

Dame Glenys Stacey: speech to AOC's FE Summit, 18 November 2020

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to join you today. Thank you for inviting me to speak today, I do appreciate it.

And thank you as well for all the exceptional work you are doing, to mitigate for your students the truly baleful and ongoing impact of the pandemic on education. I appreciate and applaud everyone's efforts here and your resolve to best educate your students and protect their futures. It is outstanding in so many respects, but it is also what I have long known and respected, in the FE sector. A heartfelt thank you from me

Much of the talk in recent months has been of GCSEs and A levels but today I'd like to focus on vocational and technical qualifications. These are particularly important to many of your students, and they are increasing in prominence generally with the government's Post-16 qualification review and the anticipated FE White Paper.

But first, I do want to make clear that we at Ofqual are sorry for what happened this summer: the distress and anxiety it caused for many students and their parents; the problem it created for teachers; and the impact it had on higher and further education providers. For our part, we are truly sorry for that.

The government has since renewed its commitment to examinations. I welcome that: we know this is generally the best way of testing knowledge and understanding, and the feedback we are getting from recent focus groups at Ofqual shows that parents and students, they are welcoming it too. In this year, because of the pandemic, there are new challenges, in assessing the right things in the right ways, so that even under exceptional assessment and examination arrangements, we still want to get sufficiently valid and reliable results for your students.

Now, awarding organisations with high levels of subject knowledge and expertise have the ability to consider how the right things should be assessed, and how to adapt assessment in this exceptional year. But they must also have a deep understanding of how centres and your colleges operate and their student cohort, as well as the needs of future employers or higher education providers.

So, from my perspective, knowing the challenges on the ground, understanding the impact of change and appreciating how these qualifications are used is critical to developing appropriate assessment – not just this year, but for the longer-term future actually, as well as for this year.

With these things in mind, we are regulating awarding organisations in novel ways, in these extraordinary times. We have got something called the Extraordinary Regulatory Framework – bit of a mouthful, but it allows

awarding organisations to use their judgement to adapt assessments and qualifications where necessary and appropriate.

Just thinking that through, particular skills and levels of practical competence are important for a student to be able to demonstrate their mastery and move into employment. Missed learning in key areas can make the difference between a student understanding safe and unsafe practices in some subject areas – and that is another key issue for us. Any changes proposed by awarding bodies do need to protect these key attributes of particular qualifications

And as AoC are telling us on your behalf, there have been difficulties in students accessing mandatory work placements as a result of the pandemic, so we have that to look at as well.

For those students intending to progress to higher education, often taking VTQs alongside A levels, there are other challenges. We know how important it is that there is coherence with GCSEs, AS and A levels. And so awarding organisations must try, as far as possible, to ensure that adaptations made to assessments do not advantage or disadvantage students against those taking GCSEs, AS and A levels. There needs to be a level playing field there.

Taking into account public health advice such as social distancing constraints, awarding organisations are putting in place a wide range of adaptations for vocational and technical qualifications to free up time for teaching and learning; and make these assessments as manageable and flexible as possible. And we've been encouraging professional bodies and employers to work closely with their awarding organisations so that students are not unreasonably penalised for loss of learning during this difficult time

So some examples then, assessment tasks or briefs may be available earlier or assessment windows extended. Assessments may be streamlined to free up for time for teaching and learning – without reducing the content that is taught. And, of course, there is the introduction of remote assessment and remote invigilation – allowing assessments to take place in different settings.

Now there are risks involved with these adaptations. We are monitoring how awarding organisations make use of these new freedoms, with a keen eye on validity, but also an awareness of the practicalities of assessment for many of these qualifications. For example we hear from you that the January RQF exams are likely to be logistically challenging – we're actively looking at what we can do and we do recognise the need for early certainty.

And we are working closely with the awarding organisations and sector bodies, including AoC, to set in place consistent approaches wherever possible and appropriate. This is not only in relation to qualifications with much in common, such as functional skills qualifications, but also in relation to how and when awarding organisations communicate with you to help you receive the information you keenly need.

