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*Winter 2021 British Edition*



# Government *WORLD*™

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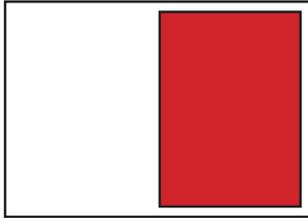
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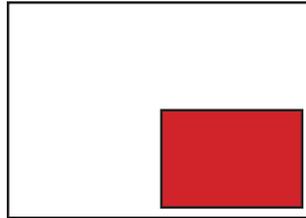
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*Nature's art - Oakmoss lichen*



# News & OPINIONS Roundup

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

By Paul G Bazeley for Government World

## October News Review

In coronavirus news, Wales introduced an NHS COVID-19 Pass, which required individuals to show the pass or proof of vaccination to enter nightclubs, indoor non-seated events of more than 500 people,



outdoor non-seated events of more than 4,000 people and any event with more than 10,000 people. There were calls for England to introduce the Plan B measures as cases began to increase and hospitalisations grew about 50% compared to September.

David Amess, the MP for Southend West, was stabbed to death while holding a constituency surgery in a Methodist Church in Essex. The murder was declared a terrorist incident the following day. A man was arrested at the scene and charged with

murder and the preparation of terrorist acts. A minute's silence was held in the House of Commons. Later that day, a service of remembrance was held at Westminster and attended by MPs from all parties.

Facebook Inc., the parent company of Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram, changed its name to Meta Platforms, commonly referred to as Meta. The CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced it was changed to better reflect the company's diversification into other areas.



Frances Haugen, a former employee of the social media site Facebook, claimed that the companies' websites and applications "harm children, stoke division and weaken our democracy". She told the US Congress, "The company's leadership knows how to

make Facebook and Instagram safer but won't make the necessary changes because they have put their astronomical profits before people. Congressional action is needed.". Facebook denied the claims made against them.

Marie Ressa, from the Philippines, and Dmitry Muratov, from Russia, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. They were given the honour "for their efforts to safeguard the freedom of expression". Both journalists have been open about their fight for freedom of expression in their countries and have faced threats and angered their countries rulers.

The streaming service Netflix announced that the South Korean television programme Squid Game is its most-watched program, having been



watched over 111 million times worldwide since its September 2021 release.

The actor William Shatner became the oldest man to go to space at the age of 90, after being launched in a rocket from the company Blue Origin, owned by Jeff Bezos.

## October Sports Review

In the Premier League, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester City kept their title hopes



alive by staying close to the top of the table. Some notable results were Chelsea 7 Norwich City 0, Manchester United 0 Liverpool 5 and Liverpool 2 Manchester City 2.

A Saudi-backed consortium purchased Newcastle United Football Club for £300 million ending Mike Ashley's 14-year ownership of the club. The takeover was controversial due to its links to the Saudi Kingdom. However, at the time of the takeover, the Premier League stated, "The Premier League has now received legally binding assurances that the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia will not control Newcastle United Football Club."

The Australian football player Josh Cavallo came out as gay. At the time of writing, he is the only openly gay topflight male footballer in the world.

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## November News Review

Sajid Javid, the health secretary, urged people to get their booster vaccines after a rise in cases. He also stated that frontline NHS workers in England would need to be vaccinated by April 2022 to protect patients, colleagues and the NHS. If they do not get vaccinated, they could face losing their jobs. The United Kingdom later surpassed 10 million cases of COVID-19.

A new COVID-19 variant from South Africa, named Omicron, was reported on the 24th of November. Two cases were reported



in Nottingham and Essex in the UK days later. The World Health Organisation listed

Omicron as a variant of concern due to its large number of mutations and its high reinfection rate. As a result, England introduced mandatory face masks for shops and public transport by the end of the month.

Finally, in coronavirus news, the death toll for COVID-19 surpassed a million worldwide. However, the actual figure is thought to be higher, as some countries haven't reported all the deaths.

The 26th United Nations Climate Change conference, known commonly



as COP26, was held in Glasgow. The culmination of the conference was the Glasgow Climate Pact, an agreement to phase down unabated coal usage, provide climate finance for developing countries and revisit emission reduction plans in 2022 to maintain the 1.5c Paris Agreement target remains achievable. There were also pledges at COP26. Including Brazil pledging to reverse deforestation by 2030, 40 countries pledging to move away from coal and 24 developed countries and a selection



of car manufacturers such as GM, Ford, Jaguar-Land Rover, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo and others committing to “work towards all sales of new cars and vans being zero-emission globally by 2040, and by no later than 2035 in leading markets”.

Although countries agreed to a pact and pledges, many felt that the resolution was less satisfying than some had predicted. The conference also experienced a protest at a lack of action and other climate



issues; it was the largest protest in Glasgow since the 2003 anti-Iraq war march. Protests also occurred in approximately 100 different countries.

Six further energy suppliers collapsed due to rising natural gas prices, impacting over 40,000 customers. While Bulb Energy went into special administration after the regulator decided the company was too large for administration, allowing the government to give grants and loans to the business. At the same time, administrators will work to sell the company and transfer customers.

Research from the James Cook University, Australia, reported that 98% of the Great Barrier Reef had been affected by coral bleaching due to climate change. The figure was much higher than previously thought.



A stampede and crush left ten people dead and hundreds injured at the Astroworld Music Festival in Houston, Texas, US. The festival was founded by the American rapper Travis Scott.

## November Sports Review

In tennis, Alexander Zverev defeated Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 6-4 in the ATP World Tour Finals.



A surprise final in the UK Championship

Snooker Final saw Xintong Zhao from China beat Luca Brecel from Belgium 10-5. It was the young Chinese player's first Championship win. In tennis, Alexander Zverev defeated Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 6-4 in the ATP World Tour Finals.

The Atlanta Braves beat the Houston Astros to win the Major League Baseball World Series. It is the first World Series title for the Braves since 1995.

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## December News Review

Due to increasing COVID-19 cases and worries about the Omicron variant, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced Plan B measures. The measures included working from home where possible, face masks mandatory in more indoor venues, daily testing for those in contact with someone with Omicron and a NHS COVID Pass to enter nightclubs and other large crowd venues. The COVID alert level was also raised to Level 3 after fears of the rapid spread of Omicron.

The record for the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the United Kingdom was beaten throughout the month, regularly reaching over 100,000 a day by the end, as the Omicron variant began to spread. The government introduced no further measures in England to



slow the spread of coronavirus, despite calls for more restrictions due to the rise in cases and fears the NHS would

be overwhelmed. The devolved nations did bring in further measures, however.

