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Spring 2021 British Edition

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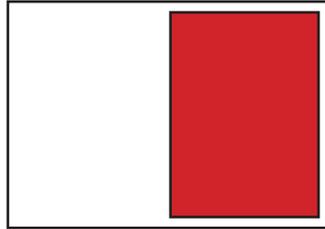
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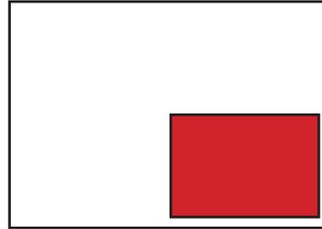
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A family of geese enjoying a day out on the lake



News & SPORTS Roundup

Summary of the main news and sports events over the last three months

By Paul G Bazeley for Government World

January News Review

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a third nationwide lockdown as coronavirus cases continued to escalate. People were only allowed to leave their homes for essential trips, while schools and universities were closed until mid-February. By the middle of the month, PM Boris Johnson announced the closure of all travel corridors. It meant that all travellers must possess a negative COVID-19 test and quarantine for ten days upon arrival.

With the Pfizer vaccine already being rolled out, the UK began distributing the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine across the United Kingdom. Later in the month, the Moderna vaccine was approved for use in the UK.

The government announced that the

COVID-19 variant, commonly known as the Kent variant, is 30% more deadly than the original virus strain.

The UK surpassed 100,000 deaths attributed to COVID-19. It became the fifth country to do so after Brazil, India, Mexico and the United States.

Pro-Donald Trump supporters stormed Capitol Hill in the USA. Some of the protesters were armed, which saw police, National Guard, and the FBI step in to stop the riots. The protesters also breached the United States Senate Chamber. Shots were fired, and police used smoke bombs and pepper spray to quash the riots. A night-time curfew was placed on the city. President Trump released a video saying, “you have to go home now” after pressure from several politicians, including President-elect Joe Biden.

In Capitol Hill aftermath, Twitter and Facebook temporarily blocked Donald Trump’s accounts, citing the President’s “incitement to violence”. Later in the month, Twitter permanently suspended Donald Trump from their platform; they said it was to end “the risk of further incitement of violence”. The US House of Representatives also impeached President Donald Trump for a second time, stating “incitement of insurrection”.

A UK judge blocked the extradition request from United States of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. Although Assange could face up to 170 years in jail if extradited, the judge ruled that it would severely impact his mental health, and he may commit suicide. The

Mexican President, Andres Obrador, offered political asylum to Assange. The judge later denied Assange bail over fears he may try to flee.

The cryptocurrency market, which includes Bitcoin and Ethereum, reached over \$1 trillion for the first time in history.

Joe Biden was officially sworn in as the 46th President of the United States of America. In addition, Kamala Harris was sworn in as Vice President, becoming the first woman and first Indian American in US history to hold the position. President Biden's first orders were to re-join the World Health Organisation and the Paris Agreement and end funding for the Mexico-Border wall, and ending the 2017 travel ban.

The UK announced it would apply to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade bloc of 11 Asia-Pacific nations.

The Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Roundel by Sandro Botticelli sold for \$92.2 million at Sotheby's in New York. It became the second most expensive

painting by an Old Master sold at auction.

It was announced that the Glastonbury Festival had been cancelled for the second year in a row due to COVID-19.

January Sports Review

Formula One move the Australia Grand Prix to later in the year due to coronavirus concerns.

The International Olympic Committee stated that the 2020 Summer Olympics would be held in July 2021, despite the host city Tokyo being in a state of emergency due to the coronavirus at the time.

February News Review

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the four-step plan to easing restrictions in England. The timeline would see the country ease all rules by the Summer.

The number of people to receive their

first COVID-19 vaccination in the United Kingdom surpassed 20 million, making it the fastest vaccination plan in Europe.

Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, announced that UK residents returning from red list countries would have to pay £1,750 to stay in a quarantine hotel in England or face a fine of £10,000 or up to 10 years in jail.

Captain Sir Tom Moore, an Army veteran from World War II who raised over £30 million for charity in 2020, died from COVID-19 at aged 100.

The International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that Iran had produced uranium metal, which is essential in creating nuclear weapons at a nuclear facility, meaning they breached the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Shamima Begum, the ISIL supporter, was prohibited from returning to the UK to appeal the revoke of her citizenship after the UK Supreme Court

overturned the decision by the Court of Appeal, noting four errors.

Archaeologists from Egypt and America discovered a mass-production brewery that likely dates to the Early Dynastic Period in the ancient city of Abydos, Egypt.

Astronomers revealed they had discovered a sub-Neptune exoplanet name HD 110082 b. It orbits a star and is approximately three times the size of Earth.

Buckingham Palace announced that Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, would be stripped of their royal patronages and honorary military appointments after reviewing their position in the Royal Family. The couple kept their HRH titles but would no longer use them.

The cryptocurrency Bitcoin, the most popular of cryptocurrencies, reached a market cap of \$1 trillion for the first time in the coin's history.

February Sports Review

Manchester United beat Southampton 9-0 in the Premier League. The result equalled the largest winning margin in the league, along with Leicester City's win against the same team in 2020 and matching their own 9-0 victory against Ipswich Town in 1995.

Manchester City set a record for the most consecutive wins (15) in all competitions by a top-flight English club after beating Swansea 3-1 in the FA cup.

The Australian Open took place after a three-week delay. Naomi Osaka beat Jennifer Brady in the Women's Singles title final; it made her the first player to win a fourth Grand Slam tennis title since Maria Sharapova won the French Open in 2012. In the Men's competition, Novak Djokovic beat Daniil Medvedev to win the Grand Slam title.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers won Super Bowl LV after beating the Kansas City Chiefs 31-9. They became the first wildcard team to win the Super Bowl since the Green Bay Packers in 2010.

The quarterback, Tom Brady, was named the MVP.

March News Review

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, delivered the Spring budget. In the speech, Rishi Sunak commented on the impact of COVID-19 on the economy with it shrinking 10% (the most in 300 years), noting that 700,000 had lost their jobs and highlighting the highest borrowing outside of wartime. Main measures included continuing the COVID-19 furlough scheme until September 2021, no changes to income or value-added tax and national insurance, £12,570 tax-free allowance frozen for five years and tax breaks for businesses.

Primary and Secondary school students in England returned to school for the first time in two months after a third lockdown. It was the first step of the

lockdown easing announced by the Prime Minister the previous month. Further easings occurred later in the month with people allowed to meet in groups of six outdoors, and the 'stay at home' order officially ended.

The UK announced a new single-day record of COVID-19 vaccines, with 711,156 doses being administered.

The Panamanian-flagged container ship Ever Green ran aground close to the Suez Port in Egypt, blocking both directions of the Suez Canal, which connects the Mediterranean Sea with the red sea, for six days. The blockage by the 220,000-ton ship caused an estimated 370 boats to be stuck queuing for passage and impacted nearly \$10 billion worth of trade.

Loyalist Group in Northern Ireland, including The Loyalist Communities Council, informed Prime Minister Boris Johnson they were withdrawing support of the Good Friday agreement in opposition to the Northern Ireland Protocol - the deal that governs customs and immigration at the border of Northern Ireland and the European Union.

The EU informed the UK it intended to start an infringement procedure as it claims the UK breached the Northern Ireland Agreement by extending the grace period related to trade on the island of Ireland.

PM Boris Johnson announced that the UK's nuclear weapons arsenal would increase from 180 to 260 while remaining committed to NATO. It was also highlighted that Russia was 'the most acute threat to British security.

Wayne Couzens, a Metropolitan Police Officer, was arrested and charged with the kidnapping and murder of Sarah Everard. The 33-year-old disappeared as she walked home to Brixton Hill after leaving a friend's house in South London; her remains were found a week later in woodland in Kent. Vigils were held across the country.

Thornton's, the chocolate maker, announced it would close all its stores and instead sell its products through supermarkets and online, causing 600 job losses. The news means that the company will end its 110-year presence on the high street.

The 63rd Grammy Awards took place

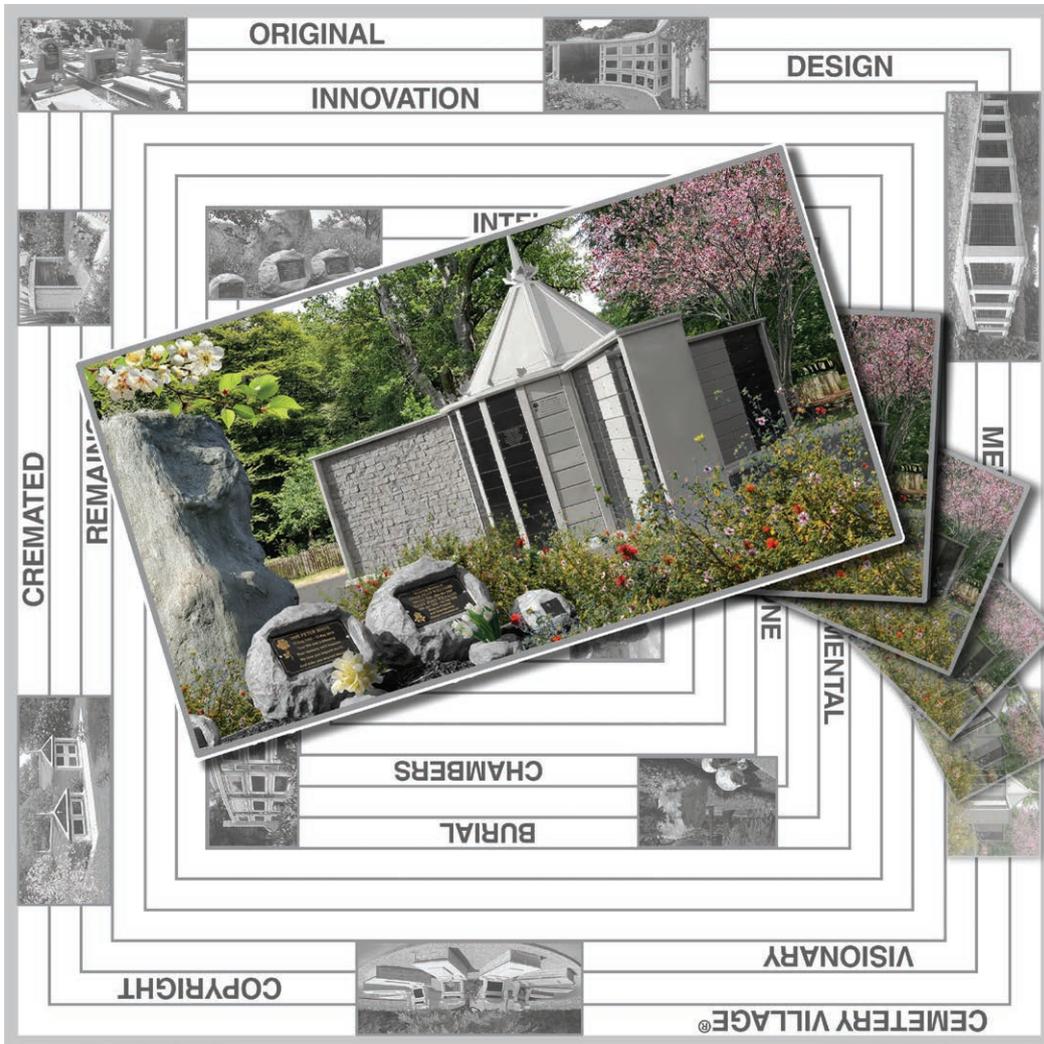
in Los Angeles. The record of the year went to Billie Eilish for 'Everything I Wanted' while Taylor Swift won album of the year for 'Folklore'. Beyonce received four awards from nine nominations, making her the most awarded woman in the show's history with 28 in total.

