will be shared on YouTube shortly.

Carrying on the conversation

We know that the framework contains a lot of useful information, and that there's too much to cover in just one hour. So we're holding a second event on 13 January 2021 at 3pm to explore some of the themes in more depth. We will hear from colleagues across the public sector on how they have assessed, improved and communicated data quality. We will then open the floor for a round table discussion about data quality in government.

Everyone is welcome. Please [register via Eventbrite](#) to join us, and pass this invitation on to colleagues who might also be interested.

You can also share your thoughts on data quality with us by completing [our survey](#) by 17 December.

Help us support you

We have an ambitious plan to support the public sector to understand, assess, and improve data quality, but we need your help to achieve this. If you want to talk to us about the framework or want to know more about our work, email us at DQHub@ons.gov.uk or tweet us at [@DQHubUKGov](#).

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1. 10 December 2020

Added date of second event and included link to register for this.

2. 7 December 2020

First published.

[Joint statement by the UK and Singapore](#)

News story

Joint Ministerial Statement by the Republic of Singapore and the United Kingdom (UK) on the signing of the UK-Singapore Free Trade Agreement and negotiations on a UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement



The UK and Singapore are pleased to announce today the signing of the UK-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Both countries also agreed to start scoping the modules of a UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement (DEA), with

the aim of launching negotiations on the DEA in early Spring 2021.

1. The UK and Singapore are like-minded partners with shared historical ties and excellent economic relations. Singapore is the UK's largest trade and investment partner from ASEAN, while the UK is amongst Singapore's top three European trading partners and Singapore's top investment destination in Europe. As island trading nations, both countries share a strategic commitment to global trade, and the free flow of capital and investments. We enjoy broad-based collaboration in areas such as science and technology, climate and sustainability, defence, education and culture.
2. The UK-Singapore FTA will take our excellent economic relations further. It will cover more than £17 billion of bilateral trade in goods and services. Companies will continue to benefit from tariff elimination for goods trade, increased access to our respective services and government procurement markets, and reduction of non-tariff barriers in key sectors such as electronics, motor vehicles and vehicle parts, pharmaceutical products and medical devices, and renewable energy generation.
3. In particular, the UK and Singapore have committed to maintain the same timeline for tariff reductions as compared to the EU-Singapore FTA. Upon the UK-Singapore FTA's entry into force, tariffs will remain eliminated for 84% of all tariff lines for Singapore exports to the UK. Singapore Asian food products such as har gow (prawn dumplings) and sambal ikan bilis (spicy crispy anchovies) will continue to enter the UK tariff-free under flexible rules of origin, up to a combined quota of 350 tonnes annually. Singapore will also continue to bind our current level of duty-free access for all UK products entering Singapore, and maintain protections on iconic UK goods such as Scotch Whisky.
4. The UK-Singapore FTA will support financial services trade and investment in both countries, and provide opportunities for existing UK Qualifying Full Banks (QFBs) in Singapore to expand their footprint, including through additional customer service locations. Both countries will continue to discuss strengthening their financial and economic cooperation and building links between their financial markets, including through the annual UK-Singapore Financial Dialogue.
5. Beyond the UK-Singapore FTA, the UK and Singapore have committed to commence and endeavour to conclude negotiations to deliver updated, high standard and ambitious investment protection commitments within two years and four years respectively of the UK-Singapore FTA's entry into force.
6. Both countries also plan to strengthen our trading relationship further. We will start scoping the modules of a UK-Singapore DEA, with the aim of

launching negotiations in early Spring 2021 on a DEA that aspires to be a model for international digital trade rules and cooperation. It is the shared desire of both countries, as forward-looking and digitally advanced economies, to explore emerging and innovative areas in digital trade.

7. Under the DEA, the UK and Singapore will aim to ensure an open, thriving, and safe digital environment for our consumers and businesses. The agreement will promote the flow of data across borders while maintaining high levels of personal data protection. It will also promote interoperable digital systems to connect our thriving innovation ecosystems, harness the interaction between financial services and the digital economy, and help shape global standards for effective regulation in key areas such as cyber security and emerging technology. The DEA will also form a strong basis for our cooperation in the WTO and other multilateral fora in pursuing a likeminded approach to global trade rules.
8. The signing of the UK-Singapore FTA serves as a significant step in the UK's interest to seek membership of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Singapore supports and welcomes the UK's intent to submit its application to accede to the CPTPP in early 2021. This will bring us closer to the CPTPP's vision of advancing economic integration and supporting the liberalisation of trade and investment globally. As vice-chair of the CPTPP Commission, Singapore will work with the chair and other CPTPP members to form an Accession Working Group for the UK as expeditiously as possible.
9. As we approach the second anniversary of our Singapore-UK Partnership for the Future, we are confident that the UK-Singapore FTA and UK-Singapore DEA, and the UK's accession to CPTPP, will deepen the foundation for the UK and Singapore to take our strong and modern economic partnership into the 21st century.

