

# Chancellor announces Richard Hughes as preferred Chair of the Office for Budget Responsibility

The statutory term of the current Chair of the OBR, Robert Chote, comes to an end later this year. Mr Chote was the first permanent Chair of the OBR and has served two terms since his initial appointment in 2010.

Richard Hughes is currently a Research Associate at the Resolution Foundation and Advisor to the IMF, and brings twenty years' experience to the role, having worked on economic and fiscal issues both outside and inside of government.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

At an unprecedented time when the state has had to take unprecedented action, it is essential that our institutions work as they should to ensure that we retain our complete commitment to strong public finances and responsible management of tax-payers' money.

That makes the independence and role of the Office for Budget Responsibility all the more important. So I am delighted to nominate Richard Hughes to be the next Chair of the OBR. We're doing so months ahead of the handover to give the institution the certainty it needs to continue to play its vital role in supporting the credibility of the UK's fiscal framework.

I would like to thank Robert Chote for the excellent work he and his team have done over the past ten years.

Richard Hughes said:

I am honoured to be nominated to be the next Chair of the OBR. It is both a great privilege and a tremendous responsibility to be proposed for this position during one of the most challenging times for the UK economy and public finances in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

I would like to thank the current Chair Robert Chote, Charlie Bean, Andy King and the staff of the OBR for all the work they have done over the last decade to establish it as one of the preeminent independent fiscal agencies in the world. Like them, I am committed to upholding the OBR's well-deserved reputation for objective, transparent, and rigorous analysis of economic and fiscal developments.

The OBR has executive responsibility for producing the official UK economic and fiscal forecasts, assessing the Government's performance against its fiscal rules and reporting on the sustainability of and risks to the public finances. As an independent institution, the OBR is committed to providing objective, transparent and impartial analysis.

The Treasury Select Committee (TSC) approve all appointments to the Budget Responsibility Committee, including the chairman. Following the Chancellor's announcement today, Richard will appear before the TSC for a pre-appointment hearing in due course.

As with all Treasury appointments, the recruitment process for the next OBR Chair was designed to ensure that the most qualified candidate was appointed from the broadest possible pool of applicants.

### **Further information**

- Robert Chote was the first permanent Chair of the OBR and was first appointed in 2010, when the OBR was first established.
- He has served two 5-year terms after he was reappointed in 2015 – appointments to the Budget Responsibility Committee cannot serve more than two terms.
- Richard Hughes was a Division Chief in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) Fiscal Affairs Department where he led their work on fiscal transparency, governance, and risk management in the wake of the global financial crisis. More recently, as Research Associate at the Resolution Foundation he published papers on fiscal rules, public investment, and the economic and fiscal implications of coronavirus. Over the last year, he has also served as Senior Counsellor to France's independent High Council on Public Finance (Haut Conseil des Finances Publiques) and Lecturer at Sciences Po university in Paris. Richard also has an in-depth understanding of the economic forecasting and fiscal policymaking process in the UK having served as Director of the Fiscal Group and Acting Chief Economist in HM Treasury where he led the department's efforts to improve the disclosure, analysis, and management of fiscal risks and the public sector balance sheet.

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## **[India joins UK's global vaccine mission](#)**

The UK today (4 June) organised the Global Vaccine Summit 2020, helping secure US\$7.4 billion (approximately £6 billion) in funding to support global vaccine supply and immunisation. The virtual event saw representatives of more than 50 countries – business leaders, UN agencies, civil society, government ministers, Heads of State and country leaders, including Prime Minister Modi – pledge their support to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, in its

commitment to help save up to 8 million lives over the next five years.

Gavi's routine immunisation efforts, including during the course of the coronavirus pandemic, help stop the spread of infectious diseases and the resurgence of other epidemics. If a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine is developed, it will also have a role in its delivery around the world. Global access will ensure a collective international recovery.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I hope this summit will be the moment when the world comes together to unite humanity in the fight against disease. I urge you to join us to fortify this lifesaving alliance and inaugurate a new era of global health co-operation, which I believe is now the most essential shared endeavour of our lifetimes.

