

New UK Government Covid testing site opens in Cumbernauld

The UK Government has today, Saturday 28 November, opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre at Fleming House Car Park (G67 1JW) in Cumbernauld. The centre is easily accessible for people without a car.

The new facility is being provided by the UK Government as part of a UK-wide drive to continue to improve the accessibility of coronavirus testing for local communities. It is operated by Mitie on behalf of the UK Government.

The test centre is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises of 6 drive through sites, 16 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.

Gabe Docherty, Director of Public Health, NHS Lanarkshire said:

The public health department continues to contact-trace positive cases and clusters in our community and this addition to the UK testing provision is welcome.

I want to thank the public for their co-operation in reducing spread of the virus and ask that they please remain vigilant. The general measures to minimise the risk of Covid-19 remain the same – face coverings, avoid crowded places, clean your hands, two metre distance, self-isolate and go for a test if you have symptoms.

Please do not hesitate if you have symptoms. It's critical that you go for a test and this walk-in centre is a very welcome addition to our testing capacity.

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 Cumbernauld, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.

Government-backed 5G facility to be built in Oxfordshire

The engineering hub, set to be built by the IT and business consultancy CGI in ESA-ECSAT at the Harwell Campus in Oxfordshire, is being backed by over £3 million of government investment and due for completion in 2021.

Providing a base for UK researchers and businesses to experiment, the new 5G hub – eventually planned to extend across the entire Harwell campus – will provide a testing facility that can show the benefits of hybrid 5G and satellite communications networks. The hope is that once the technology is demonstrated the techniques can be rolled out to other businesses across the UK.

5G connectivity is likely going to change the world and its considered the next meteoric leap in wireless communications, offering faster data speeds and less latency across networks. This low “latency” – the millisecond gap between action and reaction – has the potential to accelerate the green revolution needed to tackle climate change. It paves the way for vehicles to swap data nearly instantly, which can aid navigation and, for example, mean a car can begin to apply the brakes before a driver is aware of an accident.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

This year staying connected has taken on a new profound importance – from keeping in touch with loved ones and competing in Zoom quizzes to helping us tackle COVID-19.

This new state-of-the-art facility backed by government funding will enable our brightest researchers and engineers to better understand how 5G can help connect us all, creating new business opportunities, while delivering green efficiencies across the UK.

Space and tech companies are focusing on 5G because it allows for a broad range of applications across industries, including Internet of Things technology and augmented reality, all of which can be applied to manufacturing, public safety, enterprise and communications software and entertainment and gaming.

5G will enable more devices to be connected for more of the time: the “Internet of Things”, where chips in billions of devices talk to one another, bringing the prospect of huge efficiencies in everything from medicine and manufacturing to farming. It is also a quick, affordable way of bringing a fast data network to places where cables will not reach, from remote villages to disaster zones.

This new facility will develop software that allows satellite networks, including low-Earth orbit networks, to be integrated into terrestrial public and private communications networks. This will create new business opportunities for application developers and mobile network providers.

Credit: ESA

The centre is being backed by a European Space Agency contract, and as part of the development CGI is working with BT, Avanti Communications and the University of Surrey on a project to see how it can connect rural communities to 5G in the most affordable way possible.

Elodie Viau, director of telecommunications and integrated applications at ESA, said:

ESA's novel 5G Hub will showcase how space technology enables connectivity, partnering with industry to foster innovation in the realms of autonomous vehicles and smart cities, and to enable machines to exchange information with one another via the Internet of Things.

Adding satellites to existing terrestrial 5G infrastructure is essential to ensure a reliable and safe telecommunications network that supports such connectivity, which in turn promotes a seamless and more environmentally friendly experience. Investing in space improves life on Earth.

Shaun Stretton, Senior Vice President for UK & Australia Space Control and Information Solutions at CGI, said:

This exciting facility will bring closer the potential benefits of satellite integration into 5G networks.

Through our work with the European Space Agency and industry partners, including the development of our Carnot-Sat hybrid network planning tool, it became apparent that the ability to demonstrate the benefits of integrated 5G and satellite communications networks would help to accelerate the delivery of 5G in the UK and across Europe.

CGI invested in our own innovative 5G Accelerator lab which is being used as a model for the 5G Hub at the European Centre for Space Applications and Telecommunications.

Matthew Evans, Markets Director, techUK, said:

This facility is another indication of the UK's commitment to being

a global leader in 5G innovation. Hybrid solutions such as these could be a powerful way of providing connectivity and services to hard-to-reach areas across the UK, as well as enhancing the capabilities of our space sector to global markets.

In October three UK employers pledged to create 5,000 tech-related jobs. Liberty Global, the owner of Virgin Media, and 02's parent, Telefónica, unveiled plans to create 4,000 jobs in the UK and another 1,000 apprenticeships to accelerate the rollout of 5G.

