

First Singapore – United Kingdom climate change bilateral dialogue

The first meeting of the Singapore-UK Climate Change Bilateral Dialogue was held from 24 to 26 November 2020 by videoconference. The Dialogue covered a wide range of topics including climate ambition and green recovery post-COVID-19, carbon markets, energy transition, low-carbon technologies, green transport, nature-based solutions, and green finance.

The Dialogue advances work in one of four key pillars under the SG-UK Partnership for the Future, which commits both countries to building on our historic links to look to the future, and address shared and global challenges together.

Singapore and the UK agreed that climate action cannot wait. We therefore reiterated our commitment to take strong domestic mitigation actions, including through harnessing renewable energy and low-carbon technologies, in support of the Paris Agreement.

At the Dialogue, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to working in partnership to ensure the success of the multilateral system to address global climate challenges, in particular through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Singapore expressed its support for the incoming UK COP26 Presidency, and both countries agreed to work closely with each other and with other Parties to secure a successful outcome at COP26.

To facilitate the development and deployment of low-emission solutions, such as smart grid systems, green transport, low-carbon hydrogen, and carbon capture, utilisation and storage solutions, both countries agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation on climate science and innovation. This collaboration includes continued exchanges between government, industry, and academia.

Both sides affirmed plans to cooperate within the region to support implementation of the Paris Agreement, and accelerate the energy transition, particularly by enabling greater flows of green finance and supporting the development of carbon markets. To that end, both sides agreed to intensify exchanges between their national experts, and to enable and encourage the cooperation of their respective financial centres.

Both countries agreed to convene the second Dialogue in 2021.

Kara Owen, British High Commissioner to Singapore said:

The UK and Singapore have a long history of close engagement on climate issues. Given that climate action is a top priority for both of our governments, it was an easy choice for us to put climate and sustainability front and centre as a key pillar of the

SG-UK Partnership for the Future, launched last year. As we begin the one year countdown to the UK-hosted COP26 next November, we highly appreciate Singapore's strong support for its vital objectives.

This Dialogue has injected even greater energy into our efforts to drive the agenda forward and across green revolutions in mobility, energy, finance and beyond. By sharing our technical and policy innovations, it is more likely that our work will bring benefit beyond just UK and Singapore. Our partnership can also support the low carbon energy transition across South East Asia, the region that has the most to gain but also to lose in our battle against climate change."

Tan Kok Yam, Deputy Secretary, Smart Nation and Digital Government and Strategy Group, Prime Minister's Office (PMO), said:

Singapore and the UK have a long history of working together to address climate change issues. We see the UK as a like-minded partner to jointly pursue exciting and innovative economic and technological opportunities as we undertake urgent climate action.

During the Dialogue, we had rich discussions on ways to advance our bilateral cooperation, and on how our partnership can accelerate the low-carbon transition, not just in our respective countries, but in the region and the world. We stand ready to work more closely with the UK, in the lead-up to COP-26 and beyond.

Further information

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OPSS launches Christmas online toy safety campaign

A Christmas online toy safety campaign has been launched today (30 November 2020) by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), working in partnership with the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, the Child Accident Prevention Trust, and the British Toy & Hobby Association.

Groups, businesses, and individuals are encouraged to support the consumer awareness messages, on how to shop safely when purchasing Christmas toys online, by retweeting and posting them on social media, using the hashtag #shopsafely, or using the shared campaign materials.

Natasha Crookes, Director of Public Affairs, British Toy & Hobby Association, says; “The British Toy and Hobby Association is pleased to support the OPSS advice to help parents to shop from reputable sellers online, to ensure children get to enjoy safe playtime this Christmas”.

Shop for Christmas toys safely online

OPSS has produced safety tips on how to buy Christmas toys safely online.

These are:

Buy toys from a reputable retailer

Check that there is a name and address for the manufacturer on the site and if this information is not available do not buy the toy. Read ratings and reviews to make sure the retailer has a good reputation for safe and reliable toys.

Always read the warnings and instructions

Heed the age restrictions: toys must be marked with age restrictions based on risks such as choking hazards.

Check that the toy is suitable for the intended recipient

Festive novelties can look like toys when they should be kept away from children. If a child has special needs, they may be more vulnerable to certain toys.

Ensure the toy has not been recalled

Check if the toy you are buying has been recalled at [Product Recall](#)

Check for button batteries

If a toy has button batteries make sure they are safely behind a screwed-down flap.