Jan Thompson, Acting High Commissioner to India, said:

I was pleased to see such a strong endorsement from Prime Minister Modi at today's Summit, and to hear his message about the importance of global solidarity. As he said, India's capacity to produce vaccines at low cost and research expertise will play a very important role.

The UK is Gavi's leading donor and already playing a major role in the international response to Coronavirus. I'm delighted to see the continuing and excellent UK-India collaboration as a force for good against Covid-19 – from vaccine development to keeping essential medical supply routes open.

### **Further information**

[Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance](#) has immunised over 760 million children in the world's poorest countries, saving more than 13 million lives. It holds a Pledging Conference every five years to raise funds for its next strategic period; today's summit secured funding for 2021-2025.

At today's Summit, India committed US\$15 million to Gavi over the next 5 years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video address is available [here](#). According to Gavi, India is the only country that has moved from being a recipient to a donor. The country is also now its largest manufacturer, accounting for more than 60% of Gavi vaccines.

The UK has supported Gavi since its inception in 2000 and is its largest donor, with a pledge of £1.65 billion for the next five years. The Global Vaccine Summit 2020 builds on the UK's recent role as co-lead for the Global Coronavirus Response Initiative on 4 May, which successfully raised 7.4 billion euros (approximately £6.64 billion) toward vaccines, tests and treatment to tackle coronavirus. As part of global effort to find a

coronavirus vaccine, the UK is also the single largest donor country to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations' urgent appeal.

UK – India collaboration around a possible coronavirus vaccine includes:

- A consortium comprising Serum Institute, Gates Foundation, MIT, and Spy Biotech (a UK based biotech company) is trying to develop a vaccine using the new spy-tag vaccine development technology.
- Oxford Nanopore is working with some of India's most renowned scientific institutions to focus on rapid analysis of coronavirus samples.
- A long-term Merck and Wellcome Trust venture on vaccine research, policy and manufacturing will be based in Delhi.

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## [UK launches support package to protect tropical rainforests in Colombia](#)

- World Environment Day sees COP26 President and Business Secretary Alok Sharma pledge support to help protect Amazon and tropical rainforests and its precious biodiversity
- UK funding and expertise will help to reduce and control deforestation, build institutions and create sustainable rural economies in regions where millions of livelihoods rely on the forest
- Colombia has been a regional champion of rainforest conservation in the wake of devastating fires and deforestation of the Amazon due to conflict and the coronavirus pandemic
- Colombia has been a long-standing partner on climate action, and 2020 marks one year of the UK-Colombia Sustainable Growth Partnership

COP26 President and Business Secretary Alok Sharma is marking World Environment Day with a £64m package of funding and support for tropical rainforests in Colombia, bolstering the nation's efforts to protect the Amazon and tropical forests in Colombia, and its fragile ecosystem from deforestation.

Part of the UK's commitment to fighting global climate change, the package will strengthen Colombia's land rights and criminal justice system, controlling deforestation while building a fairer, greener and more resilient rural economy in the region.

The Amazon and tropical rainforests are a powerful symbol of the fight against climate change, and accounts for 25% of all carbon emissions absorbed by the world's forests. Colombia is the second most biodiverse country in the world and has been a leading voice in South America on environmental issues, but has recently seen a spike in deforestation and forest fires in the wake of conflict and the impact of coronavirus.

COP26 President Alok Sharma, said:

We all have a duty to work together to protect our planet's precious biodiversity.

Our work with the Colombian government will help stop deforestation in the Amazon and across the country, protect precious ecosystems, and support sustainable, rural livelihoods for communities that depend on the forest.

Speaking on behalf of the Colombian government, Minister for the Environment, Ricardo Lozano said:

These cooperation resources correspond to the biggest bilateral grant that we have received so far for environmental purposes during this administration. They are the result of the bilateral Partnership for Sustainable Growth that we jointly signed in London in June of 2019, and that will focus on supporting the fight against deforestation and environmental crime, as well as the creation of sustainable economic livelihoods.

