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Autumn 2021 British Edition



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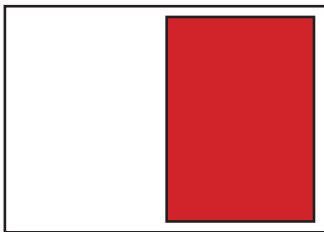
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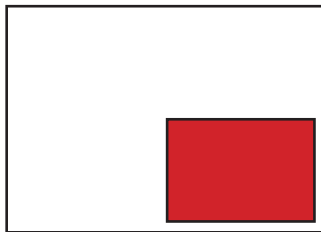
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P.O. Box 159 Carlisle, Great Britain CA2 5BG

Office: 08702 416 422

E-mail: office@government-world.com

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ISSN 1744-6996



A farmer walks his fields in the early morning light

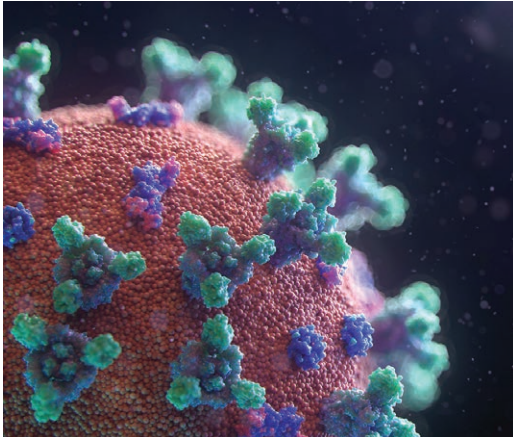


News & Sports Roundup

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

By Paul G Bazeley for Government World

July News Review



In coronavirus news, most social contact restrictions were ended in England. Face masks were no longer required inside public spaces, limits on the number of people at events were scrapped, and nightclubs were allowed to reopen for the first time in over a year. Scotland also relaxed their restrictions.

However, face coverings were still mandatory inside, and the number of people that could

meet was relaxed but still restricted. The rules for essential workers were relaxed, meaning they no longer needed to quarantine for ten days provided they were fully vaccinated and tested negative for COVID-19. The easing of the rules came after many places were suffering from a shortage of workers. The United Nations World Meteorological Society confirmed that Antarctica had reached a record high temperature of 18.3 degrees Celsius.

Severe flooding occurred across Europe. The



floods began in the UK, causing minor damage and disruption. Later, floods left billions worth of damage across Germany, Belgium,

Romania, Italy, Austria, Croatia, Switzerland, and other countries. At least 240 people are believed to have died in the floods.

The Taliban continued its offensive that had begun in May. By the end of the month, they had entered both the Helmand and Herat province. The group had also captured border crossings as well as notable districts.

Richard Branson became the second oldest person to go into outer space at the age of 70. The British billionaire travelled on a spaceplane named VSS Unity built by the space flight company



Virgin Galactic. The company aims to offer space flights to tourists.

Later in the month, Blue Origin, a company founded by Jeff Bezos (who also founded Amazon), launched the rocket, New Shepherd. Bezos, his brother Mark, Wally Funk, and a Dutch student named Oliver Daemen were onboard the rocket. Funk became the oldest person to fly to space at 82, while Daemen became the youngest at just 18 years old.

July Sports Review

The 2020 Summer Olympic Games opening ceremony marked the start of the Tokyo



Games, a year later than planned. Feelings on whether the games should have gone ahead were mixed in Japan, and a decision was made to not allow supporters into the games due to the coronavirus. In addition, several athletes had to pull out of the games due to testing positive for COVID-19.

After a successful campaign in the Euro 2020 competition, England fell at the final hurdle losing to Italy on penalties in the tournament's final at Wembley stadium. England opened the scoring early with Luke Shaw scoring in the second minute. However, a defiant Italy began to take control of the game with an equaliser coming in the 67th minute from Leonardo Bonucci. After the almost inevitable extra time came a messy round of penalties which Italy won 3-2 to crown them Euro 2020 champions.

In the Copa America, Argentina beat Brazil 1-0 with an Angel Di Maria goal separating the sides. The win meant that Lionel Messi deemed one of the best footballers ever, finally won the Copa America.

The Milwaukee Bucks defeated the Phoenix Suns 4-2 in the NBA finals. It was the first time the Bucks have won the title in 50 years and only their second overall.

August News Review

Quarantine restrictions for travellers returning from the United States and the European Union, excluding France. Anyone fully vaccinated was no longer required to



quarantine and instead were required to take a lateral flow before returning and a PCR test on the second day of their arrival. Later in the month, France was removed from its 'Amber Plus' status to move in line with other EU countries.

Those who were fully vaccinated were no longer required to self-isolate if they had been in contact with someone who had coronavirus. Instead, it was advised they do a PCR test, wear masks inside and in enclosed areas and do lateral flow tests at home.

British and American governments advised their citizens to leave Afghanistan 'immediately' as Taliban forces continued to advance and capture parts of the country. The advancement of the Taliban had slowly been gaining progress over the last couple of months as the UK, the US, and other countries began to leave the country.

By mid-August, the Taliban had entered Kabul and seized the Presidential Palace. During the month, chaos erupted at airports as UK and US nationals, eligible Afghans and asylum seekers desperately tried to flee the country as the Taliban increased its power throughout the country.

Despite a terrorist attack at Kabul International Airport, UK and US forces continued to evacuate people from Afghanistan. On the 28th August, 2021, British troops left the country, ending their evacuation efforts and their 20-year involvement in the War in Afghanistan.

The Belarusian sprinter, Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, asked for Japanese police protection and entered the Polish embassy in Tokyo. The sprinter accused the Olympic Committee of Belarus of forcing her into taking part in the 4 x 400m relay. She also claimed she was taken to the airport against her will, where she refused to board a flight back to Belarus. A few days later, Tsimanouskaya was granted a visa by Poland under humanitarian grounds.

The National Observatory of Athens announced a record high temperature of



46.3 degrees Celsius as a heatwave gripped Greece. Spain later recorded its highest temperature of 47.4 in Montoro.

Greenland's Ice Sheet recorded rainfall for the first time in history; approximately 7 billion tonnes of rain fell in the area.

August Sports Review

The 2020 Summer Olympics came to a close in Tokyo. The USA topped the medal table, winning the most gold medals (39) and most medals (113). China finished second with 38 gold medals and 88 medals in total. In third was Japan with 27 golds and 58 medals; it was the most golds and medals the country had ever won at an Olympics. Finally, Great Britain finished in fourth place, winning 22 golds and 65 medals; this meant they became the first nation to beat or equal their total medal in the two Olympic games after hosting them.

After the Olympics had finished, a few weeks later saw the opening ceremony of the 2020 Summer Paralympics. Just the same as the Olympics, the events were all held with no spectators.

September News Review

The UK government decided to offer 12–15-year-olds the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Despite others arguing it would have little impact, the choice was made to reduce disruption at schools.



A debate over whether to introduce vaccine passports went on for several weeks. The scheme would have meant those who were not fully vaccinated would not be able to enter cinemas, nightclubs and other significant events. It was eventually decided not to introduce them; however, they may be brought in later if COVID-19 deaths or rates worsen.

Motorists flocked to petrol stations in the UK to panic-buy fuel after a lorry driver shortage meant some stations completely ran out of fuel. The government and fuel suppliers urged drivers to remain calm, while some petrol stations put £30 limits due to overwhelming demand. Toward the end of the month, the army was drafted in to help transport fuel to the pumps.

Gas prices in the UK began to soar due to a global shortage. The shortage was blamed on increased demand as the world recovered from a pandemic, shortages due to the pandemic and a smaller gas supply than usual from



Russia to Europe. As a result, the regulator Ofgem had announced a £139 increase in the price cap for energy suppliers in August. Nevertheless, some smaller energy companies went bust after locking in customers on low fixed rate tariffs.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, US President Joe Biden, and Australian prime minister Scott Morrison announced the AUKUS, a security alliance formed to counter China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. It was also announced the Australian army would acquire nuclear submarines as part of the initiative. China condemned the move claiming it was provocative and adversarial.

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, stated that the UK would not recognise the Taliban government in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future. He did, however, note that Britain will engage with the group when necessary.

September Sports Review

The British tennis player Emma Raducanu shocked the world by winning the Women's US Open final, beating Leylah Fernandez 6-4,

6-3. The 18-year-old became the first qualifier to win a Grand Slam tournament. Raducanu also managed to win the tournament without dropping a single set. The tennis star rose to 25th in the rankings after her win.

In the men's US Open final, Daniil Medvedev beat Novak Djokovic 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 to win his first Grand Slam title. It also meant the Russian stopped Djokovic from winning the 'golden slam' after winning the Australian Open, Roland Garros, Wimbledon and the Olympic gold medal.