Beware of potential toy hazards

Avoid buying toys with small parts as they can be a choking hazard. Think before buying toys and costumes with loose ribbons as they can pose strangulation risks to young children.

Buy genuine toys

Compare the toy's price with other retailers and sellers. If it is a fraction of the cost, it is likely to be counterfeit.

The campaign materials can be downloaded from the [Consumer safety awareness campaigns materials GOV.UK page](#)

Government unveils path to sustainable farming from 2021

Plans to deliver a better, fairer farming system in England have been set out by government today. They will transform the way we support farmers, in the most significant change to farming and land management in 50 years.

The roadmap outlines changes that will come into force over a period of seven years to help farmers adapt and plan for the future. Outside the EU and no longer bound by the EU's bureaucratic Common Agricultural Policy, the plans set out how government plans to introduce a new system that is tailored in the interests of English farmers, centred on support that rewards farmers and land managers for sustainable farming practices.

The changes will be designed to ensure that by 2028, farmers in England can sustainably produce healthy food profitably without subsidy, whilst taking steps to improve the environment, improve animal health and welfare and reduce carbon emissions.

Next year marks the start of the transition where we will begin to move away from the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) towards new policies that will be co-designed and tested together with farmers, land managers and experts, to ensure that the new systems work for them.

The government remains committed to its manifesto commitment to guarantee the current annual budget for every year of this Parliament.

The 'Path to Sustainable Farming' document, published today, sets out more detail on the changes we are going to make, and what they will mean for farmers.

The key changes include:

- Introducing the Environmental Land Management scheme to incentivise sustainable farming practices, create habitats for nature recovery and establish new woodland to help tackle climate change.
- Investing in improving animal health and welfare as part of our sustainable farming approach. This will initially focus on controlling or eradicating endemic diseases amongst cattle, pigs and sheep .
- Direct Payments will be reduced fairly, starting from the 2021 Basic Payment Scheme year, with the money released being used to fund new grants and schemes to boost farmers' productivity and reward environmental improvements.
- Launching a Farming Investment Fund, which will support innovation and productivity. This will open for applications next year and will be used to offer grants for equipment, technology and infrastructure for the future.
- Simplifying and improving existing schemes and their application processes further from January 2021 to reduce the burden on farmers, and we will take a modern approach to regulation, cutting unnecessary red tape for farmers and working together with industry to design a more targeted regulatory system.

In a speech to farmers and environmental groups, Environment Secretary George Eustice will say:

We want farmers to access public money to help their businesses become more productive and sustainable, whilst taking steps to improve the environment and animal welfare, and deliver climate change outcomes on the land they manage.

Rather than the prescriptive, top down rules of the EU era, we want to support the choices that farmers and land managers take. If we work together to get this right, then a decade from now the rest of the world will want to follow our lead.

While the roadmap provides a clear view on the changes coming through the

transition, this will be followed by a period of engagement with farmers, land managers and other stakeholders to finalise the design and operation of the future system to ensure they work for everyone. For example, the final design for the future Environmental Land Management scheme will continue to evolve and adapt to the lessons learnt through co-design exercises, such as the ongoing tests and trials and upcoming National Pilot for the scheme.

The new roadmap comes a few weeks after the government's landmark Agriculture Bill passed into law, providing the powers needed to incentivise farmers to make the right environmental choices and help them to make the most of the opportunities available outside of the EU.

Further detail on the National Pilot for Environmental Land Management and the government response to the national conversation around the new scheme that took place earlier this year are due to be published early next year.

These measures apply to England only. Now we have left the EU each UK administration has the flexibility to develop agricultural policy suited to their own unique circumstances.

Direct Payments

The Direct Payments currently made through the Basic Payment Scheme offer poor value for money, reward those with most land, inflate rents and stand in the way of new entrants. The savings from phasing out these untargeted payments will free up more of the agricultural budget, which will go back to farmers through the roll-out of Environmental Land Management scheme, and the introduction of schemes to help farmers to boost their productivity.

The document published today sets out how Direct Payments will be reduced fairly over the next four years, with the biggest reductions made to the higher payment bands. Further reductions will be applied until the last payments are made in 2027.

In order to ensure that farmers are adequately supported throughout this journey, farming resilience programme will be made available throughout the first three years of the agricultural transition period to help those most affected by the phasing out of Direct Payments. This will help farmers plan and manage their businesses through the transition to the new system.