Footage emerged showing government aides laughing and joking about a party that occurred while the country was under lockdown restrictions. Other claims and images regarding parties within the government began to crop up. Boris Johnson denied that any of his party had broken any rules but said an inquiry would take place. Many claimed his timing of the Plan B restrictions announcement was to distract from the allegations surrounding the Conservative Party, Boris Johnson rejected the claims.

The Liberal Democrats, Helen Morgan, won the North Shropshire seat for the House of Commons. It was seen as a heavy defeat for the Conservative Party, who have held the seat since the constituency's creation.

The successor to Hubble, the James Webb Space Telescope, was launched using the Ariane 5 rocket from French Guiana. The telescope, developed by NASA, will allow observations of some of the oldest and distant events in the Universe, including the formation of stars and galaxies.



New Zealand announced it would increase the legal age for purchasing tobacco by one year, every year from 2025. The move effectively prevents future generations from buying tobacco products. There are also plans to limit the stockists of tobacco products and decrease the nicotine content of tobacco.

A Roman Castrum was discovered in Velsen, Netherlands and is believed to date to the reign of Caligula. It is the most northern fort to be found, and archaeologists think it may have been a stationing port of the failed invasion of Britain.

A 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death in West London. The boy was the 30th teenage homicide in the capital in 2021, surpassing the previous peak of 29 killings in 2008.

Ghislaine Maxwell, a British socialite and associate of Jeffery Epstein, was found guilty of sex trafficking by a court in New York City, US.

The Eastenders actress Rose Ayling-Ellis

and her partner Giovanni Pernice won Strictly Come Dancing after beating the first same-sex male couple of John Whaite and Johannes Radebe in the final. The victory meant Rose became the first deaf person to win the show.

## **December Sports Review**

Due to their human rights record, the United States announced a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Olympic Winter Games in Beijing, China. The White House stated no official delegation would be sent to the games. Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom later joined the US boycott.

Max Verstappen won the Formula One Drivers Championship Title in the final lap of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, while Mercedes won the Constructors Championship. The title win was controversial after a last-minute decision allowed Verstappen, who had fresh tyres, to overtake lapped cars under the safety car and race Lewis Hamilton, who didn't have new tyres, for the final lap. The decision was widely criticised.

Manchester City climbed to the top of the Premier League table after Liverpool and Chelsea dropped points. A large number of games were postponed throughout the football leagues due to COVID-19 outbreaks.

**End**



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# Insecure ID cards phased out as travel document to strengthen UK borders

October

- UK Border Force introduces new rules to limit use of insecure ID cards from 1 October.
- Change will prevent organised crime gangs and others who seek to abuse the system.
- ID cards are some of the most abused documents seen by Border Force officers.
- New approach will strengthen UK borders and means many EU, EEA and Swiss citizens now follow the same rules for entering the UK as travellers from the rest of the world.

From today (Friday 1 October 2021), most EU, EEA and Swiss citizens will need a valid passport to enter the UK as the government stops accepting national identity (ID) cards as a travel document.

These ID cards are some of the most abused documents seen by Border Force officers and, last year, almost half of all false documents detected at the border were EU, EEA or Swiss ID cards.

They can be easily abused by people attempting to come into the country illegally and by stopping accepting these forms of ID, the government can prevent organised criminal gangs and illegal migrants using them to enter the UK unlawfully.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

“The UK has a proud history of being open to the world, and Global Britain will continue in that tradition. But we must clamp down on the criminals that seek to enter our country illegally using forged



documents.

By ending the use of insecure ID cards we are strengthening our border and delivering on the people's priority to take back control of our immigration system.

We are doing this as part of our New Plan for Immigration, which will be firm on those who seek to abuse the system, and fair on those who play by the rules.”

ID cards are a notoriously insecure form of travel document, because:

- Some cards do not have biometric data, making it easier to falsify the data recorded.
- They are more difficult to cross-reference with criminal record databases than passports.
- Although a new ID card security standard is being introduced across the EU, cards will still be in circulation

for the next 5 to 10 years which do not conform to these standards.

- Inconsistencies in the design and security features of the cards make them easier to counterfeit than passports.

The move was first announced in October 2020.

This change fulfils our commitment to take back control of our borders and means EU, EEA and Swiss citizens now follow the same rules for entering the UK as travellers from the rest of the world. However, the government remains committed to protecting the rights of EU citizens who have made their lives in the UK, and as we agreed when we left the EU, those in the EU Settlement Scheme or with equivalent rights will be able to continue using ID cards until at least 2025.

The move also marks an important step in the government's long-term strategy to deliver a fully digitised border, providing a more streamlined and seamless customer experience for travellers entering the UK.

Those without a passport from 1 October are liable to be refused entry to the UK – although Border Force officers will retain the right to exercise discretion on individual cases.

# Global AI experts to present at Dstl's virtual AI Fest

October

Microsoft's President Brad Smith and Eric Schmidt, the former Chief Executive of Google and Chairman of the US National Security Commission on AI, are among some of the top key note speakers at this year's AI Fest.

Dstl - the science inside UK defence and security - is playing a critical role in helping UK defence understand how it can responsibly and ethically adopt AI.

Dstl provides a world-class capability in applying artificial intelligence, machine learning and data science to defence and security challenges and AI Fest will bring the AI community together from all over the world to discuss the topic of 'trustworthy AI'.

Professor Steven Meers, the Head of Dstl's AI Lab, said:

"Responsibly harnessing AI is a key challenge for our generation and AI Fest is a great opportunity to bring the UK and our international partners together to share ideas and approaches that will help ensure AI systems are safe, reliable and trustworthy.

Last year we had a fantastic event where we had over 1700 people attending and an amazing line up of speakers from all over the world. This year will build upon that success and will enable attendees to hear from some of the world's leading thinkers and leave inspired by new ideas, practical insights and lessons they can apply in their day to day work."

Over 2 days attendees will be able to engage in nearly 100 talks, pose questions to speakers and listen to panel discussions between AI



Experts.

Other keynote speakers include Lawrence Lee, MOD's 2nd Permanent Undersecretary, General Patrick Sanders, Commander Strategic Command, Lt General Groen, Director of the US Joint AI Centre, and Caroline Bellamy, MOD's Chief Data Officer.

It is Dstl's mission to de-mystify the area of AI by helping MOD understand how it can responsibly and ethically adopt AI in order to deter and de-escalate conflict, save lives and reduce harm.

This is the fourth AI Fest which aims to bring together the AI community across government, industry, academia and international partners, where world-leading experts share their experiences including the challenges of military adoption of AI, and we discuss how to build an effective and responsible AI capability.