Moreover, they are a result of the excellent relationship that we hold with the United Kingdom, to whom we appreciate their invaluable support".

The latest funding builds on £173 million of UK support to Colombia and comes as part of the UK's International Climate Finance (UK ICF) programme and will provide £64 million in grant finance to tackle deforestation in conflict-affected, deforestation hotspots of rural Colombia. The programme will deliver the cadastre work through the World Bank, environmental crime measures through the UN Office of Drugs and Crime, as well as additional local partners working with communities to establish sustainable farming and forestry approaches and businesses.

The UK Government has committed to spending 20% of UK ICF on forest and land use interventions and our goal of reduced net carbon emissions. UK ICF is the government's commitment to provide at least £5.8 billion between 2016-2020 to

tackle global climate change.

Colombian President Iván Duque Márquez has been a regional leader and climate champion and has strengthened his leading role in the wake of the disastrous 2019 Amazon fires.

Today's announcement has been welcomed by leading environmental groups, including the World Wildlife Fund.

Manuel Pulgar, the WWF's Climate and Energy Leader and Friend of COP26, said:

As we struggle with the challenges of this pandemic, it has never been more evident that our very health and survival depend on the health of our planet. This is a critical moment for all of the world to take decisive action on climate and the loss of biodiversity.

This leadership from the governments of the UK and Colombia to drive greater ambition and lead by example to develop nature-based solutions that create opportunities for economic recovery post COVID, built on systemic changes for sustainability, inclusivity and equity.

The announcement follows the UK government's confirmation that the UN climate change talks will be held in Glasgow in November 2021.

## Notes to editors

- Read details about the [International Climate Fund](#).
- Colombia has consistently shown ambitious and committed leadership on deforestation.
- UK commitments have contributed to reducing international deforestation and protecting standing forest in a variety of ways. For example:
  1. through the REDD+ Early Movers Programme, we have supported over 5000 indigenous families to benefit from protected forest, with half our programmes run by indigenous women
  2. our silvo-pastoral systems work has planted over 2.6 million trees across 34,000 hectares of pasture, mitigating 1.1 million tonnes of CO2 and working with around 5,000 farmers in all five regions of Colombia

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## [£7 million for new coalition of vulnerable children's charities](#)

A 'coalition of charities' will help vulnerable children most impacted by the

coronavirus pandemic as part of a Department for Education programme.

More than £7 million will fund the launch of the [See, Hear, Respond](#) service, to provide targeted help to vulnerable children, young people and their families affected by the virus and the measures put in place to stop its spread. The coalition, led by Barnardo's, will work alongside local authorities, schools and colleges, police forces, healthcare professionals and other vital services involved in protecting these children.

Funded by the Department for Education, the partnership will harness the role and reach of the charity sector. Barnardo's will work in partnership with other national children's charities as well as community-based organisations to provide solutions to the challenges facing children and families that may have been exacerbated by the unique circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic.

The launch of the programme comes as the Department for Education and Home Office prepare to open a new joint £7.6 million fund for national vulnerable children's charities working in England and Wales on issues including child sexual abuse and child criminal exploitation. The money is aimed at those charities that have suffered financial harm as a result of the virus, helping them to stabilise and continue delivering for vulnerable children and young people.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

We all have a collective responsibility to protect children and young people who face challenges in their home lives, or who may not have the same support network keeping them safe outside of school or college as their peers. Many of them may be at additional risk from abuse, neglect or exploitation during these unprecedented times.

By working with charities directly supporting these young people on the front line, we can expand their reach to provide a much wider safety net to those in need of mental health support, counselling or protection from people trying to exploit them, as well as helping to get them safely back into education.

Safeguarding Minister Victoria Atkins said:

As a government, we have acted decisively and adapted our response to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable children during this pandemic. I'm delighted we can provide further funding to frontline charities so those most at risk can get the help they need.