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UK strikes Singapore and Vietnam trade deals, start of new era of trade with

Asia

- New continuity trade deals with Singapore and Vietnam will deepen relationships in the Indo-Pacific region and deliver vital certainty for UK business.
- Singapore deal paves the way for a cutting-edge relationship in digital as part of the government's plan to make the UK a global hub for tech and services trade post-Brexit.
- Agreements bring the UK a step closer to joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a high-standards agreement of 11 Pacific nations.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss was in Singapore today (Thursday 10 December) to sign a Free Trade Agreement with the thriving city-state.

The Secretary of State will now travel to Vietnam, one of the fastest growing economies in Asia, to conclude another rollover trade agreement.

As the UK's largest trading partner in South-East Asia, the Singapore continuity agreement will provide a gateway to Asia for UK businesses and lock in the benefits of our existing trading relationship, worth £17.6 billion last year.

It is the latest step in the UK's strategy to create a network of trade agreements with dynamic economies far beyond Europe, making the UK a hub for services and digital trade. The UK is already one of the world's biggest exporters of services, with remotely delivered services exports worth £207 billion in 2019.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss and Singaporean counterpart, Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Trade and Industry, also announced their intention to launch negotiations for a ground-breaking Digital Economy Agreement (DEA). This would be the first DEA that Singapore has struck with a European country.

This agreement would enable the UK to become a hub for digital trade with strong connections to Asia, cutting red tape for UK businesses and setting global standards in key areas such as cyber-security and emerging technology.

This follows the launch of the UK's first Digital Trade Network in Asia Pacific, to increase digital trade and investment opportunities and to forge new digital partnerships in the region, helping more British businesses export digitally.

Singapore and the UK are both global leaders in the digital economy and 70% of UK services exports were delivered remotely to Singapore last year, worth £3.2 billion.

The International Trade Secretary will now travel to Vietnam to conclude a separate trade agreement, which will also maintain an important trading relationship that has tripled between 2010 and 2019 in nominal terms to £5.7 billion. 99% of tariffs will be eliminated after seven years, including on

machinery and pharmaceutical products, our top exports to Vietnam.

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss, said:

Both these agreements are vital for the UK's future as an independent trading nation. Not only do they lock in billions of pounds worth of trade, they also pave the way for new digital partnerships and joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership. This will play to the UK's strengths, as we become a hub for tech and digital trade with influence far beyond our shores, defining our role in the world for decades to come.

This is an important part of our vision for a Global Britain that sits at the centre of a network of deals with dynamic nations across Asia Pacific and the Americas as a global hub for services and technology trade.

International trade will help us to overcome the challenges of coronavirus and drive economic growth across our United Kingdom.

The deal also secures benefits for UK fintech firms in Singapore – Singapore has agreed to start a review in 2021 to consider an increase in the limits imposed on e-wallet payments, which affect UK firms operating in Singapore, as well as to discuss opportunities for UK firms to apply to become Digital Wholesale Banks in Singapore. This is in addition to additional customer services points permitted for UK retail banks already operating in Singapore, as part of this agreement.

The agreements with Singapore and Vietnam mark another step towards the UK joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership CPTPP, which accounted for 13% of global GDP in 2019, rising to 16% if the UK were to join.

Both economies are founding members CPTPP and have publicly shown their support for the UK acceding to this fast-growing trade bloc. Joining would provide British businesses with an unparalleled gateway to the Pacific region.

CPTPP sets modern rules in sectors such as digital, financial, professional and business services, which play to the UK's strengths. Our membership will help turn the UK into a global hub for businesses and investors wanting to trade with the rest of the world, which would not have been possible as part of the EU.

In under two years we have agreed trade deals with 57 countries that account for £193bn of UK bilateral trade. This is unprecedented. No other country has ever negotiated so many trade deals simultaneously. The Government's ambition is to secure free trade agreements with countries that cover 80% of UK trade within three years.

Antony Walker, Deputy CEO at techUK, said

techUK welcomes the ambition to sign a Digital Economy Agreement (DEA) with Singapore. This will not only deepen digital trade with Singapore but will also help to strengthen digital trade across the region. This is a great opportunity for the UK and Singapore to join forces in defining a gold standard agreement in digital trade.