At-risk groups to receive free winter supply of vitamin D

- Deliveries will be made to clinically extremely vulnerable and care home residents
- Higher risk of vitamin D deficiency as these groups have spent more time indoors this year

More than 2.5 million vulnerable people across England will be offered free vitamin D supplements for the winter, the government has announced today (Saturday 28 November).

All care homes will automatically receive a provision for their residents, while individuals on the [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) list will receive a letter inviting them to opt in for a supply to be delivered directly to their homes. Deliveries will be free of charge, starting in January, and will provide 4 months' worth of supplements to last people through the winter months.

The supplements will support general health, in particular bone and muscle health. This is particularly important this year as these individuals are more likely to have been indoors for extended periods due to measures introduced to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Evidence of the link of vitamin D to COVID-19 is still being researched with larger scale trials needed. In the meantime, the Secretary of State has asked the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Public Health England (PHE) to re-review the existing evidence. The government will publish its findings towards the end of the year.

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

Because of the incredible sacrifices made by the British people to control the virus, many of us have spent more time indoors this year and could be deficient in vitamin D.

The government is taking action to ensure vulnerable individuals can access a free supply to last them through the darker winter months. This will support their general health, keep their bones and muscles healthy and crucially reduce the pressure on our NHS.

A number of studies indicate vitamin D might have a positive impact in protecting against COVID-19. I have asked NICE and PHE to review the existing evidence on the link between COVID-19 and vitamin D to ensure we explore every potential opportunity to beat this virus.

Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist at Public Health England, said:

Vitamin D is important for our bone and muscle health.

We advise that everyone, particularly the elderly, those who don't get outside and those with dark skin, takes a vitamin D supplement containing 10 micrograms (400IU) every day.

This year, the advice is more important than ever with more people spending more time inside, which is why the government will be helping the clinically extremely vulnerable to get vitamin D.

The advice from PHE is for everybody to take 10 micrograms (400 IU) of vitamin D a day between October and early March to keep bones and muscles healthy.

PHE advises people who are more at risk of not having enough vitamin D to take a vitamin D supplement all year round. A range of products and doses are available at supermarkets, pharmacies and other retailers.

Anyone who is able to purchase a vitamin D supplement and start taking them now is advised to do so, even if you are also eligible for a delivery later in the year.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will provide further information and guidance for all nursing and residential care home providers in the coming weeks.

PM call with Irish Taoiseach: 27 November 2020

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Irish Taoiseach Micheál Martin this evening.



The Prime Minister spoke to Irish Taoiseach Micheál Martin this evening.

The leaders updated one another on their respective efforts to tackle coronavirus and the steps they have taken to ensure people in the UK and Ireland can enjoy Christmas as safely as possible.

They discussed shared challenges including the environment and committed to working together ahead of the UK-hosted COP26 summit next year.

They discussed the progress in the UK-EU trade negotiations and the Prime Minister underlined his commitment to reaching a deal that respects the sovereignty of the UK. The leaders also reaffirmed the need to prioritise the Good Friday Agreement and avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland.

The Prime Minister and Taoiseach looked forward to seeing one another in person when possible.

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Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce meeting, 27 November 2020

News story

Joint statement on progress made by the taskforce at its meeting on 27 November 2020.



The eighth meeting of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was held today, 27 November 2020.

It was chaired by Transport Minister, Baroness Vere. Attendees included the Project Director Dana Skelley plus representatives from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London (TfL), and the Port of London Authority.

Dana Skelley, speaking on behalf of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce, said:

The Taskforce held another productive meeting today. The Chair, Baroness Vere, noted the positive meeting with the Transport Secretary and Cllr Cowan, the leader of Hammersmith and Fulham Council, to discuss new proposals for the reopening of the bridge to both pedestrians and cyclists and motor vehicles. A further meeting on the temporary bridge proposals and funding is due to take place shortly.

Cllr Cowan updated the Taskforce on the new proposals from Delancey and Foster + Partners and discussed with the Taskforce how these might be incorporated into the current project plan.

Alongside DfT engineers and officials, I am continuing to provide project management support to assess and review all the proposals with the goal of enabling people to cross the river and move under the bridge as soon as possible.

The temporary ferry service is on track to be the most immediately available alternative river crossing for pedestrians and cyclists at Hammersmith Bridge.

The immediate mitigations work to the bridge's two western pedestals is underway and contractors will be onsite from next week.

The Taskforce agreed to meet again in a fortnight.

The Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was set up by the Department for Transport in September 2020 to work towards safely reopening the Hammersmith Bridge.

The taskforce is chaired by Baroness Vere and includes representatives from TfL, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority and the Port of London Authority.

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