See, Hear, Respond will provide support online to children and families who are struggling, street-based youth work to identify and support children at risk of harm outside of the home, including exploitation, and help vulnerable children to successfully

reintegrate back into school or college if they have not been attending during the pandemic.

The programme will focus on finding and reaching out to children around the country who are experiencing negative impacts on their health and wellbeing, as well as those at risk of harm.

This funding will provide:

- Access to an online support package to children and families ensuring they have readily available, accessible and interactive information;
- Online and telephone referral service by trained professionals who can source further help and support from charity workers within the partnership;
- Online counselling or therapy for those experiencing high levels of anxiety, trauma or other mental health issues that can be safely addressed through digital means;
- Youth interventions and face-to-face crisis support, particularly for those at risk of or experiencing various forms of exploitation, including criminal exploitation;

Barnardo's Chief Executive Javed Khan said:

The coronavirus pandemic has meant that vulnerable children and young people are increasingly hidden from support services. With the support of the Department for Education, Barnardo's will bring together a coalition of national and local charities working together to identify and support those who need support at this time of crisis.

This initiative is a vital lifeline for the thousands of children and young people as we navigate the coronavirus crisis and its aftermath, helping to improve their long-term outcomes so they can have successful futures.

The announcement builds on the Government's Hidden Harms Summit, held virtually on Thursday 21 May, which focused on support for people at risk from domestic abuse, wider harms and exploitation, including children.

Children may be facing additional risks during the pandemic, including being less visible to safeguarding professionals and isolated from normal support structures. At the same time, reports of domestic abuse have been rising, with the charity Refuge reporting increased visits to its website and calls to its helpline.

Harun Khan, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, said:

The pandemic has clearly exposed deep inequalities in our society, with many groups disproportionately impacted and needing extra

support. Children in particular are at risk of being left behind and their needs not met. We're pleased to be supporting Barnardo's and the Department for Education to ensure every child that is at risk and needs additional support receives this, particularly those in marginalised groups which may fall through the net. It is imperative we all work together to make sure no child is left behind.

The project will aim to reach those children and families who are not in contact with children's services, and the support provided to them will aim to prevent their needs escalating. The project will prioritise those most at risk of harm either inside or outside the home, including very young children and adolescents.

The Department for Education has also provided funding to other charities working with vulnerable children, including Grandparents Plus, Family Rights Group, FosterTalk, the Care Leavers Association, Become, Drive Forward Foundation and Adoption UK. This adds to investment in the NSPCC's Childline, while some £10 million has already been committed to the Family Fund, helping families with children that have complex needs and disabilities through grants for equipment that makes their lives easier while implementing social distancing measures, including computers, specialist equipment and educational toys.

Steven Stockley, Managing Director of FosterTalk said:

The last three months has seen unprecedented times for all our families, and none more so than our foster families. Foster parents are incredibly adaptable but COVID-19 has seen additional stresses, anxieties and pressures impact on their family lives. This funding provides an important opportunity to improve both the retention and recruitment of foster parents by extending the Fosterline service to provide additional and specific crisis support.

Cathy Ashley, Chief Executive of Family Rights Group said:

The crisis monies are extremely welcome, funding us to provide specialist legal advice to an additional 900 parents and kinship carers whose children are in need, deemed at risk or are in the care system. And significantly, enabling us to work in partnership with the charity Become so we together can provide legal and child welfare advice and follow up support to young, care experienced parents in order to enable, wherever possible, their children to be able to live safely within their care.

Lucy Peake, Chief Executive of Grandparents Plus said:

We're delighted to receive a grant to support kinship carers who have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. They are older, poorer and in worse health than other groups raising children, so they are especially vulnerable. We will be extending our services to offer tailored advice and information, intensive one-to-one and peer support, and digital skills support so carers can get online. As the lockdown has progressed, new issues are emerging for kinship families. We're delighted to be able to offer more of them the holistic and responsive support they need at this time.

The project will aim to reach those children and families who are not in contact with children's services, and the support provided to them will aim to prevent their needs escalating. The project will prioritise those most at risk of harm either inside or outside the home, including very young children and adolescents.