The Paralympics closing ceremony brought the 2020 games to an end. For the fifth consecutive time, China topped the medal table, winning 96 golds and 207 medals. Great

Britain came in second place with 41 golds and 124 total medals. The United States came in third with 37 golds and 104 medals.

In Formula 1, Lewis Hamilton won the Russian Grand Prix to win a landmark 100th race victory. He also managed to leapfrog this season's close rival, Max Verstappen, into first place of the Driver Standings.



The British boxer Anthony Joshua lost to Oleksander Usyk by a unanimous decision at the Tottenham Hotspur stadium in London. The Ukrainian boxer caused a considerable shock, outclassing AJ throughout most of the fight, meaning the Brit lost all his heavyweight titles. The result also put a potential halt to a highly anticipated fight with Tyson Fury. However, a few days after the defeat, it was confirmed the Joshua had activated his rematch clause to fight Usyk.

End



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Brand new rail tech to ‘pandemic proof’ train travel

July

- new tech to encourage passengers back to the railway post-COVID-19 has received government backing as part of the First of a Kind competition
- a 360-degree immersive journey planning app, interchangeable train interiors and an app connecting passengers to the world outside their train
- 30 projects to share £9 million investment to launch tech to improve rail journeys, increase passenger confidence and make the network even greener

A virtual reality immersive journey planning app for trains and stations could soon make journeys easier by reducing passenger anxiety and helping passengers to understand their journey ahead of travelling.

The technology is one of the winners of the latest round of the First of a Kind (FOAK)

competition announced today (2 July 2021) by the Transport Secretary. This year, the competition has been aimed at making the railways cleaner, greener and more passenger-friendly.

The Department for Transport (DfT), in partnership with Innovate UK, has funded 30 ground-breaking projects with a share of £9 million.

The competition is focused on developing pioneering technology and exceptional ideas that can improve journeys for travellers, encourage passengers back onto the network and reduce the environmental impacts of rail as we build back better from COVID-19.

Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, said:

“I am delighted to announce the winners of the 2021 First of a Kind competition. These

winners will hopefully play a role in putting passengers at the centre of our railways as we build back better from COVID-19.

The competition always throws up surprises and the ideas shown today could transform how we travel in future.”

The creative problem solving on display in this competition will be



further encouraged by the reforms brought about by the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail.

The expertise and innovation of the private sector will improve efficiency, making it easier and cheaper to plan maintenance, renewals and upgrades - unlocking new benefits for passengers.

Winners include a revolutionary app that connects rail travellers to the world outside their window and brings the route to life. As passengers travel, the app uses geo-location to immerse them in the history and stories of the places they travel through, making even the morning commute a train ride back in time.

Other winning projects include:

- a system to monitor people flow, congestion points and behaviour at stations, so operators can remove bottlenecks and deploy countermeasures, helping people avoid crowds and restoring passenger confidence in the rail system post COVID-19
- a scheme that provides an interchangeable interior train carriage for quick, deep cleaning and allows operators

to rejig a trains seating layout at short notice – reacting to demand, keeping passengers safe and freeing up space

- a project that uses electromagnetism to deliver safe and predictable braking in harsh conditions, while improving acceleration
- a scheme that aims to deliver a train running on hydrogen and a hydrogen gas blend promising low emissions and an even greener railway

Simon Edmonds, Deputy Executive Chair and Chief Business Officer, Innovate UK, said:

“As we move ever closer to getting past the pandemic, passengers are returning



to the railway. To give them ever greater confidence that rail is safe and sustainable, we called upon UK innovators to come up with fresh ideas.

Yet again the response has been fantastic. Not only will passengers benefit from these great innovations, but business prospects are bright in this sector too.”

Now in its fifth round, the competition was open to inventors from across the nation, regardless of the organisation’s size or stature, which allows small companies with bright ideas to be recognised.

Previous winners include the LoCe (Less oil, Cleaner exhaust) project that secured £398,000 in 2020. The project has developed new diesel exhaust technology that reduces nitrogen oxide emissions by around 80%. The technology has been fitted to a Porterbrook-owned Class 170 Turbostar, operated by East Midlands Railway, and has subsequently reduced harmful engine emissions.

UK Government marks national Thank You Day

July

- National Thank You Day, backed by Lorraine Kelly, Dame Katherine Grainger and Tom Kitchin, will give thanks to those who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic
- Tartan Tea Parties, BBQs and picnics are set to take place across Scotland to celebrate local heroes
- UK Government Communities Secretary thanks community heroes and encourages all to fill the airwaves with tributes to everyone who played their part

The UK Government is celebrating Thank You Day to shine a light on Scotland's unsung heroes who have served local communities during the pandemic.

With backing from a host of Scottish celebrities including TV's Lorraine Kelly, olympic rower Dame Katherine Grainger

and Scotland's youngest Michelin starred chef Tom Kitchin, the day is set to give thanks to those who have gone the extra mile to help their neighbours.

The campaign for Thank You Day was started by a small group of people from across the UK including Debbie Matthew, a stroke survivor from Perthshire, and May Parsons, the nurse who administered the



UK's first Covid jab.

Thanks to their efforts, people around the country will be gathering to show their gratitude by hosting Covid safe Tartan Tea Parties, BBQs, picnics, and certificate ceremonies in honour of those who have selflessly given their time to help those in need.

UK Government Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick is also calling on people to fill the UK's airwaves with their thanks and tributes on local radio and social media.

Unsung heroes include people such as:

- Faith leaders who embraced technology to ensure communities

could celebrate religious festivals online and opened up places of worship as vaccination centres

- The many volunteers who delivered food parcels and those who were always there at the other end of the phone or on the doorstep to smile, listen and talk so people did not feel alone
- Volunteers and charities who worked to get rough sleepers off the streets and provided lifesaving support for those fleeing domestic abuse
- Council staff, social workers and refuse collectors who kept vital services going during the most challenging times.

The Prime Minister will be joining the festivities with a 'BB-Thank-Q', hosting community leaders, NHS workers and representatives from the Royal Voluntary Service.

UK Government Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

This past year has been challenging for us all. But in the darkest of times, when people were most in need, the actions of

our friends and neighbours to support our communities have shone the brightest.

Across all faiths, ages, backgrounds and languages, our communities have shown off the best of this country.

You are all our community heroes and on behalf of the UK Government I want to say thank you.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

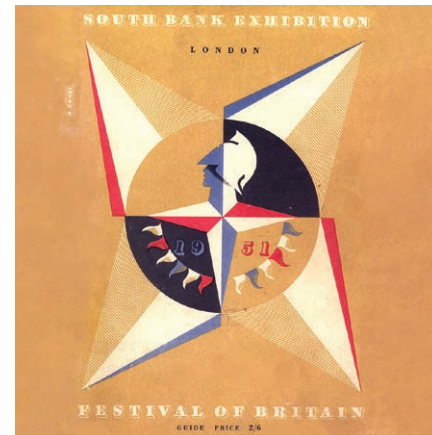
The past year has been incredibly challenging for all of us, but the kindness, generosity and community spirit shown across Scotland has been truly heartening.

From every one of our key workers who kept services going in the most difficult of circumstances, to our voluntary groups who worked tirelessly to help those in need, the people that delivered food parcels to their neighbours, there are so many in Scotland that went above and beyond to support their communities.

The UK Government is proud to be supporting Thank You Day to pay tribute to all those who deserve our sincere gratitude.

Festival of Britain

The Festival of Britain was first announced in 1947 and took place in 1951. Now, 70 years later, as announced by Theresa May in 2018, a festival of the UK will take place in 2022. Festival UK 2022 has been renamed 'Unboxed - Creativity in the UK' and further information will follow in the next edition of Government World.



Man overboard recovery and drowning prevention

July

Over the past six months the MAIB has launched investigations into a number of fatal accidents on board fishing vessels. We have identified various recurrent themes but man overboard retrieval remains a persistent, and deadly, issue. Tragically in February a fisherman lost his life off the Shetlands when he fell overboard and his crew couldn't recover him, even though at one point he had two hands on the vessel's recessed ladder.

Last month Jack Martin, one of our inspectors, took part in a man overboard experience exercise held for the fishing community. Organised by the RNLI with funding from Trinity House and Seafish, the aim was to give fishermen the opportunity to gain an understanding of what fishermen falling overboard would experience.

We were joined by a group of fishers from the east coast fleet who were all working

on board 8m or 9m crab and lobster potters that launch from beaches. The morning involved some honest conversations about lifejacket use and their experiences of accidents. It was fascinating to hear the perceived issues with wearing lifejackets while working on their boats. Once Frankie Horne, our trainer, had shown them the



statistics around man overboard incidents and the effects of cold water immersion, some of the reasons given for not wearing lifejackets (like comfort and convenience) seemed trivial, and the fishers fully admitted that.