AI Fest is open to government officials, academics and industry partners who are working in the Defence industry.

Find out more about AI and Dstl's work and read our series of Biscuit Books, easily-digested guides to the latest thinking and developments in artificial intelligence, data science and machine learning.

# £500 million Plan for Jobs Expansion

October

- Over £500 million to support hundreds of thousands of people into jobs announced today (Monday)
- Workers leaving the furlough scheme and unemployed people over the age of 50 will be helped back into work
- Those on the lowest wages will also be helped to progress in their careers and existing schemes targeting young people will be extended into next year

Workers leaving the furlough scheme and unemployed people over the age of 50 will be helped back into work as part of more than £500m expansion of the government's Plan for Jobs.

Those on the lowest wages will also be helped to progress in their careers and existing schemes targeting young people will be extended into next year

as part of the new package which could help hundreds of thousands of people into work.

## **Helping those on the lowest wages**

Starting in April 2022, the Government is enhancing its programme of support for workers on Universal Credit. More people who are in work on Universal Credit will be able to access work coach support, which will focus on career progression advice, and Job Centre Plus specialists will work with local employers to identify local opportunities for people to progress in work.

## **Supporting Older Workers to navigate the next stage of their career**

Workers over the age of 50 are also set to benefit from a new enhanced support package to help them to stay in and return to work.

This new package will ensure older workers will receive better information and guidance on later life planning, helping them make informed choices and supporting them to plan their career and remain in work. For those who have lost their jobs, this funding will ensure that older job seekers on Universal Credit receive more intensive, tailored support as they look to take the next step in their career.

The Government is also prioritising support for those coming off furlough and on Universal Credit through the Job Finding Support (JFS) scheme. This scheme provides online, tailored, one-to-one support for people unemployed for less than 3 months, including recruitment advice from a skilled adviser, support with CVs, and a mock interviews.

In addition, the Government is extending the Job Entry Targeted Support Scheme (JETS) to

September 2022; this scheme provides tailored support for people who have been unemployed for over three months.

### **Supporting young people to fulfil their potential**

More young people aged 16-24 and on Universal Credit will be able to benefit from the Kickstart Scheme, which is being extended to March 2022 and will be open to applications from employers and gateways until 17 December 2021. Over 76,900 young people - an average of 3,600 a week - are starting new placements, and this extension will see more young people developing the skills, confidence and experience to support them into long-term sustainable employment.

The government is also extending its



Youth Offer to 2025 and expanding eligibility to include 16 and 17 year olds in addition to 18-24 year olds. This provides additional support to unemployed young people on Universal Credit who are searching for work through its Youth Employment Programme, supportive Youth Hubs and specialised employability coaches.

An Apprenticeship offers vital on-the-job training and the chance for apprentices to earn while they learn. We know they work, with around 90% staying in employment or go on to further training.

Today, the Government is also extending its £3000 incentive payment for every apprentice a business hires up until 31 January 2022.

This multi-million expansion of the Plan for Jobs will ensure that people across the country continue to be supported as we enter the next stage of our economic recovery.

# New competition to find first HQ of Great British Railways

October

Great British Railways national headquarters to be based outside of London to ensure that skilled jobs and economic benefits are focused beyond the capital.

- Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announces a competition to provide the national home for Great British Railways (GBR), bringing jobs and investment outside of London
- new Transition Team launched to drive forward reforms and create the new public body responsible for running Britain's rail network
- Transport Secretary sets out commitments that define GBR, including a passenger focus, bringing back accountability and driving towards net zero by 2050

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has today (4 October 2021) announced that a competition will be run to identify the headquarters for Great British Railways

(GBR), the single, accountable public body responsible for running Britain's railways.

As part of major reforms designed to ensure decisions about the railway are brought closer to the passengers and communities they serve, GBR will require a new national headquarters alongside regional headquarters.

The government will soon launch a competition by welcoming expressions of interest with a commitment that the national headquarters will be based outside of London – ensuring skilled jobs, investment and economic benefits are focused beyond the capital.

The competition will recognise towns and cities with a rich railway history that are strongly linked to the network ensuring the first headquarters will take pride of place at the heart of a new era for Britain's railways.

The Transport Secretary also announced

today the creation of the GBR Transition Team under the leadership of Andrew Haines, who will continue to work as CEO of Network Rail.

The Transition Team will now be responsible for driving forward reforms and creating the railway's new guiding mind. They will initially focus on driving revenue recovery efforts post-pandemic, bringing a whole industry approach to tackling cost and



promoting efficiency and establishing a strategic freight unit to boost the sector.

The Transport Secretary has also set out the core goals that will define GBR, including:

- changing the culture of the railways not simply creating a bigger version of Network Rail
- thinking like our customers, both passengers and freight, and putting them first
- growing the network and getting more people travelling
- making the railways easier to use
- simplifying the sector to do things quicker, driving down costs and being more accountable
- having a can-do, not a can't do culture
- harnessing the best of the private sector
- playing a critical role in the national shift to net zero

GBR was commissioned in May 2021 as part of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, focused on delivering sweeping reforms that create a truly passenger-focused railway.

# 100% of specialist nuclear vessel recycled in a first for UK fleet

October

Nuclear Transport Solutions (NTS), which operated Oceanic Pintail, set Dales Marine Services the challenge of ensuring 98% of the world-class cargo vessel was reused.

Applying a number of innovative techniques, the Scottish firm exceeded expectations, and recycled every part of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority-owned (NDA) Oceanic Pintail, by:

- Separating different oils from water, and using the soil as furnace fuel
- Converting insulation into electrical energy

- Crushing concrete and tiles to create material used in the construction industry

Reusing 100% of a nuclear vessel is a UK first, and supports both the NDA group and Government's carbon net-zero ambitions.

Peter Buchan, NTS's Shipping Director, said:

"NTS takes its environmental responsibilities seriously, so we're delighted that 100% of Oceanic Pintail has been recycled.

We set our contractors, Dales Marine, an incredibly ambitious recycling target. They took that challenge and set the standard for others to follow when it comes to decommissioning vessels.



It's a fantastic achievement, especially considering the work was completed in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, so a lot of thanks must go to everyone who has played a role in ensuring this project has been a huge success.

Oceanic Pintail served the UK with distinction and this is a fitting end to its life."

While David Peattie, Group Chief Executive of the NDA, also praised the environmental success. He said:

"The NDA group is committed to supporting Government goals to be carbon net-zero by 2050. This fantastic achievement in recycling 100% of Oceanic Pintail, supports our ambitions to reduce our carbon impact."

