

# UK Government and Welsh Government ministers host virtual Q&A with Welsh business leaders

UK Government Minister for Wales David TC Davies, Minister for Business and Industry Nadhim Zahawi, and Welsh Government Deputy Minister for the Economy and Transport Lee Waters, have jointly hosted a virtual roundtable with business representatives from across Wales to discuss the ongoing challenges of COVID-19.

The ministers underlined both governments' commitment to do whatever it takes to support business through the unprecedented and ongoing challenge of the coronavirus pandemic and to continue to work together on a collective response.

During the Q&A, which was attended by leading figures from large multi-national corporations, leading law firms and some of Wales' many small-micro sized business, Minister Davies said he recognised the concerns of business leaders and their employees and highlighted the support packages the UK Government has made available, including £330 billion in UK Government-backed loans and the Job Retention Scheme which launched this week.

Minister Davies and Minister Zahawi outlined the continued commitment to working with the Welsh Government to tackle the coronavirus in Wales, noting that more than £2 billion in funding has now been provided to the Welsh Government by the UK Government to deal with this emergency.

Welsh Government Deputy Minister for the Economy Lee Waters also highlighted the support the devolved administration has provided including business rate relief and small business grants.

Representatives from businesses across a number of sectors including steel, higher education and construction provided important feedback on how the pandemic is affecting their businesses and employees. Discussions were also held around how both governments and businesses will work together to recover from the pandemic and to secure the future strength of the Welsh economy.

## **UK Government Minister for Wales David TC Davies said:**

We are extremely grateful for the honest feedback provided by businesses across Wales. It allows us to develop support packages that make a real difference to companies and their employees, protecting jobs and the economy.

I will continue to work closely and collaboratively with the Welsh Government to support Welsh businesses, doing whatever it takes to get us through these unprecedented and difficult times.

**UK Government Minister for Business and Industry, Nadim Zahawi said:**

It is vital for us to hear first-hand from businesses facing the pressures of the coronavirus crisis, and we are working closely with the Welsh Government to provide the critical support Welsh businesses need.

The UK Government is dedicated to safeguarding jobs and paving the way for economic recovery in Wales, and across the rest of the UK, as we face down this global pandemic.

**ENDS**

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## **Perth COVID-19 regional testing centre to open for key workers**

A drive-through coronavirus testing facility is to open at the Perth College UHI as part of the UK Government's UK-wide drive to increase testing for thousands more NHS and other key workers.

The site sits alongside a rapidly expanding network of testing sites being set up around the UK, and is operating on an appointment-only basis for NHS staff and other key workers. The facility, which is expected to open this week, will be piloted for its first few days of operation.

This follows the launch of the UK Government's partnership with universities, research institutes and companies to begin rollout of the network of new Lighthouse labs, including one in Glasgow, and testing sites across the UK, with 36 regional testing sites opened to date.

This network will provide thousands more PCR swab tests – which are used to identify if you currently have the virus – for critical key workers, starting with NHS front line staff. This means those who test negative for coronavirus can return to work as soon as possible, and those who test positive are able to recover.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

“The UK Government is rapidly scaling up the national effort to boost testing capacity for coronavirus to protect the vulnerable, support our NHS, and ultimately save lives.

“This new service will help end the uncertainty of whether NHS and social

care staff and other key workers need to stay at home, meaning those who test negative will be able to return to work.

“This is a national effort and we are proud to be working with a number of partners to turn this ambition into a reality and roll out additional capacity to where it is needed.”

Professor John Newton, National Coordinator for the UK Coronavirus Testing Strategy, said:

“New testing sites such as this one are a key pillar of our 5-pillar plan to scale up testing, and are critical in supporting NHS staff and other frontline workers who are isolating at home to return safely to work if the test is negative.”

“This is a brilliant example of industries and businesses turning their resources to creating and rolling out mass testing at scale, which will help to deliver on our aim of carrying out 100,000 tests a day across the UK by the end of the month.”

The testing centre will be operated in partnership with Mitie and offer self-administered tests. Those tested will receive their results within a few days.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Douglas Ross said:

“This new UK Government-funded testing centre in Perth will help key workers in the area continue their vital work, helping to look after those who need it most. The UK Government is expanding our COVID-19 testing capacity right across the UK. This new centre means that five drive-through centres will be operating in Scotland. We will continue to work for everyone in the UK to save lives and protect our NHS.”

Perth College UHI Principal Margaret Cook said:

“We are pleased to host this COVID-19 test centre at our Crieff Road campus. Many of our students and staff are undertaking key worker roles at this time and it’s great to see an increase in testing being implemented to support this group continue their excellent work to fight this pandemic.”