In the afternoon the real learning started! The fishers got changed into the clothes they would normally wear out at sea. We then added a set of overalls and then oil skins and shoes or boots. The first task was to jump into the wave pool and tread water for as long as we could. Then we went back in with an auto inflate lifejacket with 150N of buoyancy to compare the experience. With the lifejackets on we then had the chance to try out some different types of recovery equipment.

What did you experience in the tank?

I've always thought I was a decent swimmer but what was immediately noticeable was the weight of the oil skins. Although working hard, I felt OK for the first couple of minutes, chatting with the lifeguard and keeping a rhythm with the up and down of the waves, but that changed very quickly. As soon as the first significant splash of water went over my face, I started to go downhill rapidly. Every time I tried to calm myself down and get my breathing under control, another wave would hit, and I felt more and more desperate for a decent breath of air. Any rhythm I had with the waves disappeared which then compounded the issue as it seemed every wave was now breaking over my head.

The reality dawned on me; I was drowning. I signalled to the lifeguard who rescued me, and when I finally got out of the pool I was completely exhausted. I had been in the wave pool just 5½ minutes.

When in the pool with the lifejacket on and inflated, I was so much more comfortable. Although I still got the occasional splash over the face, I could float calmly and preserve my energy. What was very

noticeable was the difference in comfort and how high my head was above the water when my crotch strap was tightened properly.

What made it so challenging to keep going?

The weight of the oil skins was like having an anchor tied around my waist. I was also very aware that I was in a heated swimming pool with a lifeguard less than 1 m away at all times, so I tried to imagine myself in freezing water, alone and with no way to raise an alarm. It was genuinely terrifying.

What was the key piece of safety learning you came away with?

It's really important to see man overboard recovery as a system of several parts. Start by trying to eliminate the risk of going overboard in the first place, of course. However, if someone is in the water you have to assume that, in most cases, they will be unable to help in their own rescue after around 10 minutes due to the effects of immersion in cold water. A lifejacket will give time to affect a rescue but only if there is a well-considered recovery system in place which is ready to use. Being well

drilled in the use of the recovery equipment is also critical to a successful rescue, as is the ability to raise an alarm, like the use of a personal locator beacon, especially on single-handed vessels.

What advice would you give to someone who finds themselves or a colleague in a similar situation in real life?

Don't be in that situation! Even in a heated pool, without a lifejacket the danger of drowning was very real when fully clothed and with a 1 m wave state. When you consider the temperature of the waters around the UK and Ireland, a properly worn lifejacket could make the difference between going home to your family that evening or dying, and I think that's the real point. Wear the lifejacket for your crew... to give them time to rescue their mate and not have to watch you die unnecessarily. Wear it for your family, who want you back safe and sound. Don't be selfish, wear your lifejacket.



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£226 million package to support vital bus services

July

- funding will maintain bus services as passengers begin to return in higher numbers in the months following lifting of restrictions
- Department for Transport also announces 35 expressions of interest for share of first tranche of £120 million to roll out zero emission buses across England
- both packages come as part of government drive to build back greener from the pandemic

Bus operators across the country will benefit from £226.5 million in government funding to help ensure they continue to run vital services as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, Roads Minister Baroness Vere has announced today (6 July 2021).

The funding will run from September 2021 to April 2022 and will support operators

across England, outside of London, cementing the government's commitment to level up transport links as passenger numbers begin to return to pre-pandemic levels.

It comes as the Department for Transport also announces it has received 35 Expression of Interest applications for the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas



(ZEBRA) scheme, which gives local transport authorities the opportunity to compete for a share of £120 million to support the rollout of zero emission buses across England.

Both schemes are part of the government's drive to build back better and greener from the pandemic, as the UK prepares to host COP26 and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

“Buses are the lifeblood of our communities, helping us get to work, school and to see friends and family.

The recovery funding will ensure vital services continue to run by supporting operators in those

initial months, as restrictions are lifted and passengers begin to return in higher numbers.

And as we build back greener from the pandemic, the £120 million to roll out zero emission buses will have a profoundly positive effect on our towns and cities, lowering emissions, improving air quality and reducing noise pollution”

The recovery funding announced today will follow the current emergency support package, which is due to end next month after providing more than £1 billion to keep bus services running throughout the pandemic - and will be provided on

a formula basis, ensuring the sector can begin to return to commerciality. The funding will be the final tranche of COVID-19-related support provided to the sector.

In addition to helping maintain services, recovery funding will support the key aims of the National Bus Strategy of encouraging local authorities and operators to work together to deliver better bus services.

The ZEBRA fund was launched in March this year with local transport authorities able to apply under either a fast track or standard process.

The following local transport authorities

have been selected under the fast track process to progress to the next stage of the competition:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
- Kent County Council
- Leicester City Council
- Milton Keynes Borough Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- West Midlands Combined Authority

The 6 shortlisted authorities will now develop business cases for investment, with the government awarding the first tranche of funding from the ZEBRA scheme to authorities that produce the strongest business cases.

More local transport authorities will be announced as being selected to produce business cases under the standard process in due course.

The ZEBRA funding comes from the wider £3 billion fund announced by the government to improve bus services in our national bus strategy, published on 15 March 2021.



Prime Minister to set out plans to level up the country

July

- Prime Minister set to make a speech next week on plans to level up and unite the country
- Great British high streets to be central to new strategy to regenerate local communities and turbocharge new opportunities across the UK
- Renewed focus on boosting local businesses with permanent al fresco dining, support for grassroots football, and takeaway pints to continue for 12 months

The Prime Minister will set out the steps the government will take to deliver on the central purpose of his premiership - to level up and unite the United Kingdom.

The regeneration of the great British high street will form a key part of the Prime Minister's speech next week, with a new High Streets Strategy to revolutionise local communities and support them to thrive.

Al fresco dining will become the norm, with pavement licences to be extended and then made permanent, making it easier and cheaper for pubs, restaurants and cafes to set up tables outside and serve more customers.

Takeaway pints will continue for another 12 months as the temporary permissions for off-sales of alcohol are extended. This will give a further boost to the hospitality industry as local residents enjoy a great British summer together outdoors.

As England faces Italy in the Euro 2021 final, the government has renewed its commitment to support local sports teams as a central part of levelling up opportunities for all.

£25 million has been committed to build new grass roots sports facilities, equivalent to 50 new artificial pitches, to ensure that

all football fans have the chance to play their favourite sport.

In his speech next week, the Prime Minister will vow to tackle the inequalities and divisions that the pandemic has entrenched and make sure not to repeat the mistakes of the recovery from the financial crash of 2008.

He will talk about creating a more balanced economy with great



jobs in every part of the UK; levelling up between generations; increasing access to opportunity no matter where you live; investing in infrastructure and skills; strengthening community and local leadership; restoring pride in place; and putting local needs at the heart of the government's approach.

The speech will kick off a summer of engagement seeking views and input ahead of publication of the White Paper in the Autumn.

A Government spokesperson said:

“The Prime Minister is determined to level up the UK and deliver a fairer, stronger society - one where whatever your background and where you live, everyone can access the opportunities they need to succeed.

While talent and potential is distributed evenly across this country, opportunity is not.

That's why as we emerge from the pandemic, it's vital that we do not make the mistakes of recovery from the financial crash and seize this moment to ensure a better quality of life for people in every part of the UK.”

New plans to put UK at front of global innovation race

July

- Long-term plan to boost private sector investment across the UK and create the right conditions for all businesses to turn world-leading science into new products and services

- Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng: ‘The countries that secure leadership in transformational technologies will lead the world - it's our job to ensure the UK keeps pace with the global innovation race.’

New plans to boost private sector investment to put the UK at the front of the global innovation race have been set in a new Innovation Strategy launched by Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng today (Thursday 22 July).

Today's Innovation Strategy is the government's long-term vision to put innovation at the heart of building back better, as a key pillar in our Plan for Growth.

It aims to boost private sector investment in R&D across the whole of the UK, and create the right conditions for all businesses to innovate so they have the confidence to do so.

The UK is committed to increasing annual public investment on R&D to a record £22 billion, but the private sector also plays a key role in boosting spending on R&D, which is an essential part of our country's future prosperity and key to achieving key domestic priorities, from tackling climate change and boosting productivity, to levelling up opportunities across the UK and supporting businesses out of the pandemic.

The pandemic has shown us that major challenges can be

resolved by ambitious investment in science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship, and has shown the public what British innovators can deliver when given ambitious support, freedom, and risk tolerance.

The strategy takes lessons learned from the pandemic, including from the UK's Vaccine Taskforce – where the public and private sectors successfully worked alongside each other – and applies them to find solutions to fundamental challenges facing the UK - including the relative decline in business R&D investment, skills gaps and the need for pro-enterprise regulatory environment to spur innovation.

To achieve this aim, the government will specify 'innovation missions' to set clear direction, urgency and pace on the issues confronting the UK that we want to tackle with the private sector in the coming years. These will be determined by the new National Science and Technology Council and supported by the Office for Science and Technology Strategy.

