

# What is the UK Government Ventilator Challenge?

On 16 March 2020, the Prime Minister asked companies to help manufacture, design and build thousands of NHS ventilators in the fight against COVID-19.

The Prime Minister's vision aimed to ensure that patients with impaired lung function had access to vital breathing equipment. He appealed to businesses across the UK to design, build and manufacture new, safe, easy-to-use ventilators at scale to increase capacity across the NHS.

## **The response**

The response surpassed expectations, with the government receiving more than 5000 offers of support.

The challenge has been operating on a number of fronts, including the manufacture of existing ventilators, teaming up larger manufacturers with smaller bespoke ventilator makers to scale up production, as well as asking renowned engineers to design new ventilators.

Additionally, on 13 March the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) published a [specification](#), with subsequent revisions, on the minimum clinical standards acceptable for ventilator use in UK hospitals during the COVID-19 outbreak.

It is important that clinicians and engineers continue to work closely with one another as we begin to understand more about the nature of this virus.

All offers of support specifically relating to ventilators have been reviewed against the MHRA specification. A shortlist of organisations have taken designs to a Technical Design Authority, comprised of clinicians, regulators and engineers, where experts have reviewed the devices.

## **Next steps**

Government is now working with a number of organisations and consortia on the accelerated production and distribution of different types of ventilators. Manufacturing of prototypes, both new designs and modified existing designs, is commencing. Once this is completed extensive testing to demonstrate they are safe, and meet clinical requirements, will follow.

In the short term, production and distribution of ventilators across the UK is expected to ramp up significantly, with thousands of new ventilators making their way to hospitals across Great Britain and Northern Ireland. If you have any queries relating to the ventilator challenge please email [ventilatorchallenge@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ventilatorchallenge@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

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## [Biking for Britain](#)

And those with two wheels are supporting front line staff from their motorbike saddle by delivering blood and other critical items for the NHS, the demand for which has soared.

Jon Wood, who works in the maintenance section at Winfrith Site, has stepped up his usual volunteering with SERV Wessex due to the Covid-19 crisis.

SERV Wessex provide a free service to the NHS in Hampshire, Dorset and South Wiltshire. The volunteer motorbike riders provide a service to collect and deliver human milk and transport blood, plasma, platelets, medical samples and medical equipment.

Services have been extended during this current climate to support NHS hospitals and pharmacies to deliver much needed medication for vulnerable patients.

Jon said: "I enjoy my volunteering role, usually performed during the evenings. The new day time deliveries of medical supplies to vulnerable patients is rewarding and it is nice to see that my contribution can make a difference to the lives of many people."

The new daily service has already had a significant impact, in the last week SERV Wessex have covered 2801 miles and delivered 104 items.

And on the other side of the country colleagues Phil Smith and Phil Sherriff from Sizewell A Site are also using their bikes to deliver vital products to where they are needed.

Engineering Manager, Phil Smith, who is a responder and controller with SERV Suffolk and Cambridge, said: "It's a great feeling to turn up at a hospital and drop off products or samples, knowing you've helped someone in need, but also saved the NHS valuable money because the alternative would have been for the hospital to use taxis or couriers out of hours," he added.

Project Manager Phil Smith volunteers with Norfolk Blood Bikes. All the charities, which receive no government funding, rely on donations from the public and fund-raising events, as well as charitable grants and awards.

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## [Strict new controls to protect the](#)

# UK's trees and plants against damaging threats

Today (Tuesday 21 April 2020) new national measures have come into effect to safeguard the UK, and our forestry and horticulture industries, from a range of plant health diseases and pests including the devastating *Xylella fastidiosa* and exotic beetles which can kill ash trees.

These new regulations, detailed below, will add more stringent import requirements to protect UK plant health against these threats.

- [Xylella](#) – The import of *Coffea* and *Polygala myrtifolia* species is now prohibited, due to a high disease rate in these species, as well as stronger import requirements for other high-risk hosts (including Olive, Almond, Nerium Oleander, Lavender and Rosemary).
- [Emerald ash borer](#) (beetle) – New measures applying stronger import controls to countries within 100km of confirmed outbreak areas. This includes the removal of an option, within EU legislation, to remove the bark and sapwood to a depth of 2.5 cm for all countries regulated for emerald ash borer. This will help mitigate the risk of importing infected wood which has not properly met the official requirements.
- [Plane tree wilt](#) – More stringent 'Protected Zone' requirements for the UK including measures for plane trees, intended for planting other than seeds, which must now have been grown throughout their life in a pest free area or an EU Protected Zone. The new requirements apply to imports to the UK from Albania, Armenia, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States and the EU-27.