All funding is provided as part of the £750 million package of support committed to charities by the Chancellor. The application process for the £7.6 million Department for Education and Home Office fund for national vulnerable children's charities will open shortly.

Additional funding of £125,000 will be delivered to Fosterline to deliver free-to-access and specialist one-to-one support to foster families, in recognition of the additional support needed at this time to keep foster families together.

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## [Face coverings to become mandatory on public transport](#)

- government asks transport operators in England to make wearing face coverings a requirement of using public transport from 15 June to coincide with the next stage of carefully easing restrictions
- bus, coach, train, tram, ferry and aircraft passengers must wear a face covering on their journey to help reduce the risk of transmission when social distancing is not always possible – with government also working with operators to ensure staff are provided with face coverings where appropriate
- guidance remains to work from home if you can and avoid public transport where possible

The government will work with operators to make it mandatory for passengers to wear face coverings when using public transport in England, the Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced today (4 June 2020).

Wherever possible people should continue to avoid public transport and walk, cycle or drive, but for some people this may not be an option. Transport usage has been slowly increasing, including on the tube which has seen around a 20% rise this week compared to last week.

When necessary to use public transport people may be more likely to be in enclosed spaces for longer periods of time where we know there is a greater risk of the spread of the virus and social distancing is likely to be difficult to follow consistently. This differs from enclosed spaces like shops, for example, where people can more easily go outside if social distancing is not possible and where shop owners can place limits on the number of customers allowed inside at any one time. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has set out that using face coverings in this setting can provide some small additional protection to fellow passengers and can help people to avoid unknowingly spreading the virus if they are suffering from coronavirus, but not showing symptoms.

Speaking at the Downing Street coronavirus briefing, Grant Shapps confirmed the government is asking operators to introduce face coverings as a requirement for travel from 15 June. The government will also work closely with the transport industry to help them implement the plans.

The changes will be made under legislation such as the National Rail Conditions of Travel and Public Service Vehicle Regulations for buses. While the government expects the vast majority of people to comply with the changes, operators will be able to refuse travel or issue penalty fines for those who fail to wear a face covering, in a similar way to the rules on having a ticket for travel. British Transport Police will also support the implementation of these changes.

Social distancing and hand washing remain by far the most important disease prevention measures but it is also vital all passengers travelling on buses, coaches, trains, trams, ferries and aircraft should wear a face covering and the government will also work with operators to ensure staff are provided with, and wear face coverings, where appropriate for their role.

People should wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before putting their face covering on and after taking it off and it is important that people don't touch their face covering when wearing it, where possible, to avoid hand to mask transmission of the virus.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

People should continue to avoid public transport wherever possible. But, as restrictions are carefully eased when it is safe to do so, it's likely that we will see more people needing to use public transport.

So, while respecting social distancing and maintaining good hand hygiene remain the most important steps we can all take to stay safe, wearing a face covering can play a role in helping us to

protect each other.

This is about the small changes we can take to help control the virus, which is why I urge everyone using transport to wear a face covering, to help keep us all safer.

Face coverings are not the same as face masks. It is important that people do not use medical grade PPE masks to ensure these remain available for frontline staff. Last month, the government set out advice for people on how to make their own face coverings easily at home, using scarves or other textile items. These face coverings should cover the mouth and nose while allowing the wearer to breathe comfortably and can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head to give a snug fit.

Paul Plummer, Chief Executive of the Rail Delivery Group, said:

Wearing face coverings on trains will help to ensure that those who need to travel by rail can do so with confidence. Greater use of face coverings will boost the other measures we are putting in place to keep people safe, like more thorough cleaning, improved information on potential crowding and one-way systems at busier stations.

To ease pressure on public transport, the government has announced measures to encourage people to choose other forms of transport, including [£2 billion for cycling](#), and the acceleration of e-scooter trials across the country. To capitalise on the increase in cycling uptake in recent months, the government is also working hard on measures to get more people commuting by bike with initiatives such as the Cycle to Work scheme to help with the cost of bikes, including e-bikes.