The government is also outlining 7 strategic technologies to prioritise and build on our existing R&D strengths, including clean

technologies, robotics, genomics and AI, where the UK has globally competitive advantage and industrial strength.

The strategy outlines how the government will focus its efforts to support businesses and institutions at the cutting edge of innovation, setting out plans in four areas:

- Unleashing Business – fuelling businesses who want to innovate by ensuring effective access to private and public investment



- People – creating the most exciting place in the world for talented innovators

- Institutions and Places – ensuring R&D institutions serve the needs of businesses and promoting innovation in places across the UK

- Missions and Technologies – stimulating innovation in technology and missions that will provide the UK with a strategic advantage and will be critical to tackling some of our greatest challenges

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

“The UK can look back on a proud history of changing the world through innovation. From the industrial revolution to the vaccine development of the past year, the impact on our everyday lives is undeniable.

That spirit of discovery is still alive in this country today, but we have not always turned our genius for innovation into jobs and companies

here in Britain.

The countries that secure leadership in such transformational technologies will lead the world, enjoying unrivalled growth, security and prosperity for decades to come – and it's our job to ensure the UK keeps pace with the global innovation race.

Through this long-term plan, we want to rekindle our country's flame of innovation and discovery, helping businesses to seize the vast opportunities that innovation can bring.

If we get this right, we can build the foundations for the new industries of tomorrow, and ensure British firms are at the front of the pack to turn world-leading science into new products and services that are successful in international markets.”

Through the Innovation Strategy the government will:

- increase annual public investment on R&D to a record £22 billion
- ensure government procurement is proactive and supportive, providing a route to market for innovative new products and

services

- consult on how regulation can ensure that the UK is well-placed to extract the best value from innovation
- commission the Regulatory Horizons Council to consider how best to support innovation through regulation, including looking whether there are a set of high-level guiding principles for regulation that may apply broadly to any sector of innovation
- introduce new High Potential Individual and Scale-up visa routes, and revitalise the Innovator route to attract and retain high-skilled, globally mobile innovation talent



- undertake an independent review to assess landscape of UK organisations undertaking all forms of research, development and innovation
- reduce complexity for innovative companies by developing an online finance and innovation hub between Innovate UK and the British Business Bank within the next 12 months
- expand IP education programme for researchers and launch International IP Services to bolster innovative companies' and researchers' ability to confidently collaborate, export and invest overseas
- publish of a new action plan on 'Standards for the Fourth Industrial Revolution', promoting standards that enable innovation to flourish
- invest £200 million through the British Business Bank's Life Sciences Investment Programme to target the growth-stage funding gap

faced by UK life science companies

- support 30,000 senior managers of small and medium sized businesses through Help to Grow: Management to boost their business's performance, resilience, and long-term growth

The Strategy identifies areas where the UK has globally competitive R&D and industrial strength and that will transform our economy in the future - Advanced materials and Manufacturing; AI, Digital and Advanced Computing; Bioinformatics and Genomics; Engineering Biology; Electronics, Photonics and Quantum; Energy and Environment Technologies; Robotics and Smart Machines.

Our partners in the innovation system will be critical to delivering our ambitions, and the Business Secretary has asked Innovate UK and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to operationalise this Strategy in order to achieve our shared objectives.

The government will work with universities and other research organisations, charities, Catapults, public sector research establishments and research and innovation institutes who will all play a key

role in implementation of the Strategy.

As part of efforts to ensure innovative business across the UK can capitalise on these strengths, 5 pioneering projects will receive a share of £127 million through the Strength in Places Fund, delivered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI):

- in the North of England, £22.6 million will help the Advanced Machinery & Productivity Initiative to drive innovation for the UK's advanced machinery manufacturers to put them at the cutting edge of emerging technologies such as robotics
- in the Midlands, £18.3 million is being awarded to the Midlands Industrial Ceramics Group to improve manufacturing processes in advanced ceramics - the funding will help to make ceramics manufacturing to become more energy-efficient, faster and cheaper
- working in Scotland and Cumbria, £21.3 million of funding will be awarded to the Digital Dairy Value-Chain project which will create a more sustainable dairy industry by combining digital communications and advanced manufacturing

- in Wales, the media.cymru project will bring together UK broadcasters, small local businesses and freelancers to research and develop new products and services for global markets thanks to £22.2 million of funding from the fund

- and in Northern Ireland, £42.4 million will help the Smart Nano NI project to speed up the development of new nano-scale optical components to power our future digital devices

In addition to the Strength in Places Fund, £25 million of funding for the Connecting Capability Fund will help drive further economic growth through university-business innovation, and eight new Prosperity Partnerships will establish business-led research projects harnessing the power of science and engineering to develop transformational new technologies that benefit companies, with £59 million of industry, university and government investment.

COVID-19:

What we know so far - part 5

by Paul Bazeley

When we last left in the previous instalment of Government World, a few things had happened. Sajid Javid had replaced Matt Hancock as Health Secretary, the vaccination race had continued rapidly, and the final restriction easing had been delayed until July. There were also concerns over the rise in COVID-19 cases as restrictions eased and the emergence of the Delta variant.

What has happened since?

A brief overview.

By July, the Delta variant, previously known as the Indian variant, became the dominant strain in the UK. Nevertheless, the UK government went ahead with the final easing of restrictions as planned; this meant face masks were no longer mandatory but recommended, as was social distancing. There were also no longer any limits on the capacity of venues, and nightclubs were able to open for the first

time in over a year.

Some voiced concerns over the restriction easing as cases were rising. As the month continued, cases began to increase even further, with some days reporting over 50,000 new cases of COVID-19. Nevertheless, the cases did begin to decline again a week later. Experts believe the school holidays, the end of the Euros and the increased self-isolation from the NHS Track and Trace app were factors for the decrease.

Later in the month, the NHS Track and Trace app parameters were altered, as



the 'pingdemic' caused issues for shops, hospitals, transport, and other areas. Anyone classed as a key worker that had been in close contact with an infected person was no longer required to self-isolate but instead was to take a daily test to ensure they weren't carrying the virus.

As we moved into August, Scotland and Wales announced that most of their restrictions had ended, although the use of face masks was still required in some settings. The UK vaccination rate continued at pace, with 16- and 17-year-olds offered the vaccine by the end of the month and a landmark vaccination rate of 75% among adults being passed.

With cases and deaths remaining steady throughout the month, with only an increase in Scotland which

was widely considered to be due to schools returning, the government made further changes to isolating. The changes meant anyone who had been in contact with an infected person under the age of 18 or who had had their second vaccination (at least 14 days previously) were no longer required to isolate. Instead, it was advised the person should take a PCR test.

Early in September, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advised children aged 12-15 should not be offered a COVID-19 jab as it would only provide “marginal gains”. However, later in the month, the decision to provide 12 -15-year-olds with the vaccine was approved by the UK’s Chief Medical Officers, noting it would help limit the disruption to schools and reduce the spread of the virus.

Booster jabs for the vulnerable, over 50 and health and social care workers began to be rolled out across the UK as Britain started to plan for the colder weather. There was also a lot of talk about introducing vaccine passports, meaning people could prove they were fully vaccinated to enter certain events or places. After lengthy debates, England rejected the idea, but the government stated they might be brought in later if cases or deaths from the virus began to rise to worrying levels. At the time of writing, Scotland and Wales were planning

to introduce vaccine passports in October.

Where are we now?

Now we’re at the end of September, schools are offering vaccinations to children aged 12 – 15, and booster jabs are being given to those that are eligible. Travel abroad is becoming increasingly accessible, with less red tape and testing required to visit a substantial number of countries. Life without restrictions (or fewer at least) is becoming more routine. It appears the tactic of learning to live with the virus is in full swing.

What does the future look like?

Although we’d like to give a more confident outlook for once, it’s still difficult to say for sure. The vaccination progress in the UK continues to be impressive, and most of the developed world seems to be at similar levels to us. There are now calls for the poorer nations to be sent vaccines to try to stem the spread and equally lessen the chance of more variants.

Like before, a primary concern appears to be the threat of further variants. If a variant becomes immune to the vaccination, we could be in trouble and potentially back to square one. The other factor on people’s minds is what happens now the colder

weather begins to set in. Some worry that cases could rise quickly with no restrictions and more people gathering inside and in smaller spaces. Nevertheless, the government has said that vaccine passports are still possible in England and likely will be brought in in Scotland and Wales. Also, while rumblings of lockdowns in the coming months were quashed, it is evident that restrictions will be back in if required.

Currently, it feels as though the UK and the world, in general, is beginning to get ahead of coronavirus. If we continue how we are over the forthcoming autumn and winter, things look very bright indeed, but if things do worsen again, it’s unclear how bad it may get.