March Sports Review

Rangers won the Scottish Premiership for the first time since 2011 and denied their bitter rivals Celtic from winning the title for a record 10th consecutive time. It was the first title of former England captain Steven Gerrard's managerial career.

The Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games announced that spectators from overseas would be banned from entering Japan to watch the games due to the spread of COVID-19.

End



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First people to receive Oxford University/ AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine today (04.01.21)

January

The NHS is the first health service in the world to deploy the life-saving jab, which has been authorised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) after meeting strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness. It is the only approved vaccine which can be stored at fridge temperatures.

The Government has secured access to 100 million doses of the vaccine on behalf of the whole of the UK, crown dependencies and Overseas Territories.

More than half a million doses are available today, with tens of millions more to be delivered in the coming weeks and months once batches have been quality checked by the MHRA. More than 730 vaccination sites have already been established across the UK and hundreds more are opening this week to take the

total to over 1,000, helping those who are most at risk from Covid-19 to access vaccines for free, regardless of where they live.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I am delighted that today we are rolling out the Oxford vaccine - a testament to British science. This is a pivotal moment in our fight against this awful virus and I hope it provides renewed hope to



everybody that the end of this pandemic is in sight.

Through its vaccine delivery plan the NHS is doing everything it can to vaccinate those most at risk as quickly as possible and we will rapidly accelerate our vaccination programme.

While the most vulnerable are immunised, I urge everybody to continue following the restrictions so we can keep cases down and protect our loved ones.

The first Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccinations will be delivered at hospitals for the first few days, as is standard practice, before the bulk of supplies are sent to hundreds of GP-led services and care homes later in the week.

More than a million people in the UK have already been vaccinated with the Pfizer/ BioNTech vaccine and its roll out will continue at pace.

The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine can be stored at fridge temperatures, between two to eight degrees, making it easier to distribute to care homes and other locations across the UK. The vaccines will be deployed through:

hospital hubs for NHS and care staff and older patients to get vaccinated
local community services with local teams and GPs already signing up to take part in the programme
vaccination centres across the country, ensuring people can access a vaccine regardless of where they live

An army of current and former NHS staff have applied to become vaccinators, with tens of thousands having already completed their online training. These are being processed as quickly as possible and volunteer vaccinators will be deployed as more vaccine supplies become available. GPs and local vaccination services have been asked to ensure every care home resident in their

local area is vaccinated by the end of January.

The MHRA, Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and the four UK Chief Medical Officers agreed to delay the gap between the first and second dose of vaccines to protect the greatest number of people in the shortest amount of time.

In line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be rolled out to the priority groups including care home residents and staff, people over 80 and health and care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

Background

There are more than 730 vaccination sites across the UK.

Up to 100 more hospital sites are due to come online in England this week, subject to final assurance checks. There are also another 180 GP-led services which are due to come online this week.

The following hospitals in England will start delivering the vaccine today ahead of the rollout to hundreds of GP-led services later in the week:

- Royal Free Hospital London NHS Foundation Trust
- Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust
- George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust



Over £200 million boost to upgrade UK labs to help scientists tackle COVID-19 and cut emissions

January

- UK science facilities to be upgraded with £213 million government investment enabling researchers to respond to global challenges such as COVID-19 and climate change
- new world class equipment includes supercomputers in Cardiff to track infectious diseases, airborne sensors in London to monitor greenhouse gas emissions and a unique floating offshore wind testing lab at the University of Plymouth
- part of government's flagship Research and Development (R&D) Roadmap which committed to making the UK the



best place in the world for scientists and researchers to live and work

Super computers to track infectious diseases and a first-of-its kind floating offshore wind testing lab are among the world class facilities that UK researchers will gain access to, thanks to a major £213 million government investment to upgrade the UK's scientific infrastructure.

Announced today (Wednesday 6 January) by Science Minister Amanda Solloway, the investment will equip the UK's leading scientists, universities and research institutes with new state-of-the-art equipment to drive forward exceptional research that will help the UK respond to major challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The £213 million pot includes £27 million for researchers at 43 of the UK's Medical

Research Institutes across all corners of the UK providing them with access and upgrades to cutting edge equipment including ultra-high performing computers and microscopes. This will enable researchers to detect and model disease in more detail than ever before, helping the UK respond to COVID-19 and boosting resilience for future pandemics, as well as other diseases such as cancer and dementia.

The multi-million-pound investment will also provide researchers across the country with facilities to test innovative technologies to cut carbon emissions, such as a floating offshore wind turbine testing facility at the University of Plymouth, autonomous marine robotics trialled in Southampton to monitor the health of the southern

oceans, as well as airborne sensors in London to monitor greenhouse gas emissions.

Other facilities to receive financial backing includes a unique 'blast diagnostics' laboratory at the University of Sheffield, which will test the UK's ability to respond to the use of explosives in terrorist attacks.

The investment will ensure the UK is the best place in the world for scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs to live and work, while continuing to attract scientific talent from across the globe.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

"The response from UK scientists and researchers to coronavirus has been nothing short of phenomenal. We need



to match this excellence by ensuring scientific facilities are truly world class, so scientists can continue carrying out life-changing research for years to come as we build back better from the pandemic.

From the world's most detailed telescopes tracking disease to airborne drones monitoring greenhouse gas emissions, our investment will enhance the tools available to our most ambitious innovators across the country. By doing so, scientists and researchers will be able to drive forward extraordinary research that will enable the UK to respond to global challenges such as achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050."

The £213 million investment, delivered through the government's World Class Labs funding scheme and made through 7 of UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) research councils, covers investments in all disciplines from physical sciences to arts and humanities.

Facilities to benefit from the investment include:

- £29 million to upgrade and replace UK scientific equipment: upgrading and purchasing core equipment for the use of

researchers across the UK. This will equip medical researchers at 43 of the UK's Medical Research Institutes, such as in Birmingham, Glasgow and Cardiff with state-of-the-art research equipment, including new high-performance computers and telescopes to study disease. It will also replace equipment that has been donated to COVID-19 research - £25 million to support the installation of highly sophisticated testing facilities at leading UK universities: This includes a first of a kind offshore floating wind turbine testing facility at the University of Plymouth, and a 'blast diagnostics' laboratory at the University of Sheffield, which will test the UK's ability to respond to the use of explosives in terrorist attacks. Funding will also support new equipment at a multi-disciplinary X-ray facility at the University of Liverpool, helping scientists to understand how carbon dioxide interacts with sandstone rocks, in order to develop improved ways of undertaking carbon capture and storage to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions

- £34 million for data and digital research infrastructure: Upgrading the UK's digital research capabilities will enable some of the country's brightest minds to conduct pioneering analytical research that will help inform long term policy decisions. For example, urban data centres in Glasgow, Liverpool and Oxford will receive new hardware to pursue research that will show how COVID-19 has affected social and economic activity in different parts of the UK. Meanwhile, the University of Essex will be backed to conduct a large-scale household survey to understand how the pandemic has affected issues such as home schooling and family relationships

- £33.5 million to upgrade facilities of UK scientific councils: This will include a £20 million investment for the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) to upgrade laboratory infrastructure at its sites in Oxford, Cheshire, Cleveland and

Edinburgh. This will enable the Council to continue developing flagship projects covering a range of topics, from pre-launch satellite testing to the search for dark matter

- £15 million for the Capability for Collections Fund (CapCo): investment will renew and upgrade the most vulnerable research facilities across the UK within galleries, libraries, archives and museums. It will focus on conservation and heritage, modernising these spaces which will help serve local communities for generations

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Kemi Badenoch, said:

“This investment in state of the art science and research facilities will help the UK's world-leading scientists deliver life-changing research, from tackling infectious diseases and COVID-19, to delivering Net Zero.

It's vital we continue to innovate to drive our economic recovery and level up the country.”

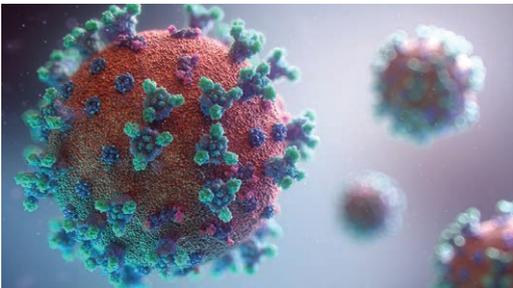
Professor Ottoline Leyser, Chief Executive of UKRI said:

“Research and innovation infrastructure is

key to delivering the government's R&D Roadmap, with some of the most innovative ideas with transformative R&D potential requiring access to leading-edge infrastructures, including national research facilities, equipment and instrumentation, networks of technologies and digital infrastructures, and knowledge-based resources such as collections and museums.

Outstanding infrastructure helps to convene talent from the public and private sectors and across disciplines to tackle society's most complex challenges. It acts as a magnet for researchers and innovators internationally, contributes to local and national economies, and generates knowledge and capability critical to UK policy, security and wellbeing.”