Boasting a perfect safety record, the Japanese-constructed Oceanic Pintail first set sail 33 years ago.

Since its maiden voyage, Oceanic Pintail has served customers from across the world with bespoke solutions to all specialist nuclear transport challenges, until its final journey to Dales Marine's Leith dock in November 2020.

# The country invited to a major celebration of creativity across the UK in 2022

October

- Unboxed: Creativity in the UK will bring people together either in person or through digital media

- Unboxed will play a major role in a year of celebration for the country alongside Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

- Programme will run from March to October 2022 boosting tourism, supporting local economies and helping the nation's renewal following the Covid-19 pandemic

Today marks the unveiling of Unboxed: Creativity in the UK - a major festival taking place in 2022 featuring ten spectacular projects across the UK that people will be able to visit in person or experience through traditional

broadcast and digital media.

Unboxed brings together some of the UK's brightest talents in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths to work on jaw-dropping projects that will champion the nation's creative ability, give people memorable days out and support tourism and local economies.

The festival, backed by £120 million of government funding, will touch all corners of the UK, with projects moving to different locations across the UK to reach as big an audience as possible.

Combined with the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, next year will be one of pride, celebration and coming together for the nation following the Covid-19



pandemic.

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said:

“From the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham to the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, 2022 is going to be a year of celebrating the UK at its best.

And today, we are launching our fantastic new festival – Unboxed: Creativity in the UK.

A celebration of UK ingenuity, energy, innovation, optimism and all-round creative genius, it will be unlike anything else that has been seen before.

Light shows, sculpture trails and a festival of ideas are just some of the spectacular events that will take place in locations across the UK – alongside work and experiences you can interact with digitally.”

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

“Next year we will celebrate creativity in all four corners of the UK in what is set to be a huge year for the nation. Everyone should have the opportunity to experience world-leading arts and culture



no matter what their background or where they’re from - and that’s what Unboxed is all about.

In 2022 we’re also preparing to host the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and mark Her Majesty The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. Together, these events will be at the heart of a year of celebration that will showcase the best of the UK to the world.”

Martin Green CBE, Chief Creative Officer, Unboxed: Creativity in the UK, said:

“Hundreds of creatives from across science, technology, engineering, arts and maths are creating extraordinary once-in-a-lifetime events and online

experiences for millions in the UK’s biggest and most ambitious public creative programme to date.

Unboxed represents an unprecedented and timely opportunity for people to come together across the UK and beyond and take part in awe-inspiring projects that speak to who we are and explore the ideas that will define our futures.”

### **Unboxing opportunities**

The programme of events will also engage hundreds of thousands of school children, young people and communities throughout 2022 through school outreach and other ways to take part. There will be volunteering roles to be filled and Unboxed will create employment and training opportunities for people involved.

Unboxed will kick off in March with the incredible ‘About Us’ installation beginning in Paisley, before touring locations including Derry-Londonerry, Caernarfon, Luton and Hull. Featuring a spectacular sound and vision show, ‘About Us’ will take audiences on a journey through time and space

- from the Big Bang to the present day - exploring the earth's history and people's connections to one another. Renowned musician Nitin Sawhney has composed a score for the show that will be performed by local choirs in host towns and cities. There will also be a UK-wide schools' poetry and computer coding competition, launched today.

Across Scotland, the 'Dandelion' project will feature Unexpected Gardens, vertical farms, free music events and plant giveaways to reimagine the annual harvest festival for the 21st Century, from Caithness to Dumfries.

In Wales, 'GALWAD' - which means call in Welsh - will tell an original story thirty years in the future, bringing 2052 to the streets of Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Ffestiniog next year. Film production designer Alex McDowell, who worked on Minority Report, is collaborating with people from across Wales on this story as it's told across different platforms.

In Northern Ireland, 'Our Place in Space' will be a 10km scale model sculpture trail of the solar system that has been designed by children's author and artist

Oliver Jeffers. People will be able to visit it in person in Derry-Londonderry, Belfast Divis and the Black Mountain, Cambridge and Ulster Transport Museum or through augmented reality.

'Tour De Moon' will be a series of festivals, satellite events and nightlife experiences inspired by and in collaboration with the Moon. Young creative talent aged 18 to 25 will be involved in creating the programme that will include music, filmmaking and debate. It will take place across Leicester, Newcastle, Southampton and satellite events across England.

Weston-super-Mare will be home to 'SEE MONSTER' a decommissioned North Sea offshore platform which will be transformed into a huge public art installation on the site of the town's disused former lido, Tropicana, in what is set to be a sensory show-stopper.

### **A summary of the ten projects at 'Unboxed: Creativity in the UK':**

• **About Us** (locations: Paisley, Derry-Londonderry, Caernarfon, Luton, Hull) - An epic touring light and vision show will take audiences on a journey through

time and space - from the Big Bang to the present day - exploring the earth's history and people's connections to one another.

• **PolliNations** (locations: Edinburgh, Birmingham) - A pop-up forest garden that celebrates the global origins of the UK's plants and population through immersive installations, live music, talks and performances.

• **Dandelion** (locations: across Scotland with two major music and food festivals in Glasgow and Inverness) - 100,000 schoolchildren and young people will take part in the largest community growing experiment ever undertaken in Scotland. Featuring live events to explore the science of future growth.

• **GALWAD: A Story from our Future** (locations: Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Swansea, TV and Online) - Communities from across Wales, creatives and a Hollywood production studio are working together to shape and share a story set 30 years in the future across TV drama, digital platforms and live events in three

Welsh locations Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Swansea.

- **Tour de Moon** (locations: Leicester, Newcastle, Southampton and satellite locations across England) - A festival of ideas inspired by our 'universal satellite', the Moon, held on a festival site created for young people and their families.

- **Our Place in Space** (locations: Derry-Londonderry, Belfast, Divis and Black Mountain, Cambridge and Ulster Transport Museum) - A 10km scale-model sculpture trail of the solar system, designed by artist and children's author Oliver Jeffers, which can be visited physically or experienced in augmented reality. The digital technology enables you to visit the virtual trail from any global location making it accessible to all.

- **SEE MONSTER** (location: Weston-super-Mare) - A decommissioned North Sea offshore platform installed in Weston-super-Mare will be transformed into a magnificent public art installation.

- **StoryTrails** (locations: Blackpool, Bradford, Bristol, London Borough of Lambeth and Lewisham, Lincoln, Sheffield, Slough, Wolverhampton,

Swansea, Newport, Dundee, Dumfries, Swindon and Omagh) - StoryTrails will bring to life untold stories using augmented reality in civic spaces to see BBC and BFI archive footage and learn the story of where they live.