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



More than 85 million COVID-19 vaccines administered in UK

August

- Two doses provide over 90% protection against hospitalisation from the Delta variant, which is the dominant strain in the UK
- All adults are eligible to get their second dose after eight weeks

More than 85 million doses of a COVID-19 vaccine have been administered across the UK, the latest figures show, as the government continues to urge everyone eligible to get their vaccines as soon as possible to protect themselves and their loved ones.

A total of 85,196,986 doses have been administered in the UK, with 46,851,145 people receiving a first dose (88.6%) and 38,345,841 people receiving both doses (72.5%).

The latest data from Public Health England

(PHE) and Cambridge University shows that around 60,000 deaths, 22 million infections and 52,600 hospitalisations have been prevented by vaccines up to 23 July.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

“In under eight months, health services across the UK have delivered more than 85 million doses – this is a phenomenal achievement. It has shown Britain at its best.

From our NHS administering the jabs,



to the armed forces, thousands of volunteers and civil servants, you have all played an important role in getting us to this life-saving milestone - and I want to thank you all for your tireless efforts.

Please get both of your jabs if you haven't already to protect yourself and your loved ones.”

Data from PHE shows COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against hospitalisation from the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant. The analysis shows the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 96% effective and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is 92% effective against hospitalisation after two doses.

The UK met the Prime Minister's target ahead of schedule to

vaccinate two thirds of adults in the UK with both doses and to offer a first dose to all adults by 19 July.

All adults in the UK are able to get their second doses after eight weeks. This will mean every adult has the chance to have two doses by mid-September.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

“Our COVID-19 vaccination programme has been an enormous success and has allowed us to cautiously ease restrictions.

Getting both doses of the vaccine is one of the most important things people can do to help build a wall of defence around yourself, your loved ones and our country.

I urge everybody to get their jabs so we can carry on doing the things we’ve missed.”

From the end of September, people will be required to prove they’ve had both jabs to enter nightclubs and music events.

The government announced that people who have been vaccinated with both doses will not have to quarantine on their return to England from an amber list country,

providing they received their second jab at least 14 days prior.

From 16 August, double vaccinated people will also no longer be legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case, and will be advised to take a PCR test.

The government announced that double vaccinated frontline NHS and social care staff in England who have been told to self-isolate will be permitted to attend work in exceptional circumstances and replaced by testing mitigations.

A limited number of critical workers may also in exceptional circumstances be able to leave self-isolation to attend

work if deemed a close contact and informed to do so by their employer.

The UK government secured access to more than 500 million doses of the most promising COVID-19 vaccines early on behalf of

the entire UK, crown dependencies and overseas territories. The UK’s medicine’s regulator, the MHRA, was the first in the world to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines, allowing the rapid deployment of vaccines across the country and ensuring the UK has one of the fastest vaccination programmes in the world.

YouGov polling shows the UK continues to be one of the top nations where people are willing to have a COVID-19 vaccine or have already been vaccinated and ONS data published on 2 July shows that more than 9 in 10 (96%) adults reported positive sentiment towards the vaccine.

Vaccines are available free of charge and from thousands of vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England and vaccinations are taking place at sites including mosques, community centres and football stadiums.



Ethical hackers collaborate with Defence to strengthen cyber security

August

Bug Bounty programmes provide safe environments for experts to identify areas where security can be improved. The identification of real vulnerabilities by ethical hackers is rewarded and Defence cyber teams are working with the ethical hacking community whose expertise has been extremely valuable in finding and remediating vulnerabilities - ensuring better security across Defence's networks and 750,000 devices.

In the Integrated Review published earlier this year, the government committed to a more robust position on security and resilience, ensuring that lives and livelihoods are protected from those who may wish to do us harm. This challenge is part of wider plans to ensure transparency and collaborate with partners to improve national security.

MOD will continue to make use of the Bug Bounty expertise, in addition to other

capabilities available to ensure cyber security and resilience. MOD cyber security efforts reinforce the UK Government strategy for cross-department resilience and security, lessons learned by Defence are shared with partners.

Minister for the Armed Forces James Heapey said:

Bug bounty is an exciting new capability for the Ministry of Defence. Our cyber teams are collaborating with the ethical hacking community to identify and fix vulnerabilities in our systems, ensuring we're more resilient and better protected.

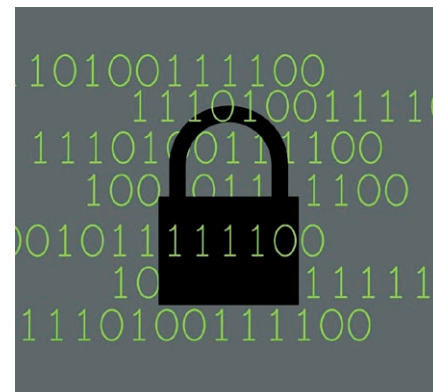
This work will contribute to better cyber and information security for the UK.

Participants praised Defence for its openness and willingness to embrace new tools and capabilities to secure cyber systems. Programmes like this are

industry best practice and used by governments and organisations across the world to defend against possible cyber-attacks.

Christine Maxwell, Ministry of Defence Chief Information Security Officer said:

The Ministry of Defence has embraced a strategy of securing by design, with transparency



being integral for identifying areas for improvement in the development process.

It is important for us to continue to push the boundaries with our digital and cyber development to attract personnel with skills, energy and commitment. Working with the ethical hacking community allows us to build out our bench of tech talent and bring more diverse perspectives to protect and defend our assets. Understanding where our vulnerabilities are and working with the wider ethical hacking community to identify and fix them is an essential step in reducing cyber risk and improving resilience.

CEO of HackerOne, Marten Mickos said:

“Governments worldwide are waking up to the fact that they can’t secure their immense digital environments with traditional security tools anymore.”

Having a formalised process to accept vulnerabilities from third parties is widely considered best practice globally, with the U.S government making it mandatory for their federal civilian agencies this year. The U.K MoD is leading the way in the U.K government with forward-thinking and collaborative solutions to securing its digital assets and I predict we will see more government agencies follow its example.

Local communities urged to help shape the natural world around them

August

The Government has today (Tuesday 10 August) opened a consultation on plans for new Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England, as part of the landmark Environment Bill.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategies aim to help drive up the recovery of England’s landscapes and wildlife locally by creating a new tool for local areas to agree priorities

and map proposals for nature’s recovery - ensuring more value is placed on nature.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategies will help local communities work together to help identify where we should take action for nature’s recovery as part of building our national



Nature Recovery Network (NRN), as well as where nature-based solutions could make a difference to help address wider environmental issues, such as mitigating flood risk and planting trees or restoring peatland for carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change.

The consultation launch follows successful Local Nature Recovery Strategies pilots in Cornwall, Buckinghamshire, Greater Manchester, Northumberland and Cumbria which showed how local groups can work collaboratively together to produce their strategies. Managed by Natural England in conjunction with the local partner organisations, the pilots have informed the policy development and next steps.

Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow, said:

“These Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be a key part of our green recovery and help kick-start the creation of over a million acres of joined up habitats which people can enjoy across the country.

I urge local authorities and public bodies alike to take part in our consultation and provide views. Once rolled out nationally,

Local Nature Recovery Strategies will underpin the Nature Recovery Network – a flagship element of our 25 Year Environment Plan and a key mechanism for knitting these precious habitats together.”

Natural England Chair, Tony Juniper, said:

“Restoring our natural world after years of decline will bring a wealth of benefits to people, our environment and our economy. We’re pleased to support today’s consultation opening which will allow our partners to feed into how the Local Nature Recovery Strategies will run.

Natural England has played a key role in developing the Local Nature Recovery Strategies, including running the pilots which used an evidence-based, locally led, collaborative approach. We look forward to



the results of the consultation and then supporting rolling Local Nature Recovery Strategies out across England to help create a national Nature Recovery Network that allows nature to thrive for the benefit of people and wildlife.”

The area covered by each strategy will vary and be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Secretary of State for Defra, in discussion with the prospective responsible authority or organisation who will lead development of the strategy for that area.

The Nature Recovery Network plans to create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife habitat outside protected sites and help species thrive, more effectively linking existing protected sites and landscapes, as well as urban green infrastructure, such as trees, hedgerows, parks, fields, forests, and urban blue infrastructure, such as rainwater tanks, bioswales, rivers, canals, ponds, wetlands, and floodplains.

Thousands of new solar panels helping prisons go green

August

- more than 16,000 new solar panels to be installed at 19 prisons
- investment will cut 1,300 tonnes of carbon and save over £800,000 a year greener prison estate contributing to government's net zero target

The installations are expected to cut more than 1,300 tonnes of carbon from the earth's atmosphere and provide 20% of each prison's electricity – a significant saving as the gworks towards its ambitious net-zero target and a move that will save around £800,000 a year.