The document also sets out the various steps that have been taken to simplify the Basic Payment Scheme for next year, in order to reduce the burden on farmers as they focus on transitioning to the new system. This includes important changes to cross-compliance, such as an increased use of warning letters and offers of advice over farmers receiving a penalty as the default response to a breach of the rules. It was also [announced earlier in the year that the greening requirements for BPS customers](#), which were complicated and historically delivered little for the environment, would be removed next year. This was documented in the [European Court of Auditors 2017 Special Report on greening](#). The new Environmental Land Management scheme, expected to be rolled out in late 2024, will introduce new ways of working together with farmers to deliver better environmental outcomes.

A statutory instrument (SI) is expected to be laid in Parliament this week to implement these simplifications ready for next year's scheme. This SI will also allow for improvements to cross compliance, such as the greater use of warning letters instead of default financial penalties and better inspection targeting.

Defra will consult formally on a proposal to offer lump sum exit payments to farmers who may wish to leave the sector and plans to delink Direct Payments from land for all farmers later in the agricultural transition.

Environmental Land Management

Environmental Land Management will consist of three components:

- the Sustainable Farming Incentive, which will support approaches to farm husbandry that deliver for the environment, such as actions to improve soil health, hedgerows and integrated pest management,
- Local Nature Recovery, which will pay for actions such as creating, managing or restoring habitats, natural flood management and species management,
- Landscape Recovery, which will focus on landscape and ecosystem recovery through projects looking to achieve large-scale forest and woodland creation, peatland restoration, or the creation and restoration of coastal habitats, such as wetlands and salt marsh.

Farmers and land managers will be able to assess which component is best-suited to their land.

Work is ongoing to design the future scheme in collaboration with farmers and land managers and will continue next year, with the expected launch of the National Pilot in late 2021, which will involve up to 5,500 farmers over a three-year period. This will build on the lessons from the 68 live tests and trials being carried out by farmers across England to assess how the fundamental building blocks of the scheme will work on the ground. This will ensure that the new scheme delivers for our farmers and land managers, as well as delivering greener, cleaner landscapes and reversing the decline of some of our most cherished species.

Expressions of interest for the National Pilot are also expected to open early next year.

Some of the core elements of the Sustainable Farming Incentive will also be introduced from 2022.

Productivity

At the same time, the funding gained from phasing out Direct Payments will be

used to introduce new schemes to help farmers become more productive and meet the growing demand for their produce all around the world.

The new Farming Investment Fund will open for applications next year. The fund will provide targeted support to businesses so that they can invest in equipment, technology, and infrastructure that will improve their productivity and deliver environmental and other public benefits.

The two levels for this fund will be the Farming Equipment Technology Fund, which will offer small grants to contribute towards the purchase of a list of specified items and the Farming Transformation Fund, which will provide larger grants towards the cost of more substantial investments in equipment, technology or infrastructure, with the potential to transform business performance.

Eligible investments under these funds may include on-farm water storage infrastructure, robotic or automated technology, items to improve animal health and welfare and equipment for processing agricultural products, which may help farmers to streamline or diversify their businesses.

From 2022, farmers will also benefit from an increased investment in agricultural Research & Development that will enable more farmers and agri-food businesses to drive innovation. This will see farmer-led R&D projects to trial and demonstrate viability of new and existing technologies to address immediate on-farm productivity challenges as well as research into how agriculture can meet its longer term goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve net zero. Example projects could be trialling new feed additives or demonstrating the integration of autonomous farm machinery.

Other available support

More funding will also be made available under an improved Countryside Stewardship scheme, which will be an important stepping stone for many farmers ahead of the full roll-out of the future Environmental Land Management scheme, expected in late 2024. Steps will be taken to simplify the administration of the scheme, making it easier for more people to take part whilst it remains open to new applications for the first few years of the agricultural transition period. This will help them to springboard into the future scheme, which will reward them for delivering environmental outcomes, such as those already paid for by the Countryside Stewardship scheme.

Prime Minister announces £20m to grow medicines manufacturing in the UK

- New £20m fund to manufacture medicines and diagnostic equipment in the UK

- Fund will put the UK ahead in medicines manufacturing, creating economic opportunities and highly skilled jobs across the country
- Supports the Government's ambitions to build back better, ensuring greater resilience in UK medicines supply chains

The UK's ability to respond to future pandemics will be strengthened thanks to a new £20 million fund to expand medicines manufacturing, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced today (Monday 30 November).

The Prime Minister will launch the Government's new capital investment fund, the Medicines and Diagnostic Manufacturing Transformation Fund, while visiting North Wales later today.