- **Dreamachine** (location: Edinburgh, Cardiff, London, Belfast) - An artwork seen with your eyes closed that explores the limitless potential of the human mind in a powerful new kind of collective experience.

- **Green Space, Dark Skies** (location: online) - A series of interventions celebrating the UK landscape to connect people with nature using a new lighting technology to be experienced by audiences online.



A collage of images related to the Welters Organisation. At the top left is a poster for 'SOUTH BANK EXHIBITION LONDON' featuring a colorful, abstract design. To its right is a circular logo for 'THE GREAT WYCOMBE AND DISTRICT WOODLAND MUSEUM' with a swan illustration. Below these is a poster for 'FESTIVAL OF HELIX' with a spiral graphic. In the center is a dark grey banner with 'Keith Welters' in a stylized font and 'FURNISHING' in a smaller font to the right. Below the banner is the text 'welters® ORGANISATION WORLDWIDE Design and Innovation www.welters-worldwide.com'. At the bottom right is a bronze sculpture of an elephant with its trunk raised.



# R.A.F. Seaplane Tender

October



Join the known names in history in relationship with the RAF Seaplane Tenders. T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), Hubert Scott-Paine and many others made history with this sequence of vessels.

The model ranged through a number of Design modifications.

Government World would be pleased to hear of relationships and history with and of this exciting craft.

Further information can be obtained from the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust or from Government World directly.



The original compass from the Seaplane Rescue Launch owned by Keith Welters proudly cherished to this day.

# COVID-19:

## What we know so far - part 5

by Paul Bazeley

Things were beginning to look up in our previous Coronavirus So Far, in the last edition of Government World. The vaccination rates continued to rise, booster jabs were starting and school children aged 12-15 were offered the jab. There were fewer restrictions, and travel abroad was becoming easier. Other developed countries were also doing well with vaccination efforts, and the idea of learning to live with the virus seemed the way forward. The main concern for scientists was a variant that could evade the vaccines.

### What has happened since?

- A brief overview.

As we reached October, things still seemed to be going relatively well; cases and deaths remained low at the start. Yet, by the end of the month, the UK had reported 233 deaths in one day, the highest since early March. While some attributed this slight rise to people staying indoors more as the colder weather settled in, others were more concerned. Government adviser, Professor Peter Openshaw, claimed we faced another Christmas lockdown and that measures should be implemented quickly.

Both Wales and Scotland introduced NHS COVID Passes during the month, which required people to prove they had been vaccinated or had a negative COVID-19 test before being allowed in places such as nightclubs and other venues. The

month came to a close as the opposition leader, Sir Keir Starmer, tested positive for COVID-19.

Moving into November, the mood around coronavirus seemed to change as cases increased across the UK. Sajid Javid began to urge people to get their booster jab as soon as possible and follow restrictions as we moved into Christmas time. A few days later, Javid, the Health Secretary, announced that frontline NHS workers in England would be required to be vaccinated by April 2022 or they could face losing their jobs. He said, "We must avoid preventable harm and protect patients in the NHS, protect colleagues in the NHS and of course protect the NHS itself".

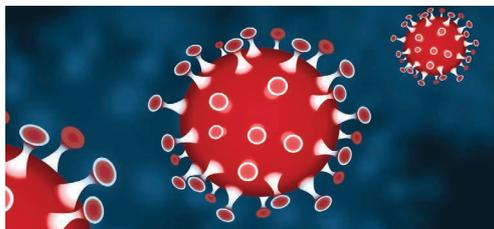
As the month continued, Northern Ireland joined Wales and Scotland



and approved a COVID-19 vaccine passport to come in to force the following month. The passport was to be used to show a person's vaccinations status or a negative COVID-19 test result to enter bars, restaurants and nightclubs.

By the end of November, the UK had surpassed 10 million coronavirus cases. Then news broke that a variant named Omicron was discovered in South Africa. Days later, the variant was classified as a "variant of concern" by the World Health Organisation after research revealed several mutations and an increased risk of reinfection.

Many became concerned that the variant may be less susceptible to vaccines due to the number of mutations. Omicron was first found in Chelmsford and Nottingham a couple of days later. Soon after discovering the variant in the UK, the government



made face coverings mandatory in England; this required people to wear them in shops, hairdressers, banks, post offices, and on public transport.

Coming into December, things were beginning to look worrying as Omicron cases began to appear around the world and cases began to rise. That became just one concern for the Conservative Party as claims began to circulate about Christmas parties and other parties the previous year when the country was under tight restrictions. Footage later emerged of people laughing and joking about a party, and images and rumours of other gatherings began to pick up momentum. However, Prime Minister Boris Johnson denied that any rules had been broken and said an inquiry would investigate any wrongdoing.

As the rumour mill continued and pressure built, the cases of COVID-19 were rising, and fears over the Omicron variant were rising. Boris Johnson quickly announced in a press conference that Plan B restrictions were being introduced. The restriction meant working from home where possible, using face masks in more places, increased testing and the NHS COVID Pass

to access nightclubs and large venues. It was also announced that the booster rollout would accelerate rapidly, with everyone eligible able to book their jab by the end of the year.

Although many thought the announcement's timing could be to distract people from the party claims, cases did begin to rise quickly. Shortly after Plan B was in place, there were calls for further restrictions due to the significant infection rate. The London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, declared a major incident in the capital as hospitals faced increasing pressure due to a surge in Omicron.

By the end of the month, there were consistently over 100,000 cases reported a day, and on one day, over 189,000 cases were reported. Nevertheless, preliminary research data showed that hospitalisations from Omicron compared to Delta were down 50-70%. Also, while



cases were very high, there was more evidence suggesting that though Omicron was spread more quickly, it wasn't causing as serious an illness as previous strains, and many reported cold-like symptoms.

### **Where are we now?**

As the New Year arrives, cases are high, not just in the UK but around the world. The Omicron variant has spread rapidly, and most countries are now under tighter restrictions once again. On the bright side, the booster and vaccination campaigns continue to succeed, with large numbers of people getting jabbed. We shouldn't forget that although we do have tighter restrictions so far, the UK has avoided a complete lockdown.

### **What does the future look like?**

You can probably guess what we're going to say; we still can't know. Since the last instalment, things have certainly taken a turn for the worse, and as we mentioned, a variant was likely to be the main issue. Omicron is an issue and has caused damage to economies. Nevertheless, it doesn't seem like more restrictions are likely to come in at the time of

writing. If anything, from what we are told, Omicron may be more cold-like and less severe than other strains. Potentially, we could start to see the world open more quickly than we thought a month or so ago.