The UK and Singapore share strong ambitions in digital trade. This year, Singapore has concluded two state-of-the-art digital trade agreements, one with New Zealand and Chile (DEPA) and the other one with Australia (DEA). The DEA goes further than any comparable bilateral digital chapter, breaking new ground in areas such as creating a safe online environment and cooperation on competition policy. The agreement is also accompanied by a number of MoUs on digital economy topics, such as data innovation, AI, trade facilitation and digital identity. Given the fast-moving nature of technology, these additional MoUs provide a flexible and adaptive framework.

Gerard Grech, CEO of Tech Nation, said

The UK and Singapore have strong track records in scaling innovation across industries and geographies, and so Tech Nation welcomes today's landmark trade agreement as a significant milestone for the global tech sector.

Our two nations have shared ambitions in tech and innovation and the trade agreement will make it even easier for tech businesses to find success in our respective countries. Tech leaders see a natural fit with the UK and Singapore markets given their focus on innovation, entrepreneurship, technology and ease of doing business.

This combination creates the stage for more future success together, when it comes to leading the world in incubating, scaling and commercialising technology.

A Deliveroo spokesperson said

As a British tech firm that operates in Singapore, it is great news that the UK and Singapore have not only agreed to roll over our current Free Trade arrangements but also that they now plan to go even further by agreeing a Digital Economy Agreement.

By reducing barriers to digital trade and developing a deeper understanding of how technology is evolving in both markets, this new agreement can help fast-growing tech companies like Deliveroo as we work with more and more restaurants across Singapore to get their great food direct to customers doors.

James Shanahan, CEO of Revolut Singapore, said

Digital trade between the UK and Singapore is now more important than ever as businesses increasingly shift online in the post-pandemic economy. This agreement will also foster greater trust and commonality between and amongst regulators in both countries.

Revolut – with its over 13 million customers worldwide – welcomes the free trade agreement and increased cooperation between the UK and Singapore. We look forward to taking even more of our product to our customers in Singapore and creating more jobs in Singapore, the UK and beyond.

[Read the Joint Statement here](#)

Notes to Editor

Singapore was a partner in the UK's first FinTech Bridge, and the UK and British trade minister Lord Gerry Grimstone spoke at the Singapore Fintech Festival yesterday (9 December).

Sources: ONS UK Trade: All countries, non-seasonally adjusted, Q2 2020; IMF World Economic Outlook October 2020; ONS Trade in services by modes of supply, UK: 2019.

Build back better: £600 million to upgrade and refurbish NHS hospitals

- Part of £1.5 billion capital funding announced by the Prime Minister in the summer to help the NHS build back better
- Almost 1,800 projects across 178 trusts will tackle urgent maintenance issues by March 2021

NHS hospital staff, patients and visitors across all regions in England will benefit from refurbished wards, brand-new electrics and upgraded ventilation systems by next spring, the Health Secretary has announced, as the government invests £600 million to tackle critical maintenance work.

The funding has been released to 178 NHS trusts to cover almost 1,800 maintenance projects. The projects are now underway, and will be completed by March 2021.

Investment will be targeted towards a range of projects including:

- building new or refurbished buildings to deliver key services;

- upgrades to electrical infrastructure
- improvements to ventilation systems
- works to improve fire safety
- replacing hospital lifts

The investment is part of £1.5 billion capital funding which was announced in the summer to build an NHS fit for the future, which also includes plans to modernise mental health facilities, expand A&E capacity and improve infection control ahead of winter.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

“Alongside delivering on our manifesto commitment to build 40 new hospitals and 20 major hospital upgrades across the country, this investment will help our NHS build back better.

“These crucial maintenance projects will deliver immediate benefits and provide NHS staff with the facilities they need to provide world-class care to their patients this winter, helping ensure the NHS is always there for you when you need it.”

The projects include:

- £15.9 million for a new critical care centre at Northampton General Hospital
- £3.3 million to Croydon Health Services NHS Trust for a new paediatric integrated unit
- £6.5 million for the construction of a new MRI building at St George’s Hospital in London to house a new scanner
- £2.7 million to refurbish Firth Theatres at the Northern General Hospital, which includes critical care, cardiovascular surgery and other surgical wards

Trusts were provided an initial allocation based on need and were asked to put forward suitable projects that would deliver maximum impact and the best value for money, and could be completed by March 2021. The successful projects are evenly distributed across England, with more than half of projects in the Midlands, North East and Yorkshire; and North West regions.

Today’s announcement is on top of an additional £450 million investment from government to improve hospital A&Es this winter by expanding waiting areas and increasing the number of treatment cubicles, helping to boost A&E capacity by providing additional space, reducing overcrowding and improving infection control measures.