So just to finish off, and to look further ahead, we welcome the upcoming White Paper, of course, and government's ambitions for a high quality,

coherent qualification market which offers the right level of choice for all types of learners at all levels. We want to see the detail of that. In the meantime, we are strengthening our capacity and redoubling our efforts in anticipation – so for example, we are gathering and publishing more data than ever before about VTQs, and I will mention here our VTQ landscape explorer analytics tool, it's a nice useful piece of kit that we're updating on our website this week.

To finish, as you balance the necessary changes and adaptations during this pandemic with caring for your students', and your own health and wellbeing, we, together with AoC, the awarding organisations, DfE and many other stakeholders across the whole sector, are working hard to safeguard sufficient validity in assessments but also keeping at heart the student perspective. Above all, we want students to have the reassurance and confidence that they have been treated fairly, and future employers to have confidence in the skills of their new employees.

Government takes historic step towards net-zero with end of sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030

- plans to accelerate a greener transport future through 2-step phase-out of petrol and diesel cars
- news comes as over £1.8 billion invested in infrastructure and grants to increase access to zero-emission vehicles and promote a green economic recovery
- new phase-out date central to UK economic growth and levelling-up agenda, as government commits nearly £500 million funding to support 169,000 jobs, help industry transition towards zero emission vehicles and maintain UK's leading position in global automotive market

The UK has taken another historic step on the road to ending its contribution to climate change while boosting jobs in the process, as the Prime Minister, Transport Secretary and Business Secretary announced the end of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars in the UK by 2030. This will put the UK on course to be the fastest G7 country to decarbonise cars and vans.

Following [consultation with stakeholders, industry and the wider public](#), a 2-phased approach to the process was announced today (Wednesday 18 November 2020).

Step 1 will see the phase-out date for the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans brought forward to 2030.

Step 2 will see all new cars and vans be fully zero emission at the tailpipe from 2035.

Between 2030 and 2035, new cars and vans can be sold if they have the capability to drive a significant distance with zero emissions (for example, plug-in hybrids or full hybrids), and this will be defined through consultation.

The move is underpinned by over £1.8 billion to support greater uptake of zero emission vehicles for greener car journeys. New measures announced today include [more chargepoints to build on our world-class infrastructure network, alongside innovation for new clean technologies](#). This investment will improve air quality in our towns and cities, and support economic growth right across the UK, putting us at the forefront of the zero-emission vehicle revolution with vehicles built right here in the UK.

Part of today's announcement is £1.3 billion to accelerate the roll-out of chargepoints for electric vehicles in homes, streets across the UK and on motorways across England, so people can more easily and conveniently charge their cars. Charging vehicles will become second nature and a part of everyday life, just like charging your mobile phone is today.

To meet future demand, the government is providing grants for homeowners, businesses and local authorities to install chargepoints, and is also supporting the deployment of rapid chargepoints. This had already supported the installation of over 140,000 residential chargepoints and 9,000 chargepoints for staff parking at businesses. Government has also already supported the development of a network of over 19,000 public chargepoints, including over 3,500 rapid devices, in partnership with local authorities and private sector investment, making it one of the largest networks in Europe.

Today, a driver is never more than 25 miles away from a rapid chargepoint anywhere along England's motorways and major A roads.

The government today has also pledged £582 million in grants for those buying zero or ultra-low emission vehicles to make them cheaper to buy and incentivise more people to make the transition.

Alongside the further funding, after laying legislation this week, [green number plates](#) are set to be introduced from December 2020 to increase awareness of cleaner vehicles on our roads and help local authorities bring in local incentives. For example, drivers could benefit from local initiatives such as cheaper parking and cost-free entry into zero-emission zones.