Simon Venn, Chief Government & Strategy Officer, Mitie, 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 Government with this vital task. A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline heroes in Perth who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.”

The UK Government has also set up a home-testing service for critical key workers, supported by Amazon’s logistics network and other commercial partners.

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## [Extra month to claim for farm payments](#)

The Government has confirmed the window to submit applications for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and make a claim for Countryside Stewardship (CS), Environmental Stewardship (ES) and woodland legacy revenue payments will be extended by one month.

In light of the disruption caused by the coronavirus outbreak, farmers and land managers will now have until 15 June to submit their applications without penalty. This will give farmers and their agents an extra month to submit applications and claims, helping them to avoid penalties for late applications.

Farmers and land managers are still encouraged to submit claims and applications, in particular online for BPS and CS through the Rural Payments Service, as soon as they are able to, with a large number already received by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA).

The RPA will continue to monitor the situation carefully and consider if further measures are needed to support farmers. Applications for new CS [Higher Tier](#) and [Mid Tier](#) agreements are still being accepted ahead of their respective deadlines of 1 May and 31 July 2020.

RPA Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

We're fully focused on making vital payments to the rural community and helping customers submit their claims and applications during this difficult time.

We know the coronavirus is causing issues where farmers are unable to meet their agents, so we are making this extension to allow more time for the farming community to submit their applications and claims without penalty.

I would urge farmers and their agents to complete their applications and claims as soon as they are able to, using the Rural Payments Service in the first instance.

In addition the period for amending your claim without penalty has also been extended to 30 June 2020 with final submission of applications and claims now to be with the RPA by 10 July 2020.

All applicants can quickly update their personal and business information and apply or claim through the [Rural Payments Service](#), where farmers and their agents can also view and transfer their entitlements and land parcels.

Natural England and Forestry Commission staff are continuing to provide

advice by phone or video call for land managers developing Higher Tier applications in time for the 1 May application deadline, so that schemes can be progressed in the absence of a site visit.

Natural England will also be supporting Mid Tier applicants through an off-farm advice programme whereby applicants can [contact an adviser](#) and book a clinic session. Applicants will receive advice on the options most appropriate to their holding and top tips on ensuring applications are correct.

## **Vigilance against fraud**

In these challenging times, people need to remain vigilant against fraudsters will try to take advantage.

We will not call you or send you emails or texts asking you to confirm your personal details or payment information.

- Never discuss your bank account details with someone you do not know
- We will not ask you to make a payment over the phone
- Delete any emails or texts you do not believe are genuine
- Do not open any links unless from our main email addresses:
  - [ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk)
  - [rpa@notifications.service.gov.uk](mailto:rpa@notifications.service.gov.uk)
  - [ruralpayments@rpa.emails.com](mailto:ruralpayments@rpa.emails.com)
  - [rdpenetwork@defra.gov.uk](mailto:rdpenetwork@defra.gov.uk)
- Be cautious about what information you share externally, particularly on social media

If you suspect an attempted fraud or feel you have been the subject of fraud, you can contact RPA's Fraud Referral Team on 0800 347 347 or [FraudInConfidence@rpa.gov.uk](mailto:FraudInConfidence@rpa.gov.uk)

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## **[Letter from the Paymaster General to the European Commission and the European External Action Service: 27 April 2020](#)**

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

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## [Recruitment for Independent Reviewer of Prevent launched](#)

News story

The government has launched an open competition to appoint the next Independent Reviewer of Prevent.



The government has launched the recruitment process for the Independent Reviewer of the Prevent programme.

The Independent Review of Prevent will look at the effectiveness of the government's strategy to protect vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism. It will also make recommendations for the future.

Security Minister James Brokenshire said:

Prevent gives vulnerable people the support they need to protect them from terrorist recruiters.

We are always looking at how we can make the programme more effective, which is why we are committed to this Independent Review.

I look forward to the appointment of the Reviewer so they can get on with their vital work.

The appointment of the next reviewer will be through a full and open competition. This will involve an advisory assessment panel, with an independent chair, that will review the applications and interview shortlisted candidates.

Applications for this post will be open until 11pm on 22 June.

You can find out how to apply on the [HM government public appointments website](#).

The government has adapted the recruitment process around the UK's coronavirus restrictions while ensuring a fair and open competition. This includes planning for remote interviews.

Find out more about the [Independent Review of Prevent](#).

Note: This article was updated on 2 June 2020 to reflect the fact that the application period has been extended. This is in recognition of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and to ensure that as broad a range of candidates as possible have the opportunity to apply

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1. 2 June 2020

Updated to explain that the application deadline has been extended to 11pm on 22 June.

2. 27 April 2020

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