The funding forms part of a £300 million commitment to upgrade scientific infrastructure across the UK, made by Business Secretary Alok Sharma, as part of the government's ambitious R&D Roadmap published in July 2020.





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New leadership for construction of 40 new hospitals

January

- Natalie Forrest brings a wealth of health, construction and project management experience, most recently as Chief Executive of Chase Farm Hospital
- Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear set to upgrade mental health and learning disability services and Salford Royal will start work on a new hospital that will include a major trauma centre

The government's commitment to build 40 new hospitals by 2030 has been boosted



today by the appointment of Natalie Forrest to oversee the building programme.

Forrest has worked in the NHS for over 30 years and is a registered nurse. She most recently led the construction and operationalisation of NHS Nightingale London in response to the pandemic. Alongside this role, she was also Chase Farm Hospital's Chief Executive in North London, where she successfully led operational and clinical teams to design an innovative and groundbreaking new hospital, delivered to time, on budget and without interrupting services.

In total, 48 hospitals will be built by 2030, with £3.7 billion committed so far. In the North East, one of these schemes has just received final approval to upgrade mental health facilities in the region. Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust's new £72.6 million facilities – which will be finalised

by 2023 – will improve the quality of mental health and learning disability services in the regions by combining innovative design with a holistic approach to patient care and safety.

Final approval has also been secured on Salford Royal's £67.4 million new hospital building, and construction work will begin soon. This will be home to a major trauma centre treating patients who have experienced life-changing or life-threatening injuries – for example, after a serious road traffic accident or fall.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

"I'm delighted to appoint Natalie into this role. She not only brings unrivalled experience in health

management and nursing, but also the construction and project management knowledge that helped turn the Excel conference centre into a Nightingale Hospital in just 9 days, as well as overseeing the rebuild of Chase Farm Hospital at pace.

The New Hospital Programme – as part of our Health Infrastructure Plan – will transform the delivery of NHS healthcare infrastructure to build back better and will ensure our country has world-class healthcare facilities right across the country for decades to come.”

Senior Responsible Officer of the New Hospital Programme Natalie Forrest said:

“I am determined to build trust in our national capability in planning and



delivering hospitals, not just with health and construction stakeholders but with the staff and patients who will benefit from them on a daily basis.

My goal will be to deliver these new hospitals cost-effectively and at speed, and to foster an ecosystem that owns, learns from and improves healthcare design.”

With over 12 years spent in NHS senior leadership roles, Forrest has extensive experience working with key clinical, board-level and other NHS stakeholders.

Starting this month, she will oversee a delivery board across the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England and Improvement, which will work closely with a network of NHS trusts.

Overall, the New Hospital Programme within the government’s long-term health infrastructure plan will help develop new sustainability standards, planning capabilities and care and workforce models. It will also implement cutting-edge digital technologies across the NHS, and will support an integrated approach to building new healthcare infrastructure using modern methods of construction.

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Rolls-Royce and UK Space Agency launch first ever study into nuclear-powered space exploration

January

This new research contract will see planetary scientists work together to explore the game-changing potential of nuclear power as a more plentiful source of energy, capable of making possible deeper space exploration in the decades to come.

Nuclear propulsion, which would involve channelling the immense energy released in splitting the atom to accelerate propellants, like hydrogen, at huge speeds, has the potential to revolutionise space travel.

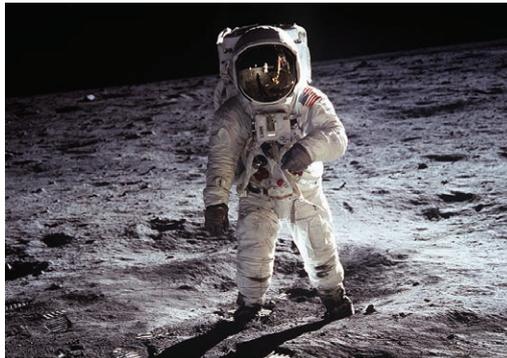
By some estimates, this kind of engine could be twice as efficient as the chemical engines that power our rockets today. Spacecraft powered by this kind of engine could, conceivably, make it to Mars in just 3 to 4 months – roughly half the time of the fastest possible trip in a spacecraft using the current chemical propulsion.

Nuclear space power is anticipated to create new skilled jobs across the UK to support the burgeoning UK space economy.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

“As we build back better from the pandemic, it is partnerships like this between business, industry and government that will help to create jobs and bring forward pioneering innovations that will advance UK spaceflight.

Nuclear power presents transformative possibilities for space exploration and this innovative study with Rolls-Royce could help to propel our next generation of astronauts into space faster and for



longer, significantly increasing our knowledge of the Universe.”

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

“Space nuclear power and propulsion is a game-changing concept that could unlock future deep-space missions that take us to Mars and beyond.

This study will help us understand the exciting potential of atomic-powered spacecraft, and whether this nascent technology could help us travel further and faster through space than ever before.”

Dave Gordon, UK Senior Vice President, Rolls-Royce Defence said:

“We are excited to be working with the UK Space Agency on this pioneering project to define future

nuclear power technologies for space. We believe there is a real niche UK capability in this area and this initiative can build on the strong UK nuclear network and supply chain.

We look forward to developing this and other exciting space projects in the future as we continue to develop the power to protect our planet, secure our world and explore our Universe.”

It would not just mean a time saving – it would also radically reduce the dose of radiation taken on by astronauts that would be making future trips to Mars or other planets. The size of the dose increases the longer you spend in deep space, away from the bubble of protection given by the Earth’s magnetosphere.

The appeal of a small nuclear power generator for propulsion also comes from the fact that power in space becomes increasingly precious with distance from the Sun. In the outer Solar System, sunlight gets too dim for solar panels, and other technologies like fuel cells are often too patchy as a source of energy.

Nuclear propulsion is an idea that has existed since the 1950s, when the United States attempted to develop a rocket propelled by small atomic bombs tossed out the back.

All UK travel corridors temporarily suspended to protect against new international variants

January

- emergency measures introduced at the border to be in place for at least one month in order to protect the UK against new variants
- all international arrivals to the UK from any country (including British and Irish Nationals) must now take a pre-departure test and self-isolate for 10 days
- passengers must continue to fill in a Passenger Locator Form and have a negative test before travelling to the UK or could face a £500 fine for each

The government has today (15 January 2021) announced emergency border measures to prevent the spread of concerning new variants of coronavirus (COVID-19) into the UK, such as those

first identified in Brazil and South America, and to protect us against the risk of as yet unidentified new strains.

From Monday 18 January at 4am, all travel corridors with the UK will be suspended – meaning that all international arrivals who have departed from or transited through any country outside the Common Travel Area in the previous 10 days will be required to both take a pre-departure test, and self-isolate immediately for 10 days on arrival. This includes British and Irish nationals.

This urgent action is in response to increasing concern over the transmissibility and virulence of new strains evolving internationally. It will also ensure that the government is able to protect the progress being made on the country’s vaccination programme.



This move will be supported by increased enforcement, both at the border and across the UK, with Border Force increasing the number of spot checks on passengers that have entered the country.

International travel corridors have been in place since July 2020 for countries and territories where critical analysis suggests the risk of COVID-19 can be mitigated.

However, the level of risk associated with the emergence of new variants globally has now increased, requiring more stringent measures to block all potential avenues through which new strains of the virus could enter the UK while we consider how best to respond.

The new measures will be reviewed on Monday 15 February - while further work takes place to manage the threat posed by coronavirus variants.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

We are operating in a completely new environment in our fight against COVID-19, with several worrying new strains of the virus emerging across the globe.

Now more than ever, as we make strides vaccinating people up and down the country, we need to take advantage of all measures available to us – and these

robust emergency precautions will help us protect the nation to ensure we continue to make progress.

As has been the case throughout the pandemic - the government is moving quickly in response to the latest scientific evidence, and we will continue to take swift action in banning travel from countries where new strains are formally identified, as we have done previously.

These measures are the right course of action now, to safeguard public health and prevent new strains of the virus from worsening the existing picture within the UK.

National restrictions for England introduced on 6 January 2021 remain in place, meaning that everyone must stay at home unless travelling for a very limited set of reasons.

The closure of all the UK travel corridors will ensure that for those returning from



trips that fall into this limited set of exemptions, and for passengers arriving to the UK from abroad, there is a clear and robust set of measures to prevent cases of coronavirus entering the country.

Those in breach of the lockdown rules face penalties starting at £200, rising to a maximum of £6,400.

A number of exemptions to the travel corridor policy - including the need to travel for business - will be suspended from 4am on Monday 18th January, unless they are vital to maintaining the flow of critical goods, protecting essential services, protecting national security or facilitating government work.

A full list of exemptions will be available on GOV.UK shortly.

The government's Test to Release scheme will remain in place, giving passengers the option to shorten the mandatory self-isolation period to as little as 5 days.

However, they will still need to adhere to national restrictions in place upon release from self-isolation.

COVID-19:

What we know so far - part 3

by Paul Bazeley

By the time the last issue went to print, the United Kingdom had a tiered structure, with the stricter tier 4 being increasingly common across the country. Rates and deaths of COVID-19 were increasing and fears the NHS may become overwhelmed meant that rumours of a third lockdown grew rapidly. Nevertheless, there was hope as the vaccine rollout had begun.

What has happened since?

A brief overview.

On the 4th January 2021, England, Scotland and Wales announced a further lockdown with schools closing and the stay at home message returning. In addition, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine began to be rolled out across the country along with the Pfizer vaccine helping to expand the UK's vaccination programme further.

In the same month, Prime Minister Boris Johnson reported that the UK had reached 100,000 deaths from COVID-19 (a death is

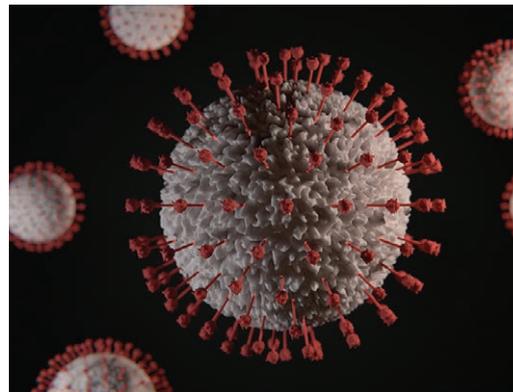
recorded if someone has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 30 days), becoming the fifth country to reach the figure. On the same day, the PM announced the plan for 'phased easing' beginning in March. The Moderna vaccine was also approved for use in the UK; the government had previously ordered a total of 17 million.