Currently, as the cases have risen astronomically, death and hospitalisation rates haven't followed. Both have increased, as is expected, but not to anywhere close to the same degree as cases. A worry now is the aftereffects of Christmas, as people began to gather inside with people. Whether or not this will create more of

an issue is yet to be seen.

Now, barring another variant of concern emerging, it seems as though we must ride the wave of Omicron cases and are in damage limitation mode. Hopefully, cases will begin to decline as we look to the warmer weather, and things will open up again. As usual, though, we will have to wait and see.

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



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# Bonfires are not an excuse to burn household rubbish

November

Only clean, non-commercial waste should be burned like paper, untreated wood and cardboard.

Only clean, non-commercial waste should be burned like paper, untreated wood and cardboard.

The Environment Agency is asking people who are planning on having a bonfire to be careful about what is being burned and to keep it secure before burning.

The burning of most type of waste is illegal as it causes pollution which can harm your own health as well as your family, friends and neighbours and can carry a fine of up to £50,000.



Sam Pickard of the Environment Agency said:

“Bonfires are not to be used for a seasonal clear-out of your rubbish. It is not an excuse to get rid of difficult to dispose of rubbish by burning it yourself or asking others to do it for you.

We want to encourage people to make sure they dispose of their waste legally and safely at their recycling centre or through their doorstep collections. And if you are responsible for a bonfire, when you are doing your checks for wildlife also look to see if anyone has added rubbish to your bonfire.”

Torrige District Councillor Philip Hackett, Lead Member for the Environment, Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety said:

“While bonfires may be a traditional part of the festivities around this time of year they can pose significant risks and impact on our climate.

We recommend people attend an

organised event instead of having their own bonfires but if they decide to light their own fires they should make safety a priority and not burn any hazardous materials. Recycling is a much more environmentally friendly way of disposing of unwanted wood and other materials.”

PC Martin Beck, Rural Affairs Officer with Devon & Cornwall Police, said:

“We work closely with our partner agencies to keep our communities and environment safe and we need the public’s help, support and co-operation to do this.

We want everyone to have a fun and safe bonfire night and fully support the message that the Environment Agency is sharing.”

Anyone seeing suspicious activities should contact the Environment Agency on 0800 807060 or report it anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

# Over eight million people in the UK receive COVID-19 booster jabs

November

Over eight million people have now received their COVID-19 booster jab, the latest figures show today (Monday 1 November 2021), ensuring the protection they've secured from their first two doses is maintained over the winter months.

Today's figures follow hundreds of thousands of vaccinations over the weekend, with more than 820,000 administered since Friday. People who are eligible are also able to get a booster at hundreds of walk-in sites across the country from today, as long as it's been six months since their second dose.

A total of 8,115,229 people have received their booster jab in the UK. 45,712,351 people have received two doses (79.5%) and 48,790,855 people have received one dose (84.8%).

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

"More than eight million people across the UK now have the vital protection

boosters provide, keeping them and their loved ones safe over the coming months.

It's never been easier to get your boost with walk-in sites across the country now open for those eligible – if it's been six months since your second dose, get your booster as soon as you can."

The colder weather traditionally leads to increased transmission of viruses and will be challenging for the NHS.

Vaccines give high levels of protection but immunity reduces over time, particularly for older adults and at-risk groups, so it is vital that vulnerable people come forward to get their COVID-19 booster vaccine to top-up their defences and protect themselves this winter.

The latest evidence from SAGE shows that protection against symptomatic disease falls from 65%, up to 3 months after the second dose, to 45% six months after the second dose for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, and from 90% to

65% for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. Protection against hospitalisation falls from 95% to 75% for Oxford/AstraZeneca and 99% to 90% for Pfizer/BioNTech.

Although the vaccine efficacy against severe disease remains high, a small change can generate a major shift in hospital admissions. For example, a change from 95% to 90% against hospitalisation would lead to doubling of admissions in those vaccinated.

The booster programme is designed to top up this waning immunity. Early results from Pfizer show that a booster following a primary schedule of the same vaccine restores protection back up to 95.6% against symptomatic infection.

Last week, clinical guidance was updated to allow COVID-19 boosters to be given earlier to those at highest risk, where this makes operational sense to do so. This includes care

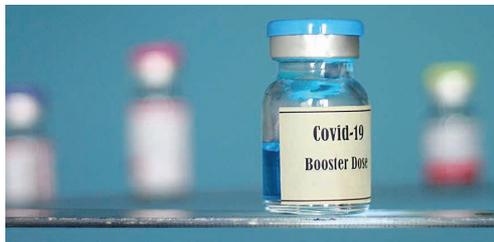
home residents who may have received their second doses at different times to be vaccinated in the same session, as long as it has been five months since their second dose. It may also help with other vulnerable groups, such as housebound patients, so that they can have their flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time.

Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup said:

“With over 820,000 boosters administered over the weekend, the programme continues at pace, now providing over eight million vulnerable people with protection.

I encourage everyone eligible to get their booster and flu jab as soon as possible to keep them safe over the winter period.”

Vaccine confidence is high with data from the Office for National Statistics showing nearly all (94%) of those aged 50 to 69 say they would be likely to get their COVID-19 booster if offered, with the figure rising to 98% for those over 70.



People will be invited for the COVID-19 booster jab when it's their turn - if they have not been contacted within a week of reaching six months since their second jab they can call 119, book online or walk into various sites across the country.

Flu is another winter virus that can be serious. To give people the best protection over winter, those eligible for a free flu vaccine should come forward and book an appointment at either their GP practice or their local pharmacy, or take it up when offered by their employer or other healthcare provider.

The government has launched a nationwide advertising campaign, encouraging people to get their booster and flu jabs to protect themselves and their loved ones and help reduce pressures on the NHS. This includes outdoor billboards, broadcast and community radio and TV.

The offer of a first and second COVID-19 vaccine remains open to anyone who is eligible. 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.

There are more than 500 extra vaccination sites now compared to April this year, with 1,697 vaccination centres in operation in April 2021, and over 2,200 vaccination centres in operation now.

Vaccines are also available for those aged 12-15 to offer the best possible protection this winter in schools, as well as over 100 vaccine centres.

Dr Nikki Kanani, deputy lead for the NHS vaccination programme, said:

“The NHS COVID-19 vaccination programme continues at pace with eight million booster doses delivered across the UK, including more than 6.8 million in England alone.

Hundreds of thousands of people continue to book in for their vital boosters with a further 1.7 million invites due to land this week and the NHS has now opened up hundreds of walk-in sites across the country so people can get their top-up protection without delay.