In total over 16,000 new ground mounted panels will be switched on across the prison estate, with HMPs Bullingdon, Erlestoke and Wayland lighting the way in the next few months and work ongoing to power the remaining 16 from Spring next year.

Prisons and Probation Minister, Alex Chalk, said:

"As we build back safer and greener from the pandemic, our prisons are playing their part in the Government's ambitious

environmental plans.

Alongside our wider sustainable action across the estate, including new all-electric prisons, we will ensure our jails are good for the pocket and the planet."

This unprecedented expansion of solar energy follows the announcement in May that the government's four new prisons – a vital building block in the drive to create 10,000 new modern prisons places that cut crime – will operate as zero-carbon in the future.

The prisons will use an all-electric design that eliminates the need for gas boilers and will in time produce net-zero emissions.

Solar panels, alongside heat



pumps and more efficient lighting systems will reduce energy demand by half and cut carbon emissions by at least 85% compared to prisons already under construction.

The environmentally friendly drive accompanies wider government action to build back greener with more than £12 billion in green investment to help achieve its net zero commitment.

This will include hydrogen and carbon capture technology, greener homes, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, walking and cycling infrastructure, flood defences and backing offshore wind to power every UK home by 2030.



Environment Agency delivers warning to illegal anglers with new enforcement campaign

August

A month-long enforcement campaign will crack down on illegal fishing and build on efforts to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour on river banks.

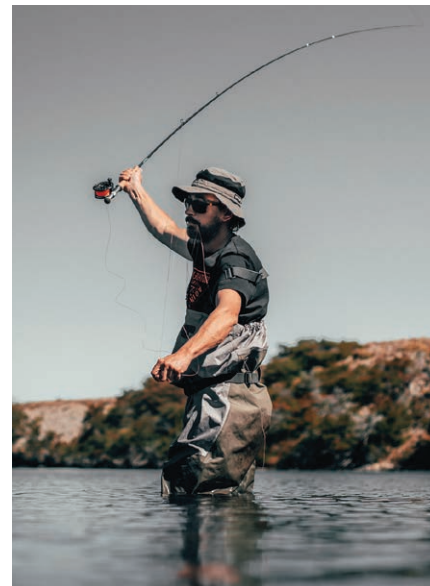
The Environment Agency has launched a month-long enforcement campaign to crack down on illegal fishing and build on efforts to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour on river banks.

A warning has been issued to illegal anglers as the Environment Agency undertakes a month of patrols to target poachers and those fishing without a licence.

Operation LUNGFISH is underway to protect fisheries from harmful activity including theft and fishing with illegal traps. Enforcement officers from the Environment Agency can be joined by the Angling Trust, Voluntary Bailiffs and local police officers to conduct patrols around rivers, lakes and ponds.

Launched on 23rd July, Operation LUNGFISH has carried out a range of action around the country in its first two weeks:

- In the West Midlands illegal



- In the South East an EA patrol team were joined by the Sussex Rural Police crime team and the Voluntary Bailiff Service (VBS) to conduct an enforcement blitz, as they visited over 40 venues to check 650 licences and issued 64 offence reports

- Patrols in Lincolnshire, conducted with the East Midlands Wildlife Crime Group and The Angling Trust, checked 118 licences with sixteen notices being served for fishing offences

Heidi Stone, Environment Agency Fisheries Partnerships Manager:

As law abiding anglers know, illegal fishing and anti-social behaviour on our banks is not only harmful to fish populations, but

We are working closely with our partners on Operation LUNGFISH to ensure that fishing licence income is used to protect fisheries and make angling a great experience for all."

Drive to improve motorway journeys for people with disabilities across the North

August

With around five per cent of the driving population classed as having a disability, Highways England has partnered with AccessAble, the UK's leading provider of detailed accessibility information, to help motorists plan where to stop for a break at any one of the 114 motorway service areas across England, including 34 services across the North.

Hull-based disability advocate and 'The Deaf Traveller' blogger, Ed Rex visited the Extra services at Leeds Skelton Lake on junction 45 of the M1 to test out the new guides.

Ed is profoundly deaf in both ears and relies on a hearing aid, cochlear implant and lipreading to communicate. Following his visit to the Yorkshire services, Ed emphasised that it's the little things that can make a huge difference for people travelling with hidden disabilities.

Ed said:

"Being able to access the services they need is a big worry for Deaf people or people who have hearing loss. Sometimes it's just about making sure that the accessibility information is there so that people know, when they travel, that it won't be stressful, and they'll feel empowered to do it on their own and be independent.

One of the features of Highways England's access guides for motorway services is



information about assistive listening, which is really helpful for people who are Deaf or have hearing loss, giving them confidence that support is there if they need it."

The new guides, available online or via the free AccessAble app, are 100 per cent facts, figures, and photographs to help motorists plan their visit to the services. They cover key areas including parking, toilets, petrol stations, shops, and restaurants, with detailed information on everything from staff training and hearing loops, to walking distances and designated places of safety.

In addition, Highways England and AccessAble have worked together to create virtual route guides for the services. This new type of

guide, which uses 360-degree imagery, will enable visitors to ‘virtually’ explore routes to key facilities like accessible toilets and Changing Places, so they can find out exactly what to expect when they arrive.

Highways England Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, Julian Horsler, said:

“We’re committed to ensuring our customers with disabilities can travel safely on our roads. That’s why we’re introducing new services to break down barriers and help people reliably plan and feel confident about their journeys.

Whatever the nature of your disability, the access guides for motorway service areas take the guesswork out of journey planning, giving you the information you need about facilities along your route.”

A spokesperson from Extra concluded:

“Accessibility is not only an issue that applies to people with disabilities, but also an issue that affects everybody. An inclusive world is a better world. As a result, we want to be a part of that. Working with AccessAble and Highways England gives us that opportunity.”

COP26 Preview

by Paul Bazeley

From 31st October to 12th November 2021, COP26 will take place in Glasgow. Here we will explain what it is and give a preview of what’s to come.

The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP26, will be the 26th climate change conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and is organised by the United Kingdom and Italy. The purpose of the conference is to discuss, plan and react to climate change. It is likely to be the first time since COP21

that the parties commit to new ambitions, which will help fulfil the ‘ratchet mechanism’ initially outlined in the Paris Agreement.

The ‘ratchet mechanism’ is set to occur every five years. In theory, each country will state their “intended nationally determined contributions” (INDCs) which describes how they intend to reduce emissions. Each proposal is supposed to be more ambitious than the previous one, in effect



‘ratcheting’ up.

Originally the conference was scheduled to take place in 2020 but was moved due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The previous COP conference, COP25, took place in Madrid, Spain, in 2019. Greta Thunberg stole many of the headlines with her speech at the event in which she said most government commitments were misleading, much of the science was deceptive and that there needs to be more urgency when it comes to climate change.

Although most news outlets focused on Thunberg’s powerful speech, COP25 saw an agreement to cut carbon emissions. Each country agreed to develop a plan to reduce carbon dioxide by the next conference. However, COP25 was criticised as many issues remained unresolved after the meeting.



COP26 is billed as the most significant climate event since the Paris Agreement in 2015. World leaders will gather to discuss climate change and report on the progress made since 2015. It is expected that more promises and agreements will be made on how to tackle the global issue. Nevertheless, many remain sceptical that the gathering will achieve anything. Greta Thunberg has even said ahead of the conference, “Nothing has changed from previous years really. The leaders will say ‘we’ll do this, and we’ll do this’... then they will do nothing”.

Boris Johnson, however, has already begun to lead the charge before COP26. In a recent speech to the UN general assembly in New York, the Prime Minister exclaimed the world needed to “grow up” and “listen to the scientists”. He went on to say that “We are awesome in our power to change

things and awesome in our power to save ourselves, and in the next 40 days, we must choose what kind of awesome we are going to be.” He continued to say that if we don’t change, “we will have made this beautiful planet effectively uninhabitable – not just for us but for many other species.”

Climate change is no longer something many people try to shrug off as we become increasingly aware of the problems the planet is facing. However, whether the change Boris Johnson speaks of will begin at COP26 remains to be seen.

A review of the conference will be in the next issue of Government World.

Vision set out for a once-in-a-lifetime digital revolution that will fundamentally change National Highways' roads

September

Other initiatives that could lead the charge on a digital revolution for roads include intelligent road materials able to repair themselves and more connected and autonomous plant.

These are some of the systems set to be rolled out as part of National Highways' Digital Roads strategy which is being outlined today on a new Digital Roads website and 'virtual learning environment'.



The web pages clearly set out the company's Digital Roads 2025 vision and how the growth of digital technology and the move to electric, connected and autonomous vehicles will fundamentally change roads in the future.

National Highways Executive Director of Strategy and Planning Elliot Shaw said:

"We are at the beginning of a digital revolution on our roads network, a once-in-a-century transformation which will fundamentally change how our roads are designed, built, operated and used.