February was a busy month with talk of variants rife after mass testing was employed after community cases of a South African strain of the virus, which is believed

to be more contagious, were found. There was also lots of talk about the efficacy of the vaccines. However, Nadim Zahawi, the vaccines minister, stated the public should "have confidence" in the vaccines.

By 14th February, the government had achieved its target of offering the first dose to the top four priority groups, allowing the next phase of vaccinating 65–69-year-olds to begin. A week later, the government announced its new target was to offer the vaccination to all UK adults by the end of July 2021.

Come to the end of February, and Boris Johnson unveiled an England-wide roadmap for easing the lockdown. He noted that the plan would be "cautious but irreversible" and would be led by "data not dates", and dates could be delayed if needed.



The proposed dates were:

- Phase 1 (part 1), 8th March 2021 - schools reopen.
- Phase 1 (part 2), 29th March 2021 - two households or six people allowed to meet outdoors
- Phase 2, 12th April 2021 (or later) – opening of non-essential retail and other personal services.
- Phase 3, 17th May 2021 (or later) – most outdoor social contact rules are removed, two households or six people can meet indoors, and indoor hospitality services can open, including hotels. International travel can reopen.
- Phase 4, 21st June 2021 (or later) – all regulations removed.

March was a relatively quiet month, with Phase 1 parts 1 and 2 of lockdown going ahead while the case and death rates seemed to be reducing slowly. The vaccination rollout continued at pace, with over 30 million people having their first dose by the end of March. Second doses of the vaccines also began to be rolled out to those in the top four groups.

A notable date was 23rd March 2021, which marked the anniversary of the first lockdown. At 12.00, a two-minute silence was held to respect all those who had died from coronavirus.

Where are we now?

We're currently at the beginning of the easing phases, with parts one and two of Phase one having gone ahead. Providing the cases and death rates continue to head in the right direction, it seems likely that Phase 2 will happen in April as originally planned.

The vaccination rollout is going from strength to strength, with most countries far behind the UK. The NHS is undoubtedly doing a fantastic job. Providing supply continues, it seems the target of every UK adult to be offered their first jab by the end of July is more than feasible.

Although a stricter lockdown was reintroduced in January, the vaccination push seems to be keeping most people in a relatively optimistic mood.

What does the future look like?

Much like previous articles, the future is quite uncertain. However, the vaccination rollout seems to be going to plan, and more and more countries are beginning to vaccinate in large quantities. Currently, the worry is that a variant may appear to which the vaccine is less effective. If that happens, it is difficult to see how the world will get out of this mess.

Looking at things from a cheerier perspective, with an incredible vaccination rollout currently happening across the UK

and a four-phase plan which should see us with no restrictions by the summer, the future could be looking very bright. The vaccination rollout has been the highest in Europe and one of the highest in the world.

Predicting what the future looks like is a bit like trying to predict the length of a string. Nevertheless, the government and their scientists currently seem hopeful that normality may be on its way. Until then, though, it seems we all need to continue being cautious.

A follow-up article will feature in a future edition of Government World.



Spacewalk to fit ground-breaking British kit to International Space Station

January

Two astronauts will today undertake a spacewalk to install a revolutionary piece of government-funded technology on the International Space Station (ISS), marking the UK's first major industrial contribution to the spacecraft.

Called ColKa for 'Columbus Ka-band Terminal', the UK Space Agency-funded system will revolutionise scientists' ability in the UK and Europe to access the results of their space-based experiments, from investigations into the effects of radiation on seeds to biomining research. The results will help unlock benefits for all of us, from understanding how our bodies and muscles age to furthering our understanding of illnesses like cancer and Parkinson's Disease.

This giant leap forward for research carried out in the Columbus module will allow astronauts and researchers to benefit from a dedicated link back to Earth at home broadband speeds. Currently, results are returned to Earth on a hard drive, which

could take months to receive, with data sometimes being lost in transit. The new terminal will enable results to be delivered to scientists just a day or two after the data is recorded - allowing scientists to process information much more quickly and adjust experiments if they see any problems with the data, such as an unclear image.

NASA's Victor Glover and Michael Hopkins will venture outside the space station



for 6 hours to mount the UK-built large suitcase-sized device to the European Space Agency's Columbus module on the ISS.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

This mission to install pioneering UK-built technology in space exemplifies how government backing is helping our most innovative companies push the boundaries of what we can achieve in space as well as back home on Earth.

Strengthening the speed at which data can be transmitted from space will bring enormous benefits to scientists and researchers across Europe, helping them progress vital research faster, while opening up numerous commercial opportunities for UK firms as we build back better.

The ColKa antenna during testing. Credit: ESA - M. Cowan

Tethered to the ISS by a retractable steel cable, the astronauts face challenging conditions as they work to install the terminal, orbiting Earth at an altitude of 250 miles.

The astronauts will go without food for hours as they work in the harsh thermal vacuum of space, where the temperature can be as hot as 120 degrees Celsius in the sunlight, down to minus 160C when the Sun is out of sight.

The data will be transmitted to a ground station at Harwell Campus, Oxfordshire, near ESA's European Centre for Space Applications and Telecommunications, and from there it will be transferred to the Columbus Control Centre and user centres across Europe.

Columbus was conceived and designed over 20 years ago, when the internet was in its infancy. The laboratory was launched to the Station in 2008 and uses the Station's network and NASA's infrastructure for communications with the Columbus Control Centre.

David Kenyon, Managing Director at MDA UK based in Harwell, which designed and built ColKa using the RAL Space clean

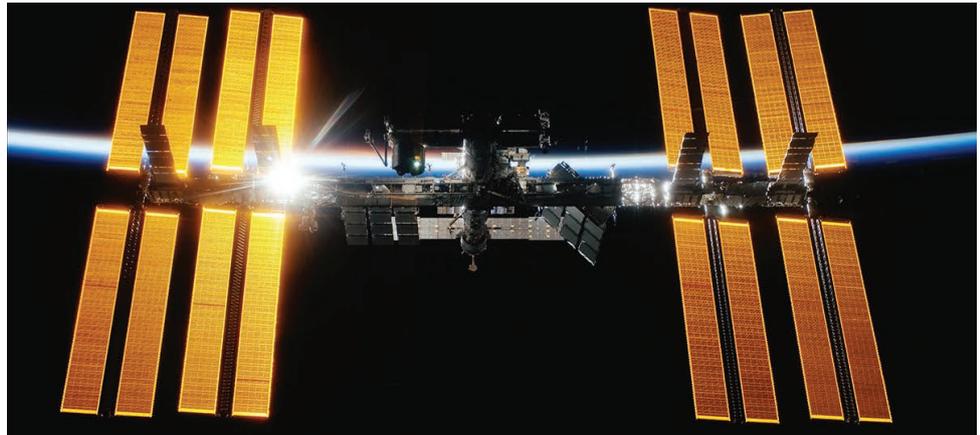
rooms on the Harwell Campus, said: We are extremely excited that ColKa is being brought into service. This system is our first flight system developed through MDA UK, and we now have equipment for another seven flight missions, including four lunar systems, under development in Harwell. ColKa will bring tremendous benefit to all our ESA astronauts, scientists and projects.

The contract was awarded to MDA UK following the UK Space Agency's investment of £40m in ESA's space exploration programme in 2012. In November 2019 the UK committed £180 million to the European Space Agency's global exploration programme, which, along with the lunar gateway and lunar communications, will include bringing back

the first samples from Mars and support the US ambition to have a sustainable presence on the Moon.

To date, UK scientists have been involved in 17 cutting-edge experiments that have taken place on the ISS and 33 others that are currently being developed and readied for future flight. In total, more than 2,700 investigations from researchers in 108 countries have been accomplished aboard the orbiting facility.

The UK's space sector is going from strength to strength, employing around 42,000 people and carrying out world-class science while growing the economy.



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Concept Originators
Design and Innovation

www.welters-worldwide.com

We can all agree that 2020, was an unexpected challenge in many ways. A challenge that looks to continue well into 2021. If you are relatively static in your work or domestic location, you are largely immune to the daily management challenges that **welters** have had to, and still do, wrestle with on a daily basis - all dramatically heightened by the covid pandemic.

Added to the obvious scenario of pressure, is the fact that, as a manufacturing organisation, designing and installing cemetery and crematoria interment systems and providing support through service and care, we require a hybrid of challenge and personal dedication from every conceived resource.

The additional challenges that we have overcome during this time of uncertainty and worry are numerous and, although some were to be expected, we have encountered many that

could not have been predicted.

As may be expected, along with the saddening and ever increasing rise in daily death toll due to covid, so comes the increase in demand for interment systems. In response, we have increased our investment risk to maximise our tooling and systems, increasing our production capacity. This, in turn, has necessitated the increase in workforce and training to ensure we have the necessary personnel to facilitate the use of these new systems.

Our status as key workers allows us to persevere throughout lockdown. However, with the daily uncertainty resultant from personnel self isolating and the need to accommodate part time hours due to child



Massive investment in additional tooling capacity

care issues as a result of the schools being off, this time also provides it's own set of challenges. Every day, there is no certainty as to how many of our personnel will be available to work and, if they are not, how long they will be absent.

The ever changing government guidelines and policies are extensive. Throughout the last year, with country wide lockdowns, local lockdowns and negotiating a tiered system of guidelines throughout the country, the planning, control and distribution of our workforce has provided us with our own management challenges. It is essential to ensure that all personnel are updated constantly to make certain that the correct guidelines are being followed in each location that we are working.

Regardless of the ongoing struggles as a result of the pandemic, **welters** have continued to do what we do best. The ongoing production of all full body and cremated remains interment facilities has been essential. All our products and systems can be installed together, in any configuration or layout, designed to best suit the needs of our customers, to create the **welters® Cemetery Village®** concept. Previously unusable land can be transformed into attractive cemeteries and cemetery extensions, creating interment positions where none were possible in the existing land prior to our involvement.

Please visit our website for further information on our products and services.