The booster is not simply a nice to have – it will provide important extra protection as we go into the winter period. So if you have been invited or a family or friend has been invited – please do come forward.”

# New proposals put forward to strengthen drone regulation and boost UK aviation sector

November

A new report published today (Monday 1 November) by the Regulatory Horizons Council has set out how the UK could support the rapid and safe commercialisation of drones as the technology develops.

The Regulatory Horizons Council (RHC) is an independent expert committee which identifies the regulation needed to foster technological innovation and provides government with impartial, expert advice on the regulatory reform required to support its rapid and safe introduction.

Drones have been used to deliver vital supplies throughout the pandemic and this report outlines how innovation-friendly regulation could further unlock the benefits of drones, which have the potential to enable the delivery of medical supplies, aid search and rescue services or inspect infrastructure.

The report expands on the opportunities for remote parts of the UK such as the Hebrides to act as a testbed for the commercial deployment of drones.

This would enable a shift away from experimentation to commercial operations, particularly for flights beyond the visual line of sight of the operator.

It also highlights regulatory lessons that the UK can learn from engagement with countries including the United States, Rwanda, Singapore, and Ireland, building on existing strengths in the wider aviation sector such as the skilled workforce and technology base.

Furthermore, the report outlines several other regulatory challenges and how the government and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) could help to address them, ensuring that the UK's regulatory framework continues to enable new technologies and business models to thrive.

Professor Iain Gray, Chair of the Drones Industry Action Group, said:

“This is an exciting time for the UK's drone sector, as new technologies are solving real commercial problems and helping

save lives. Government is making game-changing investments through the Future Flight Challenge, but to reap the full benefits, innovators need clear, forward-thinking and responsive regulatory regimes to operate within.

I would like to thank the RHC for their work producing this welcome report, and look forward to government's response in due course.”

The Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng has written to the Regulatory Horizons Council welcoming the report, and the Department for Transport will respond in detail to its recommendations after the live consultation on the future of transport regulatory review.



# Ministers renew efforts to increase opportunities for talented women at the top of UK business

November

Government to back a new five-year review to monitor women's representation in the upper rungs of FTSE companies

- Government will support a new five-year review aimed at increasing opportunities for women at the top of Britain's biggest companies

- new five-year review will follow hugely successful Hampton-Alexander Review that saw 50% increase in women on FTSE boards in just 5 years

- Business Minister Paul Scully: The business case for diversity is too strong to ignore

- Ministers have urged the UK's biggest businesses not to take the foot off the pedal when it comes to improving gender diversity in their senior leadership. The call comes as the government announced today (Monday 1 November) it would back a new five-year review to monitor women's representation in the upper rungs of FTSE companies, namely The FTSE Women Leaders Review, and

encourage firms to open up opportunities to everyone.

Research has found that having diversity at the top can improve companies' profitability, and government is eager to ensure everyone, whatever their background, has equal opportunity to succeed and achieve on merit to make the most of talent across the UK.

Business Minister Paul Scully said:

"UK business has taken great strides when it comes to gender diversity at board level, underlining the success of the government's voluntary approach.



Companies shouldn't take their foot off the gas. Evidence shows that more diverse businesses are more successful businesses – the case is too strong to ignore."

To date, the government's actions have proven immensely successful in encouraging companies – without the use of quotas – to improve the gender balance on their boards, through fair recruitment on the basis of merit.

Earlier this year the final report of the government-backed Hampton Alexander Review, which ran from 2015 to 2020, found that its main target had been more than met, with over a third (34.3%) of FTSE350 board positions held by women.

This marked a huge increase of 50% over 5 years. The numbers of 'one and done' boards – with only one woman member – dwindled from 116 in 2015 to just 16 earlier this year.

Today, the new FTSE Women Leaders

Review opened its online portal for FTSE companies to submit their gender diversity data. New leadership is currently being appointed to steer the review, and take forward new targets over the coming years.

1 - Women on Boards Reported numbers for Women on Boards of FTSE 350 companies, as at 11 January 2021 show: (Source - BoardEx) • FTSE 100 at 36.2% • FTSE 250 at 33.2% • FTSE 350 at 34.3%

2 - Women in Leadership Reported numbers for Women in leadership roles of FTSE 350 companies, as at 31 October 2020 show: (Source - Hampton-Alexander Review Portal) • FTSE 100 at 30.6% • FTSE 250 at 28.5% • FTSE 350 at 29.4%

3 - Women in Leadership is defined as the Executive Committee & the Direct Reports to the Executive Committee on a combined basis.

4 - The FTSE Women Leaders Review Portal is open for all FTSE 350 companies to submit their Women in Leadership gender data from Monday 1 November until Tuesday 30 November 2021. The next annual report will be published in February 2022.

5 - Further information is available at <https://ftswomenleaders.com>.

# Over a million jobseekers to benefit from new training opportunities

November

Across Great Britain, Universal Credit claimants can attend full-time work-related training courses for up to 12 weeks while still receiving benefit payments, following an extension to the rule changes around the Department for Work and Pensions' Train and Progress (TaP) initiative.

Before the DWP Train and Progress initiative started in April 2021 claimants were limited to training lasting just eight weeks, but since the rules were changed, jobseekers have benefited from the improved training opportunities, part of building a higher skilled, higher paid economy.

The announcement follows the government's recent £500 million expansion to its multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs, ensuring even more people will be helped back into work and to progress in their careers as the economy continues to bounce back from the impact of the pandemic.

Minister for Employment Mims Davies MP said:

“A higher skilled, higher paid jobs market is in everyone's interests – and this change can help us get there. It means jobseekers across Great Britain can build their skills and progress, seizing new opportunities as we bounce back from the pandemic.”

At last week's Budget, the Chancellor announced the most ambitious funding package for adult education in



England since 2015, with the government set to invest £3.8 billion in skills by 2025.

At the heart of these plans is the government's ambition to level up and reduce regional inequality so that no matter where in the UK someone lives, they have the opportunity to reach their full potential, find rewarding work and take pride in their local area.

The extension to DWP Train and Progress means those receiving Universal Credit who are in the intensive work search group can take advantage of more sector-specific training – from digital skills to social care and engineering – while continuing to receive financial support.

In England, customers can also take part in the free Department for Education Skills Bootcamps for up to 16 weeks, and will be able to access the planned HGV Bootcamps.

People of all ages can make the most of the opportunities, with Work Coaches matching jobseekers to the best courses for them. People can also search for free courses for jobs in their local area using the Find a Course website in England, World of Work in Scotland and Careers Wales, or can talk to their Work Coach to find out more.

