

[Press release: Joint Statement on Syria Chemical Weapons](#)

On October 26, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), a body established by unanimous decision of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), concluded that the Assad regime is responsible for the use of sarin in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017. We have full trust in the JIM's findings, its professionalism and independence. The Syrian regime violated international law, including the Chemical Weapons Convention. We condemn this heinous act and demand that the Syrian regime immediately cease any and all use of chemical weapons and finally declare to the OPCW all chemical weapons that it possesses.

The JIM also found that ISIS/Daesh was responsible for a sulphur mustard attack on the town of Um Housh in September 2016 on two consecutive days. We also condemn this despicable act, and we are united in our determination to defeat this abhorrent terrorist movement once and for all. We condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere.

We agree that it is vital for the international community to continue to investigate cases where chemical weapons have been used in Syria. We therefore urge the United Nations Security Council to maintain the JIM's investigative capacity. We also call on the OPCW Executive Council to take action in response to the JIM report to send an unequivocal signal that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons will be held accountable.

Sadly, this is not the first report identifying those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. In 2016, the JIM came to the conclusion that the Syrian regime was responsible for the use of chlorine as a chemical weapon in at least three attacks in 2014 and 2015, and ISIS/Daesh used sulphur mustard once in 2015.

And there is more work for the JIM to do. The OPCW has now reported that a sarin attack "more than likely" took place in Al Lataminah in Syria, just a week before and 15 kilometers from the sarin attack on Khan Sheikhoun. The attack it describes bears the hallmarks of the Syrian Regime.

A robust international response is now essential to hold those responsible to account, seek justice for the victims of these abhorrent attacks and to prevent such attacks from happening again. After such a report, the Security Council and all its members have a common responsibility to protect the international non-proliferation regime and live up to their previous commitments.

Ends

Attack at Khan Shaykhun: What Happened

[Attack at Khan Shaykhun: What Happened](#)

Further information

[Press release: Appointment of Dr Patrick Vallance as government Chief Scientific Adviser](#)

The Cabinet Secretary is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Patrick Vallance as the new government Chief Scientific Adviser. Dr Vallance, who is currently President of Research and Development, at GlaxoSmithKline, and the former Head of Medicine at University College London, was chosen following an open competition. He will take up the post in Spring 2018. Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Scientific Adviser for the Department of Health, is carrying out the role on an acting basis.

The Cabinet Secretary, Sir Jeremy Heywood said:

This is an excellent appointment for the Civil Service, in an important area of government business. Patrick Vallance has already advised the government on several occasions in his capacity as a Member of the UK Ministerial Industry Strategy Group, so he is well placed to offer the best scientific advice available to the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet. I am also looking forward to the contribution Patrick will make in leading the science community across government, building on the great work of Sir Mark Walport, his predecessor.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Sir Mark for the invaluable contribution he has made to policy development and strengthening Whitehall's already world-class science capability.

Commenting on his new role, Dr Patrick Vallance said:

It is a great honour to join the Civil Service as the Government Chief Scientific Adviser. Science, engineering and technology have a vital role to play at the heart of policy making and are critical to economic growth and prosperity in the UK as well as to addressing many of the greatest challenges of our time, such as environmental change and keeping our citizens healthy and secure.

I look forward to working with colleagues to ensure the government has the best possible advice, from the best experts, based on the strongest evidence, to inform the widest range of policy decisions.

Science Minister, Jo Johnson said:

Science and innovation plays a pivotal role in our Industrial Strategy and we've invested an additional £4.7 billion to 2020/21 to ensure we continue to build on our worldwide reputation as a science powerhouse. Dr Patrick Vallance's extensive knowledge and experience from the private sector and academia will play a central role in supporting this commitment and promoting our global leadership status.

Press release: Public asked to comment on Medway Estuary flood defence strategy

Members of the public are being invited to share their views on the Environment Agency's strategy to protect areas of the north Kent coast over the next century.

The [online public consultation](#) opens today, 6 November 2017, allowing people to view the Environment Agency's plans on how best to best protect people, properties, wildlife habitats and agricultural land from flooding and coastal erosion in the Swale and Medway Estuary Area.

The Medway Estuary and Swale Strategy outlines the best technical solution for flood defence while considering the impact and benefits to local communities and the environment, as well as the cost to the taxpayer. It covers the Medway towns of Stoke, Sittingbourne, Conyer and Faversham, in addition to the Isle of Sheppey and the Medway Estuary.

Rising sea levels could result in the loss of nationally and internationally designated wildlife habitats in the area, which might be 'squeezed' against existing defences. The strategy therefore considers whether existing defences could be moved inland and the coastline returned to a more natural state, or whether habitat could be created elsewhere.