Production continues of ashes & full body interment systems & memorials alike

£11 million boost for energy entrepreneurs to turn green dreams into reality

February

- £11 million government funding for UK's energy entrepreneurs to turn ideas into clean, green technologies that eliminate carbon emissions
- previous projects include tech to anchor floating offshore wind turbines, using ash waste in glassmaking and new solar heating systems, benefiting from grants of £72 million in total since 2012
- funding supports the UK's commitment to cut carbon emissions, level up the whole country and create new jobs as we build back better from the pandemic

Talented energy entrepreneurs have the chance to benefit from a share of £11 million government funding to turn their ideas into real products and services whilst eliminating carbon emissions.

Energy Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan today (Thursday 4 February) announced the latest round of the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund (EEF), which seeks to drive forward new clean technologies across all sectors of UK industry, supporting the UK to eliminate its

contribution to climate change by 2050.

This includes innovations that boost energy efficiency in people's homes, reduce carbon emissions and develop green transport as well as sourcing cleaner and greener ways to generate power and heat.

The UK's budding energy entrepreneurs are being urged to bid for the latest £11 million government funding, which will support between 15 and 20 projects, with each successful bidder receiving up to £1 million.

Successful projects could create hundreds of green jobs and kickstart millions-of-pounds-worth of private sector investment across the UK, helping the country to build



back greener as we host the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow this November.

Previous recipients of funding include CCm Technologies in Swindon that is working with Walkers Crisps to implement carbon capture innovations in its factory processes, and Leeds-based C-Capture, which has developed processes to capture harmful greenhouse gases, including an innovative deployment of its technology at the Drax power station in North Yorkshire.

Energy Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

“The UK is famous for its strong entrepreneurial spirit. We want to unleash this talent to drive forward green technologies across the UK, helping the public and businesses cut their carbon footprint.

The Energy Entrepreneurs Fund is backing the UK's next generation of inventors and innovators to turn their ideas into reality, with previous successful projects already helping drive down emissions across the country and creating green jobs as we work to build back greener."

Since 2012, the government's Energy Entrepreneurs Fund has awarded £72 million worth of grants, supported 156 projects and leveraged more than £500 million in private investment – a figure that is still growing.

Previous low-carbon projects that have reaped the rewards of government grants, include:

• **Axis Energy Projects, Aberdeen:** received £217,160 to develop an efficient and low-cost method of anchoring floating offshore wind turbines to the seabed that could enable offshore wind technology to be positioned in more remote and deeper parts of the marine environment that are inaccessible to fixed turbines and contributing towards UK commitments to produce 40GW of wind power by 2030

• **Energy Transitions Ltd, Cardiff:** received £160,793 to develop the Steel Zero system, which combines innovative stainless steel cladding panels with solar energy technology so a building's entire façade can produce clean and efficient heat

for the spaces within

• **Glass Technology Services Ltd, Sheffield:** received £508,739 to lead a project with 6 partners to revolutionise glassmaking by replacing existing raw materials with ash waste from the biomass energy industry, reducing the high temperatures required in the glass production process and lowering energy requirements, costs and carbon emissions by up to 10%

• **Radfan, Newcastle:** received £20,250 to develop an innovative fan unit that fixes to the top of any central heating radiator and redirects the flow of warm air horizontally into the room, preventing heat from escaping, keeping people's rooms warm and helping to lower heating bills

UK Net Zero Business Champion, Andrew Griffith said:

"I am thrilled to welcome the next stage



of this excellent scheme, which is harnessing the creativity of British entrepreneurs to protect both the planet and UK industry by large and small innovations alike.

This is another great step from our government, investing in the jobs of the future and the next generation of UK business who will lead the world in eliminating emissions from industry and driving forward our green industrial revolution."

UK Government Minister for Scotland, David Duguid said:

"The UK government celebrates entrepreneurship. We are committed to rewarding innovation and hard work. Entrepreneurs bring solutions to problems, such as climate change, whilst creating new jobs and supporting our economic recovery from coronavirus.

With a long history of innovation, it is no surprise Scotland is producing lots of really exciting startups – including previous Scottish recipients of the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund.

I encourage Scotland's energy entrepreneurs to apply for a share of this £11 million UK government funding as we seek to build back better ahead of COP26 in Glasgow later this year."

Secretary of State for Wales, Simon Hart said:

"The chance to share in this funding is fantastic news for promising Welsh energy entrepreneurs. The UK government is committed to achieving net zero carbon by 2050. We will do so by investing in pioneering projects, people and businesses, creating green jobs and opportunities for people across Wales."

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said:

"Northern Ireland is a nation that embodies entrepreneurial spirit and is at the forefront of our efforts to cultivate a more environmentally sustainable future across the United Kingdom. With a share of this new £11 million investment, Northern Ireland's entrepreneurs will be able to help supercharge the United Kingdom's 'Green

Economy', as we continue to work towards our goal of reducing our emissions to net zero by 2050.

Northern Ireland based projects such as Senergy Innovations and Minesto have already developed cutting edge technologies to harness natural resources for energy, a testament to our extraordinary local talent. I encourage all our budding entrepreneurs to apply for this scheme to help us build back greener from the coronavirus pandemic."

Tom White, CEO C-Capture, said:

"Innovations in carbon capture technology are vital in helping the UK achieve its net zero target. Energy Entrepreneurs funding enabled C-Capture to further develop and deploy its technology, to demonstrate the performance and cost advantages which will be advantageous to companies seeking to decarbonise their operations.

The support we have received from the UK government has been of fundamental importance in developing a technology has the potential to capture millions of tonnes of CO2 per year."

John Blower, CEO Energy Transitions Ltd, said:

"The Energy Entrepreneurs Fund acted as a catalyst that enabled us to take forward

our Steel Zero solar façade from concept towards market readiness.

BEIS' support, both through the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund grant and the associated 'Incubation Support', which has assisted us in a range of areas, including branding, licensing and marketing, has had a transformational effect and helped us establish a platform from which we aim to create a global clean technology business."

John Baross, managing director Axis Energy Projects, said:

"Axis Energy Projects was pleased to have received a grant from the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund. It allowed us to progress our low-cost anchoring method for floating offshore wind turbines not only on the UK Continental Shelf but on a global basis.

Such was our progress that we can now focus on offshore wind farms and on decarbonising existing and new offshore oil and gas production facilities. This would not have been possible without the grant award."

Christine Boyle, CEO Senergy Innovations, said:

“For Senergy, the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund programme brought the perfect combination of critical early-stage funding and business acceleration support. The network of academic and business experts that were brought together to support our innovation journey was key to our success.

The wealth of experience both within CLT, the programme partner companies, and the international organisations they collaborate with, was key to delivering our early commercial success. A fantastic opportunity to turn an entrepreneur’s idea into a global opportunity.”

In 2019, the UK became the first major economy to legally commit to ending its contribution to global warming by 2050. This commitment has been reinforced by the Prime Minister’s ten point plan and the Energy White Paper, published in 2020.

The Energy Entrepreneurs Fund (EEF) is a programme funded through the BEIS £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio.

The EEF supplies innovation grants for small to medium sized enterprises and start-up companies to back the development and demonstration of disruptive technologies whilst also supporting our decarbonisation targets.

Government delivers more than one million devices to disadvantaged pupils

February

More than one million laptops and tablets have now been delivered to the most disadvantaged children across the country, as part of a £400 million government investment that will support schools and young people for years to come.

Official statistics published today show the government has delivered 1,055,745 laptops and tablets to the children who need them most to help make sure their education can continue during the pandemic.

Thousands of families have also received additional data from mobile operators, following the Department’s work to help children without internet access get online. This has supported access to educational resources to help children while most are being educated from home.

The news comes after the Department for Education last month announced a further 300,000 laptops and tablets to help even more disadvantaged children and young

people learn at home. Schools are now receiving these top-ups to their original device deliveries – with those schools with the highest proportion of disadvantaged pupils being prioritised to receive devices first.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

“I know what a challenging period this has been for pupils, teachers and parents - but it has been



nothing short of inspiring to see schools and staff going above and beyond, as they always have done, to give our pupils the very best education possible.

Online access has been an important part of this work and will continue to be as we help young people catch-up after the disruption caused by the pandemic, which is why the delivery of these one million laptops is so vital. They represent one million children who will not let their education be overcome by this virus.

I want parents to know that we'll continue to do everything we can to protect our children's education at this unprecedented time and ensure they have the tools they need to get on with and make the most of their lives."

Work to deliver remote learning will lay the foundations for a long-term strategy to take advantage of the opportunities technology presents. The substantial number of devices provided, along with other initiatives such as the EdTech Demonstrator Programme, mean children will be able to access support for years to come.

The 1.3 million devices the government is providing sits alongside a package of extensive support for the most disadvantaged children. This includes partnering with the UK's leading mobile

network operators to provide free data to disadvantaged families, alongside a further £300 million being invested in tutoring programmes building on the existing £1bn Covid Catch Up Fund.

In addition, the Oak National Academy has been 'zero rated' by eleven major telecoms providers, including Vodafone, O2, Three, and BT. This means no data charges will apply if lessons from the country's online classroom are accessed through a mobile phone from participating providers.

The news comes as the government continues to support the most disadvantaged, including those on Free School Meals. Every child eligible for free school meals will be supported while they are learning remotely during the school term, and with the support of the government's £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme, every council in England will be keeping vulnerable children warm and well-fed during the February half term.

Julian David, Chief Executive Officer of techUK, said:

"Securing 1.3 million devices for disadvantaged children and young people in these challenging times, and delivering over one million, is a testament to how the UK tech industry and government have pulled together to support families that

need help the most.

The devices programme is a great example of industry and government collaboration, which will help children's futures for generations to come. I'm keen to deepen this collaboration and see it go even further, and the tech industry stands ready and eager to provide further support for this critical mission."

Leora Cruddas, Chief Executive Officer of the Confederation of



School Trusts, said:

“The milestone of 1 million laptops is really important. Teachers and leaders have worked extraordinarily hard to provide pupils with high quality remote education during the lockdown. Schools are doing their utmost to support these pupils, including through the teacher-led Oak National Academy. We support the Government’s ambition to make sure all pupils can access high quality teaching, at home and in school, and will work closely with Government to continue to improve access and connectivity.”

In addition, the Department has also made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. This will all help to make sure there is as little impact as possible on children’s education while they are learning from home.

The Prime Minister has confirmed that the current attendance restrictions in schools and colleges will remain in place until 8 March at the earliest.

Children of critical workers and vulnerable children and young people will still be able to attend schools and colleges, including special schools and alternative provision. Early years settings also remain open.