To ensure the phase-out dates are met and to support interim carbon budgets, the Department for Transport will publish a green paper in the coming months on the post-EU regulatory regime for CO₂ emissions from new road vehicles. This will consider both overall fleet efficiency and how to best deliver the transition to 100% zero emission sales for cars and vans. A consultation on the phase-out of new diesel heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) to put the UK in the vanguard of zero emission freight will also be launched.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The UK is going further and faster than any other major economy to decarbonise transport, harnessing the power of clean, green technology to end the UK's contribution to climate change by 2050.

Bringing forward the phase-out date could create 40,000 extra jobs by 2030, particularly in our manufacturing heartlands of the North East and across the Midlands, and will see emissions reductions equivalent to taking more than 4 million cars off the road.

We are also leading the charge when it comes to the transition to zero emission vehicles and today's timely boost in funding builds on our world-leading £2.5 billion package to encourage drivers to make the switch.

The government is also stepping up its commitment to help the sector transition towards zero emission vehicles by boosting the development of clean, green technologies for zero emission vehicles on UK soil – from battery packs to recycling infrastructure and super-lightweight components.

As part of this, the government is committing £500 million of funding over the next 4 years through the [Automotive Transformation Fund](#) to put the UK at the forefront of the design and manufacturing of the next generation of zero emission vehicles.

The investment will help build a rich, diverse and sustainable supply chain that will form a vital part of the future industry, ensure the enormous strength the UK has in innovation can progress, and help maintain our position in a globally competitive market. It will also support around 169,000 jobs in the industry, including in our strong manufacturing bases across the Midlands and the North East.

Business Secretary and COP26 President Alok Sharma said:

Today's £500 million pledge will help our automotive industry transition towards electric vehicle production, open up new opportunities to build zero-carbon vehicles right here in the UK, while strengthening regional supply chains with new Gigafactories – creating thousands of new highly skilled jobs.

I hope other nations will follow suit as the UK makes another ambitious commitment to protect our planet and reach our all-important target to end our contribution to climate change by 2050.

For the first time, ministers from the world's largest car markets will come together on 27 November 2020 to form a new Zero Emission Vehicle Transition Council. Hosted by the Business Secretary, this will help to accelerate the pace of the global transition – with further meetings council meetings to

take place in 2021, including at COP26.

As host of COP26, the UK is leading the way to double the pace of the global transition to a greener future, working with international partners, governments, industry, businesses and civil society to make the transition to zero emission vehicles easier, cheaper and faster for all.

For a greener maritime sector, the government is investing £20 million in a new clean maritime demonstration competition, which will support the UK design and development of clean maritime technology. This 1-year 'springboard programme' will lay the foundation for a network of real world projects to kick-start government investment in decarbonising the maritime sector ahead of COP26.

The government is also announcing the first stage of a new £15 million sustainable aviation fuel competition, which will support the early development of new industrial plants in the UK, and £3 million for a sustainable aviation fuel clearing house. £3 million will also be invested in research and development for the infrastructure needed to support the introduction of new electric and hydrogen planes.

There is also a further £1 million of funding being announced to extend e-bike hire schemes, which will allow those who are retired, studying, self-employed or looking for work to access the physical and health benefits of e-bikes.

[Food processing plant pay £50k for effluent leak](#)

Noble Foods Co leaked approximately 26,000 litres of untreated waste water from their plant of which an unknown quantity entered the stream in January 2020. The plant slaughters and processes chickens, on Corringham Road in Gainsborough.

The discharge occurred as a result of a series of faults within the company's treatment plant.

As the effluent leaked from the plant, workers on site blocked a drain in an attempt to contain the spill. But the untreated waste water flooded the area which eventually reached a surface water drain and entered the stream.

Despite their efforts to minimise the damage, staff didn't follow emergency procedures correctly meaning their efforts were unsuccessful.

While it's unknown how much untreated waste water entered the stream, samples taken by Environment Agency officers found a toxic level of ammonia in the

water. The levels were more than 80 times the natural level.

After an investigation, the Environment Agency deemed the matter could be appropriately handled by way of an enforcement undertaking. As part of the enforcement undertaking the company paid £50,000 to the Lincolnshire Rivers Trust to fund environmental improvements around Lincoln.