Mark Douch, Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, said:

The project team has developed leading options for each section of the strategy area, based on economic, technical, and environmental appraisals.

We are keen to hear comments and feedback from the public on the proposed flood and coastal management options. We want to make sure

we have captured all information before finalising the strategy.

The consultation runs until 5 February 2018.

Members of the local communities and key stakeholders are invited to review the proposed options for the management of coastal flood and erosion risk at public exhibitions being held at:

- Eastchurch Village Hall, Isle of Sheppey, 3pm to 7pm, 30 November 2017.
- Riverside Country Park, Gillingham, 3pm to 7pm, 6 December 2017.
- Halling Community Centre, 3:30pm to 7:30pm, 12 December 2017.

[News story: Chief Secretary heralds breakthrough in Northern Line extension](#)

A groundbreaking new development in South West London moved a step closer today (8 November), as tunnelling work on the Northern Line extension was completed, paving the way for faster journey times and supporting tens of thousands of new homes.

This project, which was backed by £750 million of loan guarantees from HM Treasury, has created two new tunnels running from Battersea to Kennington via Nine Elms. Two new tube stations – Nine Elms and Battersea Power Station – will also be added to the Northern Line, helping cut commutes to central London to as little as 15 minutes.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Liz Truss said:

It's very exciting to see this new phase of the Northern Line delivered.

Great infrastructure, including the tube, is vital to a thriving London. That is why we backed this important project which is supporting thousands of jobs and new homes in our capital.□

And that is why we are backing projects across the country that will help drive enterprise and growth.

The newly extended service is vital to regenerate a historic part of London, and will create an estimated 25,000 new jobs, resulting in more than 20,000 new homes being built in the area.

As the first London tube line extension for more than 20 years, the project received government support in 2012, in the form of a UK Guarantee. This project was one of the first to benefit from the UK Guarantee Scheme which supports private investment in UK infrastructure projects, and enabled the Mayor of London to borrow up to £1 billion needed to get it off the ground.

Further information

The UK Guarantees Scheme was launched in July 2012 and can issue up to £40 billion of guarantees. To date, it has issued nine guarantees totalling £1.8 billion of Treasury-backed infrastructure bonds and loans, supporting over £4 billion worth of investment.

For the Northern Line extension, the loan from the Public Works Loan Board is being used to pay for the up-front costs of construction, while the borrowing costs are being serviced by a tariff on development paid by developers to the London Boroughs of Wandsworth and Lambeth under the Section 106 (s106) and Community Infrastructure.

[News story: Innovation loans to demonstrate infrastructure systems: apply now](#)

Small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) working on late-stage infrastructure systems projects can apply for a share of £10 million in a pilot loans competition – the first opportunity to access Innovate UK's new alternative financial support scheme.

This loans competition aims to help businesses overcome barriers to scaling up innovation in infrastructure systems. It will do this by enabling them to demonstrate their ideas work as expected in real-world applications with users, and take their solutions to market.

It was announced today at [Innovate 2017](#).

Smarter, better infrastructure

The growing, ageing population, increased urbanisation and urgent need to reduce carbon emissions calls for new and novel infrastructure solutions. But developing, testing and commercialising new ideas in this sector can be risky.

You could get an innovation loan of up to £1 million for a first of a kind deployment of infrastructure technologies.

Demonstrator projects must be in one of Innovate UK's priority areas. These are:

- smart infrastructure, adding intelligence to improve physical infrastructure or the design process
- urban living, addressing the challenges people face in urban areas in order to improve user experience and lower costs. This could be:
 - 'hard' systems, such as energy, transport, waste, water and communication
 - 'soft' systems, such as security, law and justice (for example, public order and safety), health, wellbeing, social care and education
 - 'environmental' systems such as green spaces and waterways
- energy supply and systems, specifically improving the value proposition, affordability, emissions and security of energy
- connected transport, looking at solutions that move people and goods more efficiently and sustainably, and make transport more secure, user-centric and accessible

Introducing innovation loans

This is the first time Innovate UK has run a loans competition.

Innovations need different types of funding support depending on how close they are to market. Getting the right funding at the right time can scale up businesses' productivity and growth.

We believe that a patient, flexible loan scheme will be useful for innovations that are near to market, where there is less risk involved.

A pilot loan scheme worth up to £50 million will be offered over the next 2 years. Loans will be made through Innovate UK Loans Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Innovate UK.

About the infrastructure systems loan competition

- the loans competition is open, and the deadline for registration is 10 January 2018
- you could get between £100,000 to £1 million to cover up to 100% of eligible project costs
- this opportunity is for UK-based SMEs
- applications can only be made by single SMEs
- loans are for late-stage experimental development only
- they are available for up to 10 years
- there is a briefing event for applicants on 16 November 2017