The Digital Roads journey, the strategy that will create the roads of the future, is huge. It covers every aspect of the roads infrastructure from design and construction, to how roads are operated to the changing experience for all road users.

Digital Roads will make our roads safer and greener. Improvements and maintenance will be delivered more quickly with less disruption and road users will have a far better end-to-end journey experience, with savings on time and the cost of travel."

National Highways, formerly Highways England, is laying the foundations of the Digital Roads vision with several ambitious partnerships working at the forefront of technology.

The road twinning system is being developed in collaboration with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the EU MSCA COFUND programme, construction and engineering company Costain and the University

of Cambridge. It will see drawings and static models replaced with digital versions that can identify when maintenance is needed.

The system is being developed thanks to two grants: the £8.6 million EPSRC Digital Roads Prosperity Partnership grant and the £6 million EU MSCA COFUND Future Roads Fellowships programme.

The University of Cambridge Principal Investigator of these grants Dr Ioannis Brilakis said:

“It is high time the transportation infrastructure sector embraces digital transformation. We should strive to replace drawings and static 3D models with dynamic and data-rich Digital Twins, pdf documents with databases, file exchange with cloud permissions exchange, passive materials with smart materials able to sense and heal themselves and automate all manual routine maintenance. All this is possible on a data science foundation, able to generate rich, data-driven insights to help us make better decisions.”

Combining ‘live’ data from intelligent materials in the existing road surface with a digital twinning system that visualises the road and its condition will identify when maintenance work is needed, with roads

able to repair themselves using self-healing materials. This will dramatically reduce the need for time consuming and costly on-site inspections, prevent unnecessary delays to drivers and reduce the emissions generated by roadworks.

Also in use or being developed are connected and autonomous plant, off-site fabrication and modular construction methods.

As well as reducing disruption for drivers, these steps will reduce the associated carbon emissions by around 50 per cent and help to meet the target of zero injuries or deaths on the network by 2040.

The Digital Roads vision for the strategic road network supports the Government’s



ambition of ‘the UK being a world leader in shaping the future of transport’ and supporting Britain’s growth. For example, digital design and construction could reduce scheme delivery times by up to 50 per cent.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

“From digital road models that can predict where maintenance is needed on the real-life road network, to self-repairing road surfaces, and automated cone laying machines, we’re committed to keeping the UK at the forefront of technological developments.

I’m therefore delighted that National Highways’ vision reflects this, benefitting road users for many years to come with greener, smoother, safer journeys.”

How the network is operated is becoming more automated and data driven. The use of technology enables National Highways to pre-empt situations rather than just responding to them. For example, sensor technology will forecast traffic levels, weather and

environmental conditions enabling us to pre-emptively prepare and respond to situations.

Communication with drivers is improving, ensuring that accurate information is available to help plan journeys through their preferred digital channels. Longer term, the deployment of connected and autonomous vehicles is expected to drastically improve traffic flow and reduce incidents by up to 90 per cent.

Ian Patey, Immediate Past-Chair of ITS (UK), said:

“National Highways’ vision for Digital Roads will transform road transport in the UK; harnessing technology to create greener, safer, more inclusive and more reliable mobility – the embodiment of an Intelligent Transport System.”

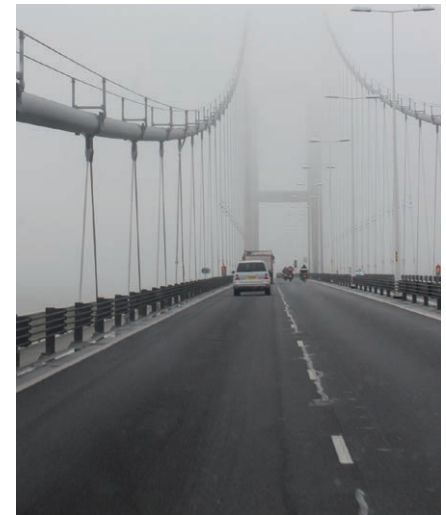
Visitors to the new website will be able to enter a ‘virtual learning environment’ with additional information about how National Highways will deliver its vision and the impact on road users, employees and companies in the supply chain.

The vision for Digital Roads also goes beyond 2025 and looks forward to 2050 and beyond. Freight platooning,

personalised in-vehicle messaging as well as vehicles sharing data, and decluttered roads free from signage - these are some of the ambitions for the roads of the future.

National Highways recognises that realising the vision will rely on the continued support of the supply chain and stakeholders. We are preparing to launch a Digital Roads innovation competition later in the year looking for fresh ideas and involvement.

This will be funded through the Innovation and Modernisation designated fund. For more details about the National Highways Innovation and Research strategy visit [here](#).



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UK funding protects 88 million people from the impacts of climate change

September

The UK's International Climate Finance (ICF), totalling £11.6 billion over the next five years, helps developing countries limit and manage the impacts of climate change, mitigate further global warming from emissions and avert, minimise and address loss and damage.

The results come ahead of COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference, which the UK will host in Glasgow in November this year. World leaders will come together to agree on action to tackle the urgent threat of global climate change, with the UK making supporting vulnerable communities a priority in its presidency.

International Environment Minister Zac Goldsmith said:

Tackling climate change and protecting vulnerable communities and habitats is truly an international effort. I am proud of the impact that the UK's International Climate Finance is having in developing countries around the world. By lending to climate friendly businesses in Latin America and the Caribbean, or preventing emissions and boosting biodiversity through the restoration of

mangroves, forests, and other habitats, the UK is stepping up to tackle the greatest threats we all face.

COP26 represents a unique opportunity for more countries to come forward with ambitious financial commitments and urgent action to reduce emissions and protect and restore the natural world.

Today's figures show that over the last ten years, UK funding has:

Provided 41 million people with improved access to clean energy, including connections to off-grid renewable energy sources; access to solar lanterns, or clean cookstoves; Installed 2,400 MW of clean energy capacity, equivalent to 500 offshore wind turbines, capable of powering 1.8 million UK homes; Avoided or reduced 180 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions; Leveraged £3.3 billion of private finance and £5.2 billion of public finance for climate change purposes.

Programmes like the Blue Forests initiative in Madagascar see UK funding support local

communities, the private sector and government to protect over 20,000Ha of mangroves, as one of the most effective natural carbon stores on earth. This also provides invaluable storm protection and coastal erosion prevention.

UK funding has also supported the KaXu Solar One Concentrated Solar Power project in South Africa to use mirrors to reflect and concentrate the sun's rays, generating enough energy to power 80,000 households and saving around 315,000 tonnes of CO₂ – the equivalent to taking 66,000 cars off the road.

These results follow a week of climate talks among global leaders at the UN General Assembly in New York, where the UK Prime Minister committed new UK funding for global climate action, including a further boost the UK's contribution to the \$100 billion a year from 2020 goal for developed countries to support developing countries.

Driver testing changes

September

The HGV driver shortage is a long-standing challenge facing countries across the world.

As a result of the pandemic, driver testing was suspended for large parts of the last year. It is now back up and running and the government has already increased capacity, but we can go further.

Over the summer, we consulted on 3 measures which will substantially increase the number of vocational driving tests available. I can announce today (10 September 2021) that we will proceed with the measures we consulted on:

First, car drivers will no longer need to take another test to tow a trailer or caravan, allowing roughly 30,000 more HGV driving tests to be conducted every year.

Second, tests will also be made shorter by removing the ‘reversing exercise’ element – and for vehicles with trailers, the

‘uncoupling and recoupling’ exercise – and having it tested separately by a third party.

And third, we will make it quicker to get a licence to drive an articulated vehicle, without first having to get a licence for a smaller vehicle. This would make around 20,000 more HGV driving tests available every year and mean drivers can gain their licence and enter the industry more quickly - without reducing the rigour of the test.



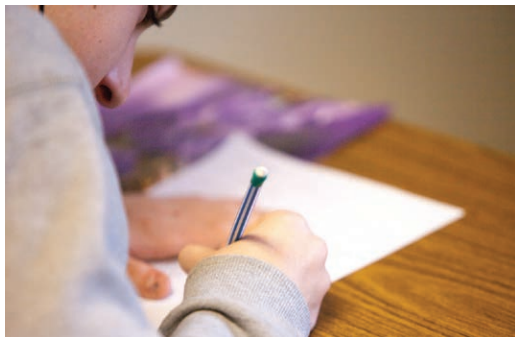
We've already provided a 50% increase in testing compared to pre-COVID. These measures go even further. These new measures follow a public consultation over the summer, which saw thousands of respondents, including industry leaders, support the move as a positive step to help the sector tackle the lorry driver shortage currently affecting countries around the world. Some of these changes will generate additional capacity for HGV tests very rapidly, and we will shortly lay the appropriate licensing regulations before the House.