Michael Waugh, Regulatory Officer at the Environment Agency, said:

We always aim to get the best result for people and nature. Enforcement undertakings mean those responsible for pollution have the chance to take responsibility for their actions and put things right in a way that directly benefits the environment.

In this case, the extra cash will go to making real improvements to local watercourses including the Brayford Pool, which will be a boon for wildlife and visitors.

Nicola Craven, Project Manager at Lincolnshire Rivers Trust said:

The funds received from this enforcement undertaking will provide valuable financial support to enable river improvement projects in and around Lincoln.

Our planned work around the Brayford Pool and Fosdyke will help improve a range of habitats adding value for both people and wildlife.

Noble Foods has also spent £40,000 on measures to clean up the stream and prevent a repeat pollution, including installing alarms and equipment to stop waste water entering the stream.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- On 28 January, Noble Food Co committed a single offence contrary to Regulation 38(2) of the Environmental Protection Regulations (EPR) 2016 by discharging effluent into an unnamed watercourse contrary to their environmental permit.
- The Environment Agency is increasingly using enforcement undertakings for suitable cases to restore or enhance the environment, improve practices of the offending business and ensure future compliance with environmental requirements. We will continue to pursue prosecution for the most serious cases.
- The Environment Agency is required to publish details of EUs we have accepted, which we do on a regular basis on our website

- The latest list of enforcement undertakings can be found here:
[<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-environment-agencys-use-of-civil-sanctions/enforcement-undertakings-accepted-by-the-environment-agency-2>]
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-environment-agencys-use-of-civil-sanctions/enforcement-undertakings-accepted-by-the-environment-agency-2>)
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Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention – 18th Meeting of State Parties: UK statement

Mr President,

As this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor, let me begin by thanking you for your astute leadership this year in exceptionally difficult circumstances.

For nearly two decades, the United Kingdom has provided regular updates to the Convention on our progress to clear the Falkland Islands, the only part of UK territory contaminated with mines. I am proud to announce today that clearance operations concluded on Saturday 14 November. The UK and its overseas territories are now free of anti-personnel mines.

The UK has thus fulfilled its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention. In line with Action 25 of the Oslo Action Plan, we will shortly submit a voluntary declaration of completion.

While the Convention entered into force for the UK in 1999, clearance operations in the Falkland Islands could not begin until we had determined the scale and complexities of the task ahead. This commenced with a six-year Joint Feasibility study with Argentina, completed in 2007. This comprehensive study allowed us to fully appreciate the environmental, technical, and logistical constraints we would be up against. This included considering the most effective methods to access mines in challenging locations such as in very remote areas, buried under 10-metre high sand dunes or in swampy peat.

Clearance operations began in 2008 by testing the approach to search for and then remove mines in three areas. The lessons learned from this first operation gave us the confidence to expand the Programme, eventually culminating in the clearance of 122 minefields. Over the course of the Programme, our skilled team built invaluable experience working in unpredictable weather and tackling difficult terrain, developing creative solutions to manage the technical and physical challenges they faced. Indeed, the clearance management processes implemented on the Falklands have informed the universal International Mine Action Standards.

11 years later, we have now released over 23 million square metres of land back to the Falkland Islands community. We are deeply grateful to our diligent international team who have worked tirelessly since the inception of the Programme to ensure the Falkland Islands are now safe.

We are pleased that our Falklands Demining programme team will be joining us virtually on Friday at our side event to discuss the methodologies, best practices and lessons learned on this Programme. We hope the knowledge and insight we have gained will contribute to our shared ambition for a mine-free world by 2025.

Thank you, Mr President.

Green Homes Grant extended for extra year

- Prime Minister announces the Green Homes Grant will continue until the end of March 2022
- extension to the £2 billion scheme will help more households and tradespeople benefit, as Britain builds back greener from coronavirus
- energy efficiency scheme will create new work for accredited tradespeople in green construction, supporting 100,000 jobs across the UK

Homeowners across England will have until the end of March 2022 to have energy efficiency upgrades to their homes completed through the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme, helping up to 600,000 households save up to £600 on their energy bills.