£180m Army vehicle contract protects 700 Glasgow jobs

February

A £180 million contract to deliver cutting edge threat detection technology for the British Army’s new Boxer vehicles will support hundreds of jobs in Scotland, it is announced today.



The Remote Weapons Stations will deliver cutting-edge technology for the Army’s Boxer vehicles. MOD Crown Copyright

The 10-year Remote Weapons Stations

(RWS) contract will protect over 700 jobs at Thales UK’s Glasgow site while supporting 30 apprenticeships.

It uses a 360degree high definition long range cameras attached to the outside of the vehicle to scan for enemy threats, even when Boxer is moving at speed. The RWS then alerts soldiers inside the armoured Boxer through a digital display – so they can keep a permanent watch outside while remaining safely inside the vehicle.

The system also offers key defensive capabilities, including a multi-barrel smoke grenade launcher, thermal imaging, and infra-red pointers.

Defence last year secured a substantial settlement of more than £24 billion over four years to modernise the Armed Forces to meet the threats of the future and support British across the Union.

Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

“We look forward to working with Thales UK on the delivery of these Remote Weapons Stations, knowing this contract will not only contribute to the safety of British military personnel on the front line, but also support industry growth here in Scotland.

Protecting hundreds of jobs and supporting 30 apprenticeships, this £180 million UK Government investment further demonstrates our commitment to supporting the defence sector in Scotland and underscores the many opportunities available within the United Kingdom economy.”

Minister of State for Defence, Baroness Goldie said:

“This £180m contract with Thales UK will deliver pioneering surveillance and protection for our front line soldiers and

our new Boxer fleet. We depend on skills and technology from across the United Kingdom and this order will secure 700 Scottish jobs.

Our troops face a myriad of new and emerging threats so it is imperative we invest in critical detect and destroy technology such as this.”

Following the sonar contract for Dreadnought submarines last year, this is Thales UK’s second multi-million-pound contract within 12 months, further showcasing the government’s commitment to levelling-up across the UK.

DE&S Director Land Equipment, Major General Darren Crook said:



“This is another significant step forward for Boxer and I am delighted to see the different threads of the programme coming together. This is a military capability of the future to be proud of.”

The UK re-joined the Boxer programme in 2018 and has committed £2.8 billion to deliver over 500 vehicles to the British Army. The first vehicles are scheduled to be ready for service in 2023.

Steven Lockley, Managing Director of Thales in the UK’s vehicle integration business in Glasgow, said:

“Thales’ sub-contract is a great step forward after months of hard work. Working with our strategic partners, Thales is bringing new skills and technologies into the programme, our facilities in Scotland and the UK supply chain.”

New measures to allow proxy voting in local elections for those self-isolating with coronavirus

February

Individuals who need to self-isolate because of coronavirus will still be able to vote in the local elections, following a planned amendment to emergency proxy voting rules published in Parliament.

The move is one of a number of measures the government is putting in place to allow for fair and COVID-secure participation in the upcoming council and mayoral elections in England, and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales.

The legislation, which has been laid before Parliament, will allow anyone who is self-isolating due to COVID-19 to access an emergency proxy vote, up to 17:00 on election day.

Minister of State for the Constitution & Devolution, Chloe Smith, said:

These elections can and will be delivered in a COVID-secure way and the extended proxy voting rules are a key part of this.

The new rules will mean that voters who have tested positive for COVID-19, or are self-isolating, can still have their say in these elections without having to leave their home.

The new legislation allows:

All those who are unable to attend a polling station as a result of COVID-19, including those who are shielding, to appoint a proxy beyond the usual deadline.

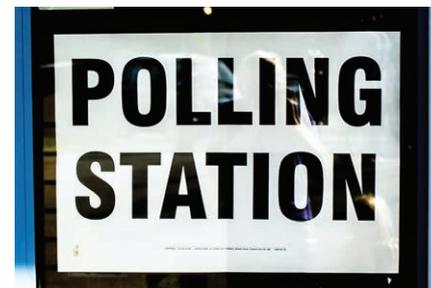
All those with an existing proxy arrangement to appoint a new proxy up until 17:00 on polling day if their proxy is affected by COVID-19 and are unable to act as a proxy.

On Friday 5 February, the government confirmed that the polls scheduled for 6 May 2021, including council and mayoral elections in England and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in England and Wales, will go ahead as planned.

The government has also published a

Delivery Plan setting out guidance on how the polls will be delivered in a COVID-19 secure and effective way, which included preliminary changes to proxy voting rules. As usual, anyone can also secure a postal vote in advance of the May elections. The deadline for all postal voting applications is 17:00 on Tuesday 20 April. Anyone who wants to vote by post is encouraged to apply to do so as early as possible and not wait until the deadline.

Now more than ever, people deserve to have their say as we



build back better, on issues ranging from local health provisions, to safer streets, to the level of council tax, and the pandemic calls for a more flexible approach to voting.

The government continues to work closely with the electoral community and public health bodies to resolve challenges and ensure that everyone who is entitled to vote is able to do so in a COVID-secure way. The government will be engaging with political parties on wider election guidance. This includes the additional new measures on the nominations procedure, published on GOV.UK.

These measures will support the holding of important elections in a way that minimises the risk to public health and instills confidence amongst electors that every effort is being made to ensure the polls remain COVID-secure.

We will also be amending the coronavirus regulations to enable a broader range of campaign-related activity from 8 March, but it is essential that this still takes place in a COVID-secure way, in line with the guidance and the law. The Government will be publishing further guidance for candidates, their agents and political parties on campaigning in the elections in due course, and is engaging with the Parliamentary Parties Panel on this guidance to ensure the views of political parties are taken into account.

‘Space Bridge’ across the world will help UK and Australia get ahead in global space race

February

The world’s first Space Bridge will unlock improved access to trade, investment and academic research opportunities, better advice to businesses and innovative bilateral collaborations. The UK and Australia share future ambitions for space and have similar plans to increase the size and job creation potential of the sector. This agreement will further develop the longstanding relationship between the two countries which dates back to the 1970s when the Prospero satellite built in Farnborough, UK, launched from Woomera, South Australia.

The arrangement enhances cooperation between the UK Space Agency, UK Department for International Trade, Australian Trade & Investment Commission, and the Australian Space Agency, coordinating opportunities for the UK and Australian governments and companies to work on space-related activities, including sharing Earth Observation data to collaborating on robotic and artificial intelligence.

UK Science Minister Amanda Solloway

said:

“The signing of today’s Space Bridge partnership, a world’s first, with one of our closest international allies, is another step forward in our ambition for the UK to become a globally-competitive space power.

The bond will allow our most innovative space businesses and universities to collaborate and share best practice more effectively than ever. I’m excited to see how this partnership will unlock new space jobs in both countries while driving forward new ideas that could enrich all of our lives.”

Minister for Exports, Graham Stuart MP said:

“Space exports hit £5.5 billion in 2017 and it is this international demand for our space goods and services which is driving the development of the UK’s vibrant and innovative space industry.

Like the UK, Australia recognises the enormous potential of space science and recognises that closer partnership and alignment between our two sectors can boost progress and jobs in both countries. I believe that UK exports to Australia could grow by £900 million as a result of a Free-Trade Agreement and the Space Bridge programme can play a critical role in space contributing to this growth, and further strengthening our UK-Australia relationship.”

The UK boasts strong Foreign Direct Investment levels into its space sector and the Australian space sector reports a strong appetite to expand operations into the UK. Leaders for Australia and UK’s space agencies recognise the importance of stronger space ties between both countries, as the UK ramps up plans to become a leading global player in space.

The announcement comes as the UK and Australia begin the fourth round of negotiations on the Free Trade Agreement this week. We have already made good progress in several chapter areas including digital, telecommunications, customs, rules



of origin, and procurement in previous rounds.

Australia is influential in the Indo-Pacific and a Free-Trade Agreement will help us pivot towards this dynamic area of the world. This will help diversify our trade, make our supply chains more resilient, and make the UK less vulnerable to political and economic shocks.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive Officer of the UK Space Agency, said:

“As the UK extends its ambitions in space, it’s only right that we forge new and stronger alliances with new and existing partners all across the globe.

This agreement has the potential to unleash innovation, promote knowledge exchange and build relationships that will help both the UK and Australia maximise the vast economic and scientific potential that the space sector offers. It will help create better opportunities and greater security for people in both nations.”

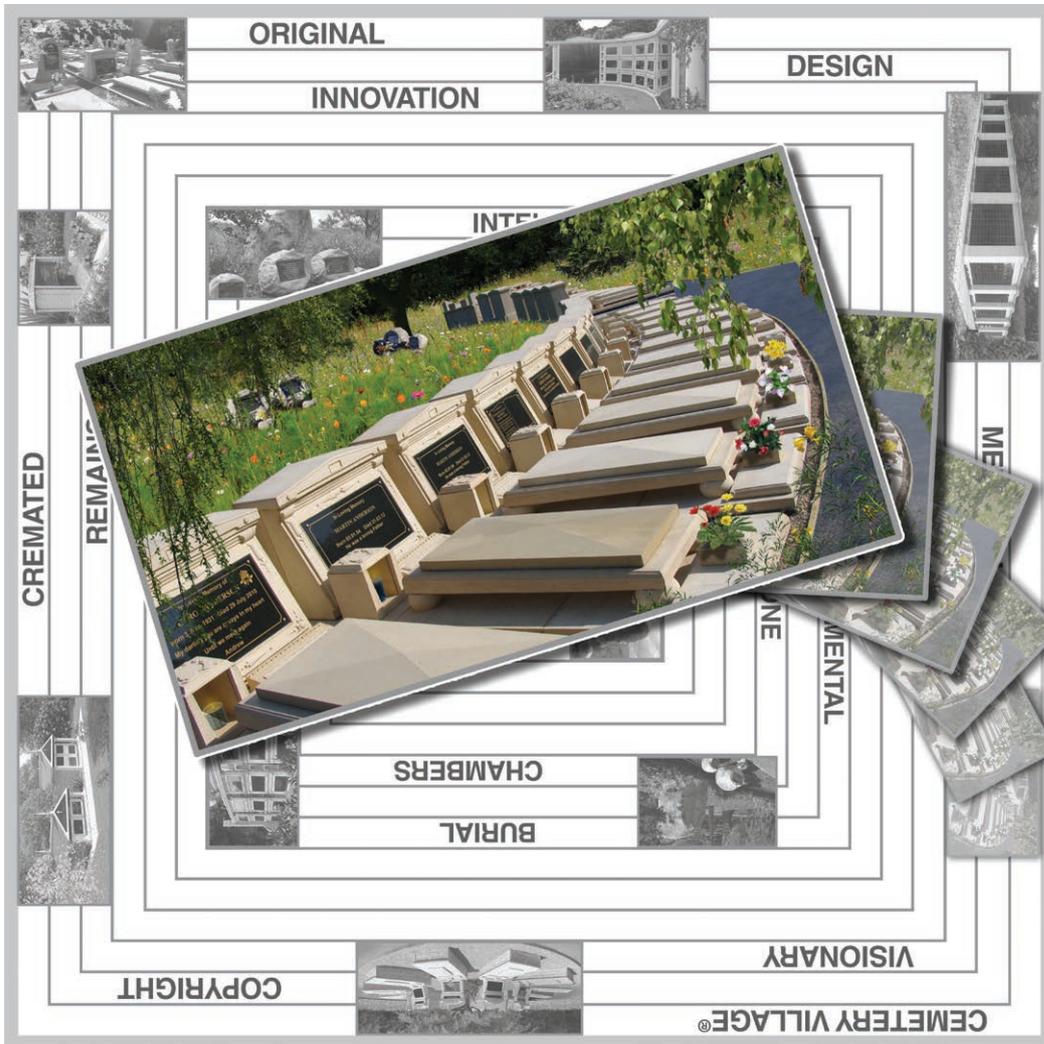
Enrico Palermo, Head of the Australian Space Agency.