These changes will not change the standard of driving required to drive an HGV, with road safety continuing to be of paramount importance. Any driver who does not demonstrate utmost competence will not be granted a licence. All car drivers

will also still be encouraged to undertake training to tow trailers and caravans.

A new cross-government ministerial group has been set up to monitor labour supply chains, identify pinch points and consider necessary government action. Chaired by CDL and meeting on a weekly basis, the group includes ministers from numerous government departments including DfT, DfE, Home Office, BEIS and DEFRA to make sure all angles are being considered.

The driver shortage is a widespread problem affecting countries across Europe and also the United States, caused by a range of factors, including an ageing workforce. Today's announcement will ramp up driver testing and numbers and help industry leaders build a resilient haulage sector which attracts drivers from across society.



Fast-track routes for gifted stars to come to the UK

September

Illustrious award winners and sport stars will be able to live and work in the UK more easily under new simplified Immigration Rules announced by the government.

New Immigration Rules laid today (Friday 10 September), will create the new fast-track International Sportsperson route, which will make it more straightforward for professional athletes across sports to work in the country.

While continuing to offer an option for anyone wishing to come to the UK for 12 months or less, the new route, which opens next month, brings together and replaces the current Tier 2 and Tier 5 paths, providing a dedicated and simplified visa for sportspeople and their sponsors.

The government has also added more illustrious prizes to the Global Talent Visa, making it simpler for more of the world's

most gifted minds to come to the country.

Individuals at the pinnacle of their career and who have won prestigious awards from the world



of arts, science, engineering, medicine and more will now be able to use their prowess to take advantage of the Global Talent Visa. This includes winners of the Booker Prize, Academy Awards, BAFTA and the Wolf Prize,

Under this path, applicants who hold a qualifying prize will be able to fast-track the endorsement application and instead make a single visa application.

Today's immigration changes are part of the UK's points-based immigration system to attract the brightest and best to the country, delivering on the government's New Plan for Immigration.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

"We want to attract the world's greatest minds at the crowning point of their careers, so the UK remains number one on the global leader board in sports, the arts, science, film and technology sectors.

Through our points-based system we focus on talent and skills, not where someone comes from, and the immigration changes we're making today demonstrate this, making it much easier for the brightest and

best to live and work in the UK."

Immigration Minister Kevin Foster said:

"The UK is a proud home to some of the world's most talented stars and the changes we've made will make it even easier for people at the top of their game to come and work in the UK.

Our immigration rule changes put our words into action, delivering on the government's ambition to attract the brightest and best talent to the UK and ensure we build back better."

A spokesperson for the Football Association said:

"The FA welcomes the Home Office changes to simplify the rules required for a visa application for an International Sportsperson. Ensuring a faster system after obtaining a Governing Body Endorsement from The FA will allow for the world's best footballers to enter the country more easily."



Among the 73 prestigious awards added to the Global Talent Visa include:

- science, engineering, humanities and medicine: Benjamin Franklin Medal, Faraday Medal, L'Oréal-UNESCO Award for Women in Science, various Wolf Prize categories
- arts and culture: the Booker Prize, various Queen Elizabeth Competition categories, International Dublin Literary Award
- film and television: best supporting actor and actress across the Academy Awards, BAFTA and Golden Globes

The government's Immigration Rule changes announced today follow last month's Sponsorship Roadmap which demonstrates how the immigration system will continue to ease administrative processes for British organisations sponsoring workers from abroad.

Environmental Policy

welters® organisation worldwide

welters® is committed to the care of the environment and the prevention of pollution. They acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that all their operations are carried out with the minimum adverse affect on the environment, and to comply with all applicable legal and other requirements to which they subscribe which relate to their environmental aspects.

It is **welters®** policy to: -

- Assess their activities, products and services with respect to their environmental aspects and impacts, and incorporate all practicable procedures and controls to prevent environmental damage and

pollution.

- Minimise, control and, as far as possible, prevent the release of pollutants or other substances to air, water or land.
- Improve the efficiency of their operations by the monitoring of their consumption of energy and resource, and reducing, reusing or recycling waste materials.
- Introduce and maintain an Environmental Management System which conforms with ISO14001

The Organisation, in its overall activity, achieves carbon offset through a tree

planting programme. The company history of timber trade association enables this programme to be both effective and exciting.

In addition, the **weltestone** project reflects the vision where every attempt should be made to minimise imports, especially of non environmentally friendly material, such as polished granite, and particularly when exported from the opposite side of the globe and produced by nations which may pay less attention to environmental issues and also may lack some transparency in employment



Examples of coppicing within **welters®** woodland

controls.

welterstone was created as a solution to this issue, producing products manufactured locally from local indigenous quarried material by directly employed and managed labour.

welters® use their best endeavours to persuade their clients and specifiers to utilise products and systems from the **welterstone** range as opposed to non eco-friendly imported material. A range of finishes and permeable gradings are available and compression strengths of 65 N/mm2 are common.

welters® continue to help to improve the environment of our planet.

Respecting and working with Nature whilst developing Science through innovation

welters® products and services are developed through the careful and expeditious pursuance of Science through innovation.

Not only are materials and manufacturing techniques determined to be efficient but the utilisation of ongoing use of **welters**® systems, by minimising the ongoing operational profiles, virtually removes maintenance cost and activity.

The carbon footprint of systems in operation is reduced from that of traditional methods.

welters® interest and dedication to caring for the environment and working with Nature is such that, despite the savings and benefits of 'Cemetery Village®' operation, and as mentioned briefly before, **welters**® manage and own a tree planting programme to create carbon offset on the effect of the manufacturing and installation which is the 'high point' of impact.

Through reference to British Standards, Building Industry Research Association, British Cement Association and Sustainable Concrete@ The Concrete

Centre and wetters Assessments...

... **welters**® pledge that, where memorials or interment systems are being sold, one tree will be planted or cultured for every memorial or interment. In all other cases, a minimum of one tree will be planted each year for every tonne of concrete or cast stone produced. This procedure is substantially in excess of that required to establish parity.

For further exciting exchanges, **welters**® welcome interaction with our editorial panel as ongoing activity will be extensive.



Humans are still in charge...

Captain Andrew Moll, Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents

My grandfather was born before the Wright brothers first took to the air, and men had landed on the moon within his lifetime. I started studying mathematics at school using a slide-rule and Log Tables, and we are now entering an age of Artificial Intelligence and robotics. Each generation will have its own experience and story to tell but the common theme is progress, the pace of which seems to be accelerating. If you want some statistics: there are around 54m autonomous vehicles of various types and 22bn smart devices in the world; about 4bn social media accounts, and roughly 300m photographs are uploaded every day. Even as I write, these figures are becoming out of date.

So what has this to do with the “Seafarers: at the core of shipping’s future”? Well, as the recently published study by the Danish Maritime Accident Investigation Board (DMAIB) and Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) into Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS) usage has highlighted, the boundaries between humans and machines are changing and responsibilities are becoming blurred. Only

a couple of decades ago most activities onboard were completely human centred. Bridge watchkeepers took position lines and plotted them on charts to create ‘fixes’ from which future movements were extrapolated; chief officers carried out complex loading calculations; and, in the engine room, gauges were read in order to monitor system performance. Most of these tasks are now automated, with the human in the system reduced to the role of monitor, but still with the responsibility for stepping in, in time, to make safety critical decisions. Spare a thought for the chief officer on a 22,000 TEU container ship who is responsible for checking the stow plan provided to him by a shore-side loading computer, when the algorithms it used do not match the metrics in the ship’s Cargo Securing Manual.

There is a seductive side to technology. The more often it is right (or appears to be), the more we come to rely on it. “Why check? The machine is always right”, and human skills begin to fade from lack of use. After nearly 20 years as an accident investigator, I could be accused of becoming cynical,

but in my view much of the maritime industry is compliance based: implement the standards and all will be OK. This approach neglects the fact that the pace of technological change can leave standards struggling to keep up, and ‘compliance’ alone does not provide the ‘assurance’ we expect. The good news is that we have yet to cross the Rubicon. Humans are still in charge, but to be effective they need to be appropriately trained, properly equipped, and following procedures that are fit for purpose. Anything short of that is a cop-out.

My plea, for World Maritime Day, is that across the spectrum we take time to focus on what we are requiring seafarers to do, and ask ourselves whether they have actually been trained to use the tools they need to do their jobs. Can they really discharge the responsibilities they have been given effectively?



Forthcoming articles under consideration

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

- UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) - conference review
- Native tree environmental protection
- Festival of Britain / Festival UK 2022 / Unboxed - Creativity in the UK
- History of the waterwheel
- Fuel shortage
- Budget 2021 - review of main points
- Insulate Britain - a help or a hindrance?
- Flooding - worst affected areas and what can be done to prevent future heartbreak?

COVER OPTIONS
considered by our Editorial Department for the Spring
edition as alternatives to the final chosen cover

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Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following sources:

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