The scheme funds up to 2 thirds of the cost of green home improvements up to £5,000, or 100% of the cost for homeowners on low incomes, up to £10,000. Measures covered include insulation of walls, floors and roofs, double or triple glazing when replacing single glazing, and low-carbon heating like heat pumps.

The Prime Minister announced the extension of both the Green Homes Grant and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme in his [10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution](#), designed to help the country build back greener and help reach the UK's key target for net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

£1 billion will be available next year into making new and existing homes and public buildings more efficient, including through the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

Minister for Climate Change Lord Callanan said:

The Green Homes Grant scheme gives homeowners and landlords right across the country a cheaper way to make their homes more energy efficient and cut their bills – all while making their contribution to tackling climate change.

Today's announcement means an extra year to take advantage of this new scheme, helping households and tradespeople who can plan their workload and create new jobs in their communities. I would urge anyone to visit the Green Homes Grants website and see how they could benefit.

As part of his ambitious green recovery plan, Prime Minister Boris Johnson today announced funding for the drive to make homes, and public buildings like schools and hospitals more energy efficient, would continue until the end of the next financial year.

People have been able to apply for vouchers through the Green Homes Grant Scheme since September this year. Although restrictions are in place to help tackle the spread of coronavirus, government guidance is clear that homeowners can still have work done as long as installers follow the COVID-secure guidance.

Chief Executive of the Federation of Master Builders, Brian Berry, said:

The extension of the Green Homes Grant for another year is very positive news, and shows that builders' concerns have been listened to. This will give the reassurance needed to the building industry to invest in the scheme. Our existing homes contribute 20% of all our carbon emissions and consume 35% of our energy.

Chief Executive of TrustMark, Simon Ayers, said:

Consumer confidence is not only essential to the recovery of the UK's economy, but also to the protection and creation of key jobs that will support the long-term delivery of quality green home improvements.

We urge any tradespeople who want to be a part of the Green Homes Grant scheme to apply for TrustMark registration and Microgeneration Certification Scheme or Publicly Accessible Standards certification as soon as possible.

1. Find out more about the [Green Homes Grant](#).
2. The PM's extension for the Green Homes Grant is until the end of March 2022 for the £1.5 billion voucher element, and until the end of December 2021 for the £500 million Local Authority Delivery element.

3. Green Homes Grant vouchers will remain valid for 3 months from the date they are issued or until 31 March 2022, whichever is earlier, and need to be redeemed before the end date on each one. Homeowners can request an extension for circumstances outside of their control.

4. Through the Green Homes Grant Voucher scheme, which opened in September 2020, homeowners (both freehold and leasehold owner occupiers), and landlords can apply for vouchers of up to £5,000 towards the cost of installing energy efficient and low-carbon heating improvements in their homes. Some homeowners on income-based or disability benefits may be eligible for vouchers covering the full cost of improvement, up to a value of £10,000.

5. There are 2 elements to the scheme, a voucher scheme available to all homeowners and domestic landlords and a Local Authority Delivery scheme, through which funding will be allocated to local authorities to support low-income, fuel poor households. The first phase of the [Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme](#) launched on 4 August 2020, with the bidding window for local authorities to submit funding proposals.

6. Vouchers will help more than 600,000 households across England to save up to £600 a year on energy bills. Together the 2 elements of the scheme are supporting 100,000 jobs in green construction and helping the UK to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

7. Tradespeople need to be TrustMark registered and have Microgeneration Certification Scheme or Publicly Accessible Standards certification to carry out these home improvements as part of the scheme. This will assure homeowners that tradespeople have been thoroughly vetted and meet the required standards of good customer service, technical competence and good trading practices.

8. The PM also announced that the Energy Company Obligation will be extended from 2022 to 2026 and underlined the government's commitment to upgrading the worst off-grid homes occupied by low income and vulnerable households through the introduction of the Home Upgrade Grant.