“The Space Bridge Framework Arrangement will help propel the Australian civil space industry into its next phase of growth, opening doors to build local capability, as well as significantly boost our collaboration with the UK Space Agency.”

The space sector is one of the fastest-growing UK sectors with 30,000 new jobs expected by 2030. The Australian space sector is also growing with up to 20,000 new Australian jobs expected by 2030.

The Space Bridge Framework Arrangement was signed on Tuesday, 23 February 2021 at the British High Commissioner’s residence in Canberra, Australia, and at Westminster, in London, United Kingdom.

The arrangement was signed by the Australian Minister for Industry, Science and Technology Karen Andrews, UK Minister for Science, Research and Innovation Amanda Solloway, in the presence of British High Commissioner to Australia Vicki Treadell CMG MVO, High Commissioner to the UK The Hon George Brandis QC, Australian Space Agency Head Enrico Palermo, UK Space Agency Chief Executive Officer Dr Graham Turnock, UK Space Agency International Director Alice Bunn, Chair of UKSpace Nick Shave and Space Industry Association of Australia Chief Executive Officer James Brown, who joined the signing virtually.



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£79 million to boost mental health support for children and young people

March

- Nearly 3 million children in England to be supported by mental health support teams in schools
- Around 22,500 more children and young people to access community mental health services
- 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services

Young people have been uniquely impacted by the pandemic and lockdown, with NHS research suggesting 1 in 6 may now have a mental health problem, up from 1 in 9 in 2017.

The number of mental health support teams in schools and colleges will grow from 59 to 400 by April 2023, supporting nearly 3 million children. Mental health support teams work in a variety of ways, including enabling children to text their local mental health support team, with a health professional responding within an hour during the school day offering them advice, or providing families with tips on how to spot that the children and young people are struggling with their mental health.

The teams also help staff within schools and colleges to provide a 'whole school approach' to mental health and wellbeing through training sessions for parents or workshops for teachers.

Throughout the pandemic, these teams have continued to work virtually, providing vital support for young people during lockdown. Schools have hailed their success in supporting both students and staff. In Kent, teams have provided 20-minute telephone counselling sessions for parents struggling with the competing demands of life under lockdown, alongside virtual drop-in sessions for school staff on how to support children with their mental health.

Access to community mental health services will also be expanded, giving 22,500 more children and young people access to help and support by 2021 to 2022 – including talking therapies and cognitive behavioural therapy.

This accelerates the commitment to expand

services as part of the NHS Long Term Plan, which will see an additional 345,000 more children and young people access mental health services by 2024.

As we near step one of the roadmap, with schools returning from Monday, the government has



expanded the support available to children and young people who may be suffering from poor mental health as a result of, or exacerbated by, the pandemic.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“Over the last year great focus has rightly been placed on our physical health, but I am incredibly conscious of the impact the pandemic has had on people’s mental health and wellbeing.

Children and young people have been particularly impacted by disruption to their routine, education and social lives and I am committed to doing all I can to ensure mental health support is there for those who need it.

Our response to this global pandemic will not only treat the public health threat of coronavirus but ensure our clinicians have the resources to respond to the long-term impact on people’s mental health, to provide support to everyone in their hour of need.”

Children and young people facing a mental health crisis will continue to get support through 24/7 crisis lines and will benefit from additional funding to support follow-up crisis treatment at home where necessary.

Eating disorder services for conditions like

anorexia and bulimia will also be accessible to an additional 2,000 children and young people in the community. This follows NHS England’s plans to expand rapid access to specialist NHS treatment for young people with eating disorders across England, aiming to contact patients within 48 hours and beginning treatment as soon as 2 weeks later.

Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Nadine Dorries said:

“This has been an exceptionally difficult year, especially for our children and young people, and we know it is having a real impact on mental health.

This additional funding will mean children who need to can access services in the community, as well as providing early intervention in schools.

I am committed to supporting everyone’s mental health and wellbeing, and doing everything we can to ensure young people who need help, get help.”

Children and young people’s mental health services have remained open throughout the pandemic, adapting to deliver services remotely where appropriate.

NHS Mental Health Director Claire Murdoch said:

“The pandemic has turned our lives upside down and hit children and young people particularly hard.

NHS mental health services have worked around the clock, proactively reaching out to and caring for children and young people despite challenging circumstances – and we stand steadfast in our commitment to continue to improve mental health care for each and every one of them.

This funding announced as part of the Spending Review last November will now support NHS England’s work to increase the number of mental health support teams in schools and colleges to 400 by 2023, and growing community services to treat more children and young people than ever before.”

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind said:

“It’s positive that the UK government have confirmed that £79 million of the previously announced £500 million investment in mental health has been allocated to support children and young people’s mental health. With schools re-opening in

England next week, the commitment to having better mental health support for pupils cannot come soon enough.

We know that high levels of poor mental health and problems accessing mental health services were a problem for many children and young people even before the pandemic, and that coronavirus has disproportionately affected younger people. Over the past year, our young people have faced a whole load of additional challenges, including school closures, loneliness and isolation, and the knock-on effect of the recession causing problems for families such as debt, unemployment, housing and access to benefits.

There is still lots more work to be done to ensure that every young person gets the support they need for their mental health. But this is a positive step forward in cementing mental health at the heart of recovery from the pandemic and beyond.”



Children’s Minister Vicky Ford said:

“For many young people this pandemic has amplified the feeling of lack of control, which can have such a huge impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

This additional funding will be absolutely vital and the new mental health support teams will enable even more children and young people to get the support they need quickly. It builds on the expert training programme we’ve introduced for school and college staff and our Mental Health in Education Action Group to address the mental health issues young people are experiencing and improving the help available.

This challenging time may be turbulent, but our commitment to improve mental health support remains firm and we are prioritising this as more pupils and students return to face-to-face education next week.”

To help children and young people, their parents and carers manage their mental wellbeing, deal with stress and tackle issues like anxiety and uncertainty, Public Health England has a series of dedicated resources on the Every Mind Matters website.

This includes tips on self care and dealing with change.

Dr Alex George, government’s Youth Mental Health Ambassador, said:

“This funding will make a huge difference to young people’s lives, and I am so pleased to see this level of commitment from the government and the Prime Minister.

The mental health support teams in schools, together with the child and adolescent mental health services are vital sources of support, and I will continue to work with the government on supporting the wellbeing of children and young people.”

Education staff will be supported to respond to the emotional and mental health pressures some children and young people may be feeling as a result of COVID-19 as they return to school by the Wellbeing for Education Return programme backed by £8 million, and free online psychological training modules on how to provide practical and emotional support to children and young people affected by emergencies or crisis situations.

This funding forms part of the £500 million for mental health announced at the 2021 to 2022 spending review.



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Schools and colleges to reopen from tomorrow (8 Mar) as part of Step One of the roadmap

March

The Prime Minister has today hailed the collective efforts of the public to bring infection rates down so we can start Step One of the roadmap, with pupils across England returning to school and college from tomorrow.

Throughout the pandemic, the Prime Minister and Chief Medical Officer have been clear of the benefits that being in school brings to the physical and mental health of children and young people. Getting children back to face to face education has remained the national priority throughout lockdown.

The sacrifices that have been made by each and every member of the public by staying at home whilst the most vulnerable in our society have been vaccinated, has meant that we can now begin the cautious easing of restrictions. Millions of children and young people will be reunited with their friends and teachers, with schools returning from tomorrow.

Many secondary schools and colleges have already started inviting students for their

first rapid lateral flow test, with schools and colleges having discretion on how to stagger the return of their students over the next week to facilitate testing and their safe return to the classroom. After three initial tests on-site students will be provided with two rapid tests to use each week at home.

Nearly 57 million lateral flow tests have already been delivered to schools and colleges across the country. Over 5 million lateral flow tests have been conducted across education settings during lockdown, with nearly one million last week alone.

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson said:

“The reopening of schools marks a truly national effort to beat this virus. It is because of the determination of every person in this country that we can start moving closer to a sense of normality – and it is right that getting our young people back into the classroom is the first step.

We are being cautious in our approach so that we do not undo the progress we have made so far and I urge you all not to give up

on your efforts to keep your families and others safe. Get the vaccine, get tested, and remember that we are all in this together.”

The government has confirmed twice-weekly testing using lateral flow tests will be given for free to all adults in households with primary, secondary school and college-aged children and young people, including childcare and support bubbles, to help find more Covid-19 cases and break chains of transmission. One in three people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and will be spreading it without realising it, so rapid regular testing offers a reliable and effective additional tool to help keep schools safe. Twice-weekly testing will also be offered to adults working in the wider school community, including bus drivers and after school club leaders.