This will open-up investment opportunities for medicines manufacturers in England, Scotland and Wales – improving our domestic medicine supply chains and creating thousands of highly skilled jobs in the process.

This will put UK companies ahead of global competitors in advanced medicines manufacturing, while helping them respond to future healthcare needs – and increasing the overall health resilience of the UK.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

This new £20m fund will significantly increase the capacity and resilience of our medicines and diagnostics manufacturing supply chains and equip us to fight future health crises.

Throughout the pandemic we have seen a coming together of British scientific industry and innovation and this new fund will enhance the UK's manufacturing capabilities even further.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

The positive and timely response of our medicines manufacturers to the pandemic has been remarkable, but we want to ensure that the UK's supply chains are even more resilient in the future.

There are huge opportunities for innovation in medicines and diagnostics, and this new fund will put the UK head and shoulders above others, boosting the UK's capabilities and generating significant economic opportunities across the country.

The pandemic has shown the importance of having a strong domestic medicines and diagnostics manufacturing industry. This new fund has been established to grow and strengthen the UK's capabilities, by encouraging companies to develop new technologies, build new factories and harness new advances, including bioprocessing, data and using greener manufacturing processes.

With two-thirds of life science manufacturing jobs already outside London and

the South East, the fund will also open-up economic opportunities in different parts of the UK, creating thousands of new, highly skilled manufacturing jobs while safeguarding existing jobs.

This multi-year fund will have an initial pot of £20 million, which will be available from next year, as part of the government's 2021/2022 Spending Review announced by the Chancellor on 25 November.

Eligible manufacturing companies can bid for the fund to help with their capital costs.

More information will be made available over the coming months, ahead of the fund launching mid-next year. The fund will be run through a competitive process overseen by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

H5N8 strain avian influenza confirmed on farm in North Yorkshire

Avian influenza of the H5N8 strain was confirmed at a turkey fattening premises near Northallerton on Saturday 28 November.

All 10,500 birds at the farm will be humanely culled to limit the spread of the disease. A 3km and 10km Temporary Control Zone has been put in place around the infected site to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

Public Health England (PHE) advises that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency advises that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss, said:

Avian flu has been confirmed at a commercial turkey fattening farm near Northallerton, North Yorkshire. Immediate steps have been taken to limit the risk of the disease spreading and all the remaining turkeys at the farm will be culled.

Public Health England has confirmed that the risk to public health is very low and the Food Standards Agency advises that bird flu poses a very low food safety risk for UK consumers.

Bird keepers should remain alert for any signs of disease, report suspected disease immediately and ensure they are maintaining good biosecurity on their premises.

We are urgently looking for any evidence of disease spread associated with this farm to control and eliminate it.

Dr Gavin Dabrera, Consultant in Acute Respiratory Infections at PHE said:

To date the World Health Organisation has never confirmed any cases of H5N8 in humans and the risk to the public is considered very low.

As a precaution the local Health Protection Team will offer routine health advice to those working on the farm. We will work with DEFRA to monitor the situation closely.

A Food Standards Agency spokesperson said:

We advise that, on the basis of the current scientific evidence, avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers.

Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, remain safe to eat.

A detailed investigation is in progress to determine the most likely source of this outbreak.

There is not anticipated to be any impact on the supplies of turkeys or other birds over Christmas.

Wild birds migrating from mainland Europe during the winter period can spread the disease to poultry and other captive birds. There are some simple measures that all poultry keepers, whether they are running a large commercial farm, keeping a few hens in their back garden, or rearing game birds, should take to protect their birds against the threat of avian flu.

These include:

- All bird keepers in England (whether they have pet birds, commercial flocks or just a few birds in a backyard flock) are required by law to take a range of biosecurity precautions.
- If you keep poultry or other captive birds, you must take action to reduce the risk of disease in your flock by following government advice on biosecurity. Further details of the measures that apply in the AIPZ can be found in the AIPZ declaration and our biosecurity guidance.
- Keeping the area where birds live clean and tidy, controlling rats and mice and regularly cleansing and disinfecting any hard surfaces
- Cleaning footwear before and after visits
- Placing birds' feed and water in fully enclosed areas that are protected from wild birds, and removing any spilled feed regularly
- Putting fencing around outdoor areas where birds are allowed and

limiting their access to ponds or areas visited by wild waterfowl

- Where possible, avoid keeping ducks and geese with other poultry species.