The government is committed to supporting the NHS to build back better, having confirmed a series of major investments in NHS infrastructure since August last year, including £850 million to upgrade 20 hospitals and £3.7 billion to help deliver 40 new hospitals by 2030.

Following last month’s Spending Review, £1.2 billion has been ring-fenced for NHS new hospitals and upgrades in 2021/22, plus £4.2 billion for NHS operational capital funding.

The Treasury has also committed an additional £235 million for further hospital maintenance works for the next financial year beginning in April 2021. There will be a further boost for technology and digital projects including AI labs and remote GP appointments, diagnostic equipment and a science hub.

800,000 trees set to be planted as Green Recovery Challenge Fund projects announced

- Funding will create over 300 hectares of woodlands, restore hedgerows, and plant trees in cities as we build back greener from the pandemic
- Nearly £40 million allocated to projects across England in this first round, with second round of funding to open in early 2021

Projects that protect landscapes, connect people with nature and help create and retain thousands of green jobs across England have been awarded a share of almost £40 million, the government announced today.

The 68 projects will see over 800,000 trees planted and help restore damaged habitats such as moorlands, wetlands and forests. The projects will also support conservation work and help to improve education about the environment.

This first round of funding from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund will award nearly £40 million. The second funding round will open for applications early next year. The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is a key part of [the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan](#) to kick-start nature recovery, create green jobs and tackle climate change while helping the country build back better and greener from the pandemic.

The fund will be delivered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

The winning projects include:

- The Woodland Trust, which is being awarded £3,860,200 to restore ancient woodlands and trees in 63 landscapes across England. The funding will also go towards helping increase skills and capacity within the wider forestry and conservation sectors and reinvigorate UK timber markets.
- A partnership led by the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) in England and Wales, who will receive £2,543,600 to connect young people to nature and build a new workforce for the green recovery, targeting young people from deprived areas through virtual, field or class based learning, day and residential trips, citizen science programme and volunteering with

experienced environmental tutors across 200 diverse natural heritage sites, such as conservation areas, AONBs, national parks and more.

- The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare, which has been awarded £580,400 to improve access to green spaces at NHS sites across England, including by planting 10,000 trees at 50+ NHS sites, and providing outdoor ecotherapy sessions and even refurbishing a garden for a chemotherapy suite, which will allow patients to have treatment outside.
- The Conservation Education & Research Trust will receive £249,900 to help plant 12 'tiny forests' (the size of a tennis court) in urban areas across England.
- The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust's Owl Box Initiative is being awarded a grant of £123,700 to work with 100 farms and supply communities with Barn Owl boxes, monitoring their success and involving farming families in this process.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

These projects will drive forward work across England to restore and transform our landscapes, boost nature and create green jobs, and will be a vital part of helping us to build back greener from coronavirus.

I look forward to working with environmental organisations as these projects develop and help address the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change, while creating and retaining jobs as part of the green recovery.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

Reaching net zero and achieving the government's 25 Year Environment Plan goals for nature can only be done by employing the right skills. The Green Recovery Challenge Fund will deliver on the ground benefits for local communities, and wildlife, by supporting jobs in the environmental sector.

This has been a tough year for everyone, but these projects give us reason for optimism and will help develop the skills needed to tackle the climate emergency, protect biodiversity and build back greener.

Natural England Chair Tony Juniper said:

Having opportunities to experience wildlife-rich natural environments has never been more essential for the nation's health and wellbeing as it has been this year. Today we celebrate the tangible benefits for people and wildlife this fund will soon deliver, as we emerge from the coronavirus crisis.

It is inspiring to see how the fund will help aspiring ecologists take their first roles toward building careers in Nature recovery and the sustainable economy it is essential we now build. It is another step toward securing the wonderful landscapes and habitats upon which we all depend.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive, National Lottery Heritage Fund, said:

Supporting our natural environment is one of the most valuable things we can do right now. All these projects are of huge benefit to our beautiful countryside and wildlife, but will also support jobs, health and wellbeing, which are vitally important as we begin to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis.

Exchequer Secretary, Kemi Badenoch, said:

This investment will support growth right across England, creating and supporting thousands of new jobs and helping people develop valuable new skills.

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is a vital part of our efforts to support decarbonisation and restore biodiversity, as part of our transition to a green economy.

21 projects will receive the larger grants (over £250k – £5m) and 47 projects awarded funding for the smaller grants (£50 – £250k).

The fund will also drive progress on the government's wider [25 Year Environment Plan commitments](#), including plans to increase tree-planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025. This is alongside the forthcoming [Environment Bill](#) which puts the environment at the centre of policy making to ensure that we have a cleaner, greener and more resilient country for the next generation.