As we move towards a more normal way of life, testing will be a key part of continuing to protect loved ones

and the community. As the Health Secretary set out earlier this week, our roadmap is built on the principle of replacing the protection that comes from lockdown with the protection that comes from vaccines and regular testing.

Lateral flow testing detects cases quickly – in under 30 minutes – meaning positive cases can isolate immediately. This could be the difference between finding and isolating cases and their close contacts, or a whole school being sent home due to an outbreak. It could also be the difference between a workplace having to close for a period, or being able to stay open and running.

Secondary school and college students are also being asked to wear face coverings wherever social distancing cannot be maintained as an additional safety measure through to Easter.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

“Tomorrow will mark a moment of joy for millions of people across the country – from the students going back to class to the



teachers who can't wait to get them back – as young people walk through their school and college gates and are reunited with their friends.

I do not underestimate how challenging the last few months have been with some children in class and most at home, but I do know how important it is for all children to be back in school, not only for their education but for their mental health and wellbeing.

Over the last few days I've been visiting schools and speaking to staff who have been preparing for the full return and their sheer dedication and selflessness has shone through.

I'd also like to thank children, young people, their families and carers for their patience and resilience in the face of the challenges the pandemic has posed.”

Existing safety measures also remain in place, including maintaining distance between staff and students where possible, good ventilation and regular hand washing.

Dr Susan Hopkins Covid-19 Strategic Response Director to Public Health England and Chief Medical Adviser to NHS Test and Trace said:

“Schools re-opening for all students is important for children's wellbeing and mental health as well as their learning.

Scientific studies show that rates of

COVID-19 infection in schools reflect rates in the community and schools have reduced the risk of transmission. With extra precautionary measures and twice-weekly testing in place and the lowest rate of infection since September 2020 it's better that students are now back in the classroom.

Outside of schools, it remains crucial that current restrictions are followed.”

The return to face to face education has been supported with a £1.7 billion package, focusing on an expansion of one-to-one and small group tutoring programmes across all age groups, summer provision for those pupils who need it the most, and flexible additional one-off funding for schools to use in the best interests of their most disadvantaged pupils.

The National Tutoring Programme that was set up to reach the most disadvantaged young people with one-to-one or small-group tutoring has already reached over 125,000 young people this academic year, and will continue to expand thanks to the extended funding package. This targeted intervention is proven to boost progress by up to three to five months from just a single block of tutoring.

Unlimited fines for those who breach fire safety regulations

March

Building owners could face unlimited fines following new measures being brought in to strengthen fire safety, the Home Office has announced today.

As part of the government's work to ensure people are safe in their homes, these limitless fines will be handed out to anyone caught obstructing or impersonating a fire inspector as well as to those who breach fire safety regulations under the Fire Safety Order.

These new measures, announced as part of the government's response to the Fire Safety Consultation, will come into force as part of the legislation in the Building Safety Bill.

The measures will amend the Fire Safety Order and will include a requirement for fire risk assessments to be recorded for each building and improve how fire safety information is handed over throughout the

lifetime of a building.

The Home Office have also announced a further cash boost of £10 million for Fire and Rescue Authorities across England, on top of the £6 million already announced in the Fire Covid-19 Contingency Fund. This will help with additional tasks related to managing the pandemic – such as driving



ambulances and assisting at testing and vaccination centres.

Fire Minister Lord Greenhalgh said:

Everyone should be safe in the buildings where they live, stay or work.

Our new measures will improve fire safety and help save lives, but will also take firm action against those who fail in their duty to keep people safe.

Our incredible Fire and Rescue Services have played a crucial role in our response to the pandemic, from assisting at vaccination centres to driving ambulances. That is why we are giving them this cash boost, so they can continue their life-saving efforts.

Roy Wilsher, National Fire Chiefs Council Chair, said:

The NFCC welcomes the extra funding to support Covid activities carried out by fire and rescue services across England. Firefighters are responsible for administering around 1 in 240 vaccinations to the public.

We also welcome the government's response to its own fire safety consultation and the continued investment in fire and rescue services protection work.

Ultimately, we want to see safer buildings for residents and are committed to working constructively with the Home Office and other partners on the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations and other key fire safety policy areas.

The new measures announced today will:

improve the quality of fire risk assessments and competence of those who complete them

ensure vital fire safety information is preserved over the lifespan of all regulated buildings

improve cooperation and coordination amongst people responsible for fire safety and making it easier to identify who they are

strengthen enforcement action, with anyone impersonating or obstructing a fire inspector facing unlimited fines
strengthen guidance issued under the Fire Safety Order so that failure to follow it may be considered in court proceedings as evidence of a breach or of compliance
improve the engagement between Building Control Bodies and Fire Authorities in reviewing plans for building work
require all new flats above 11 metres tall to install premises information boxes

The Fire Safety Consultation took place last year to inform government work on improving fire safety. The government received feedback from over 250 stakeholders with an interest in building and fire safety, including residents, Responsible Persons and enforcing authorities, which we have used to inform our response.

The government intends to launch a further consultation on personal emergency evacuation plans this spring to seek additional views on implementing the relevant Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations.

The Home Office intends, subject to the Fire Safety Bill receiving Royal Assent, to lay regulations before the second anniversary of the Grenfell Inquiry Phase

1 Report which will deliver on the Inquiry's recommendations.

The Fire Safety Bill clarifies that the scope of the Fire Safety Order (FSO) and changes to the FSO outline above will be delivered through it. The Building Safety Bill will create the first national Building Safety Regulator and overhaul the way buildings in scope of the new regime are designed, built and managed when occupied.



Workplace testing programme expands to offer free rapid home testing

March

- Government makes rapid home testing available for all businesses with over 10 employees who cannot offer on-site testing
- Businesses must register interest by 12 April to access free tests
- Over 60,000 businesses already registered for regular and rapid tests for employees

Over 60,000 businesses across the country have already registered their interest to provide rapid tests to key workers. From 6 April, the workplace testing programme will supply home test kits to companies with over 10 workers where it is not possible to set up testing on-site, due to a lack of space or because companies operate across multiple sites.

Businesses across the country will be eligible to order the home test kits online to distribute to their employees. These self-test kits will be picked up by staff from their employer with clear instructions about how to take the test. Staff will then complete the home test in the normal way, before reporting their results to the NHS using the provided gov.uk address.

The workplace testing programme uses lateral flow tests (LFD) to rapidly detect the virus in 30 minutes. Swift detection of cases means those who test positive can isolate immediately and, in doing so, break chains of transmission and suppress the virus.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“Rapid testing is a vital part of our roadmap, helping us to cautiously lift restrictions on our economy and society.

Around one in three people with coronavirus do not have any symptoms, so extending employee testing from the workplace to the home will help us identify more cases we otherwise wouldn't find, prevent further transmission and save lives.

60,000 businesses across the country have already registered for free, regular and rapid tests and I encourage many more to take up the offer, helping to keep their employees and their families safe.”

Businesses are encouraged to register before 12 April in order to access free tests until the end of June, even if they're not yet open or are not able to start using the tests straight away.

As well as reporting their result directly to the NHS, employees should advise their employer of a positive result and take a confirmatory PCR test. Employers will retain an important role in encouraging their employees to take and report the results of their test.

Matthew Fell, CBI Chief UK Policy Director, said:

“Mass, rapid workplace testing is an



essential pillar of the roadmap for reopening, alongside the vaccine rollout. Having the option for staff to test at home will enable more firms to embrace workplace testing, as not all employers will have the space or facilities to run testing programmes on their premises. The move to home testing reflects ongoing, high quality dialogue between business and government. We'd encourage as many firms as possible to register before the 12 April deadline, as part of their broader efforts to keep staff and customers safe."

Employers with fewer than 10 people can alternatively access regular testing through the community testing programme, which is now offered by all local authorities in England. Work is also underway to allow staff of small businesses to order tests online to be sent to their home.

Helen Dickinson, Chief Executive of the British Retail Consortium said:

"The BRC welcomes the proposal to extend the workplace testing programme to include home testing. This is something we have called for as the next step for smaller businesses and stores where the space for testing at work is limited. It is also supported by employees as a practical approach."

Testing will form a crucial part of everyday life as parts of society reopen. Regular testing could be the difference between a workplace being able to stay open and operational, or needing to close due to a Covid-19 outbreak.

For many employers on-site testing has already become an essential part of its employee offer and a routine part of working life.

Around 1 in 3 people with coronavirus don't have symptoms, which means they could be spreading the virus in workplaces without knowing.

Regular, rapid testing is already in place for millions of people across the NHS, care homes and schools. The government has also confirmed twice-weekly home testing using lateral flow tests for free to all adults in households with primary, secondary school and college aged children and young people, including childcare and support bubbles.

This is in addition to the two home tests for all secondary and college students and staff per week. Staff in primary schools, and in private, voluntary and independent nurseries also have access to rapid testing through their workplace.

The announcement comes as a new set of statistics published on Friday, by the Official of National Statistics (ONS), revealed 86% of people testing positive for coronavirus are fully complying with self-isolation guidance for their full isolation period.

Data also showed 90% of the contacts reached by NHS Test and Trace are fully adhering with the rules and that 97% of NHS COVID-19 app users started

to self-isolate within 24 hours of receiving a notification. The majority of respondents (68%) also fully understood the self-isolation guidance. Of people who did not fully comply, the most common breaches were to buy food, get medicines or medical appointments.

"BT Chief Medical Officer, Dr Richard said:

"BT is pleased to have been supporting this important government trial in England, offering rapid home testing to our field engineers who have done such an incredible job of keeping the country connected."

Eastwood Park CEO John Thatcher said:

"We originally invested in testing kits for all staff and the hundreds of learners returning to our classroom and laboratory-based training. Now to benefit from support from the government providing kits for staff, which on average could mean 120 tests per week, is allowing us to focus on our learners. The additional security and ease presented by the new self-testing operation, sitting alongside all the other day to day measures, has been a big confidence boost for everyone."



Forthcoming articles under consideration

(guest contributors welcome - please contact office@government-world.com)

- Festival of Britain - when and where will it be held and what will it entail?
- Britain – an industrial and manufacturing nation or a massive distribution centre for imported disposables?
- UK space hubs to be established from Cornwall to Sutherland in Scotland - what are the environmental implications?
- Peat sales in garden centres to be banned from 2024 as part of the government's bid to tackle the climate emergency
- Armstrong Siddeley

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