UK Chief Plant Health Officer Nicola Spence said:

Protecting our country from tree pests and diseases is key to protect our environment, economy and our health.

That is why we are introducing tighter restrictions on the importation of high risk host plants and trees for *Xylella*, emerald ash borer and plane wilt.

*Xylella* is a major threat to our landscape and industry and in this year of International Plant Health it is more imperative than ever that we do all we can to ensure the UK remains a *Xylella*-free zone. Emerald ash borer and plane wilt also represent significant threats, which is why we are bolstering our protection against them, in response to recent changes in the risk situation.

The new legislation will also amend an area of the EU Plant Health Regulation concerning the plant disease [Elms Yellows](#) and the UK's Protected Zone. Elm yellows is a plant disease of elm trees that is spread by leafhoppers or by root grafts.

Professor Saskia Hogenhout, leader of the [BRIGIT](#) consortium at the John Innes Centre, said:

We welcome these new regulations which will be a key step in keeping the UK free from Xylella. Through the BRIGIT programme we are investigating how Xylella may spread in the UK environment, by assessing how symptoms may develop in plants, the prevalence and movement of insect vectors and how Xylella may move around the country via transport of plants.

We also organise public engagement events to distribute information about Xylella and risks associated with importing ornamental plants into the UK. All of these components are vital in developing an effective regulatory framework to manage the threat posed by the disease.

Further information on the new plant health national measures can be found on the Defra Plant Health Portal, [here](#).

The new legislation is amending the Official Controls Regulations 2019, to address new plant health threats.

- On Tuesday 31 March Defra introduced legislation which implements new measures for Xylella following the recent consultation and Defra's response, as well as new measures for emerald ash borer, canker stain of plane and elm yellows.
- The new legislation is summarised [here](#) with further details provided in an [annex](#).
- The government recognises the challenges that the horticultural sector and individual businesses are facing at the current time due to the coronavirus pandemic, and has carefully considered the timing of these new regulations and agreed that it is important to proceed now to protect the UK's biosecurity and given the support of industry and stakeholder representatives through the Plant Health Advisory Forum and Tree Health Policy Group.
- Further information on plant health imports and exports regulation can be read on the [Defra Plant Health Portal](#).
- The UK will continue to apply the derogations in place for imports of wood of ash from the US and Canada (EU Implementing Decisions)

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## [Letter to academy trust accounting officers: 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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## [DRS helping to keep the country rolling](#)



DRS' distinctive locomotives are moving thousands of shipping containers every week

Image credit: David Clough – Golborne Jn 2017 8 26 88005 0640 Daventry – Mossend Euroterminal

The specialist rail freight company, a subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, provides rail transport to a range of vital sectors, including nuclear power stations, logistics and distribution for supermarkets, passenger rail as well as helping maintain the UK's rail network.

The Carlisle-based firm has enacted its business continuity plans and put in place extra layers of safety and protection for all its staff working across the UK – from train crew to engineering and maintenance teams through to train planners and the essential office-based staff that keep the trains running on time.

Chris Connelly, Managing Director, said:

We have an important role to play to help keep the country going during these difficult times. DRS' services make sure the country's nuclear power stations can keep working, food and other goods are

available on supermarket shelves, key workers can get to their place of work, and the rail infrastructure can be maintained.

Everyone at DRS is doing an absolutely fantastic job – all our colleagues have pulled together to ensure we can carry on working at the same time as helping protect each other.

DRS' intermodal work has been crucial, delivering vital supplies for supermarkets up and down the country. Their distinctive locomotives are moving thousands of shipping containers every week – with DRS initially running some of its longest trains to keep up with demand.

NDA Chief Executive, David Peattie, added:

DRS plays a crucial role in the NDA's mission – safely transporting materials across the UK to support nuclear decommissioning and EDF Energy's operating power stations. Their non-nuclear work, keeping the supermarket shelves full and helping keep the rail network running for key workers, has never been more important.

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