# UK funding to support developing cities and regions transition to net zero by 2050

November

- A new multi-million UK Urban Climate Action Programme launched today to help developing cities reduce their emissions and grow sustainably
- UK as COP26 Presidency calls on cities and regions across the world to commit to net zero emissions by 2050
- decarbonising the world's urban buildings, which are responsible for around 40% of global emissions, crucial in combating climate change

The UK government has today (Thursday 11 November 2021) launched the new Urban Climate Action programme (UCAP) to support the cities and regions in developing countries most impacted by climate change to accelerate their transition to net zero.

Backed with £27.5 million of new UK government funding as part of the UK's International Climate Finance

commitment, the programme will support cities across Africa, Asia and Latin America to take action to tackle climate change and create a sustainable future, by helping them to become carbon neutral by 2050 and prepare low-carbon infrastructure projects.

The programme will help cities like Nairobi, Kuala Lumpur, and Bogotá develop low-emission public transport systems, renewable energy generation, sustainable waste management, new climate-smart buildings codes and climate risk planning.

To date over 1,000 cities and regions across the world – over a fifth of the global urban population - have committed to slashing their emissions to net zero by 2050.

Today, as part of the UN COP26 climate summit's Cities, Regions

and Built Environment Day in Glasgow, the UK has called on cities yet to make commitments to step up and set a net zero target that will help protect the places where people live and work, future proofing the world for future generations.

Business and Energy Minister Lord Callanan said:

“From our homes and workplaces to our towns and cities, the buildings we live in are a fundamental part of our daily lives, but also a significant source of global emissions.

That’s why at COP26 today we are calling on cities, regions, governments and businesses to seize the moment and set bold net-zero targets as we work together as a global community to end our contribution to climate change.”

The world’s urban buildings, including homes, workplaces, schools and hospitals, are responsible for around 40% of global carbon emissions. By 2050, 1.6 billion people living in cities will be regularly exposed to extremely high temperatures and over 800 million people living in cities across the world will be vulnerable to sea level rises and coastal flooding. Accelerating the transition to net zero emissions for the world’s cities will

therefore be vital to achieving the goal of keeping global warming to close to 1.5 degrees.

Energy and Climate Change Minister Greg Hands said:

“By 2050 urban areas will be home to two thirds of the world population, with the speed and scale of urbanisation set to lock in high-carbon infrastructure and inequality if we do not act now.

The UK’s new programme will provide invaluable support to cities across Africa, Asia and Latin America to help them grow sustainably, and make them resilient to climate risks, securing a greener future for generations to come.”

Joy Belmonte, Mayor of Quezon City, one of the cities that will be supported through UCAP said:

“Quezon City’s Enhanced Local Climate Action Plan was successfully developed with the support of the UK government. With the assistance of the

C40 Cities Finance Facility, the city is also pioneering the deployment of solar PV on public schools and on critical public healthcare facilities, contributing to a green and just recovery.

We are immensely looking forward to continuing our fruitful partnership with C40 to implement Quezon City’s Climate Action Plan as a matter of urgency, continuing the journey together with the support of the UK government.”

UCAP will follow on from the flagship Climate Leadership in Cities programme, which was funded by the UK and successfully supported megacities in Latin America and Asia to develop ambitious climate action plans consistent with the Paris Agreement - including developing pathways to net zero by 2050 and committing to ambitious interim targets by 2030 to keep 1.5 degrees within reach.



As the first major economy to legislate to end its contribution to climate change by 2050, the UK is already taking action to tackle emissions from the built environment sector. As heating for homes and workspaces makes up almost a third of all UK carbon emissions, reducing these emissions is key to achieving the goal of net zero by 2050. Through the recent heat and buildings and net zero strategies, the UK government has set out how the UK will deploy the low-carbon technology needed to decarbonise homes, workplaces and public spaces.

To address emissions from the wider built environment, the UK government is investing £3.9 billion through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, the Home Upgrade Grant scheme, Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, Boiler Upgrade Scheme and Heat Network Transformation Programme.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Minister Eddie Hughes said:



“Net zero provides a real opportunity as we level up across the UK - delivering new green jobs and skills and boosting local economic growth.

Many local areas are already taking action and we continue to work very closely with them to meet our climate change commitments.

We are also taking action to cut the CO2 emissions of all new build homes by at least 75% from 2025 under the Future Homes Standard, and by 31% through an improvement in building standards later this year.”

The transition to net zero will drive levelling up across the country while supporting communities towards a greener future – providing opportunities for economic growth and delivering new green jobs for local people.

Many local areas are already taking strong action on climate change, including:

- the Gateshead District Energy Scheme, a renewable heat network for up to 1,250 new homes, backed by £5.9 million government funding
- Suffolk County Council has set out

plans to build new walking and cycling infrastructure, work with industry in Suffolk to utilise innovative waste heat technology, and deliver a public education campaign on the climate emergency to change behaviour

The government is supporting councils to reduce local carbon emissions and take advantage of the opportunities created, including through the Local Net Zero Programme. Almost £22 million has been invested in the programme to date for local places to build capacity and capability to deliver on net zero. A Local Net Zero Forum will also be established to bring together national and local government policymakers on a regular basis.

The Urban Climate Action Programme will work with cities including:

- **Africa:** Addis Ababa, Accra, Nairobi, Lagos, Johannesburg, Tshwane, Dar es Salaam
- **Asia:** Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Quezon City
- **Latin America:** Bogotá, Medellín, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Lima

# Water companies could face legal action after investigation launched into sewage treatment works

November

The Environment Agency (EA) and Ofwat have launched a major investigation into sewage treatment works, after new checks led to water companies admitting that they could be releasing unpermitted sewage discharges into rivers and watercourses.

This investigation will involve more than 2000 sewage treatment works, with any company caught breaching their legal permits facing enforcement action, including fines or prosecutions. Fines can be up to 10% of annual turnover for civil cases, or unlimited in criminal proceedings.

In recent years the EA and Ofwat have been pushing water companies to improve their day-to-day performance and meet progressively higher standards to protect the environment.

As part of this, the EA has been checking that water companies comply with requirements and has asked them to fit new monitors at sewage treatment works. This is to make sure the right levels of wastewater are being treated before overflows are allowed to enter the environment.

Following this action by the EA, several water companies have now revealed that many of their sewage treatment works may not be compliant. This would mean that water companies are in breach of their permits and failing to meet their legal duties.

EA and Ofwat are now looking into all water and sewerage companies to assess the scale of the problem.

Any company caught breaching these minimum standards will face a range of possible enforcement action – up to and including prosecution.

Emma Howard Boyd, chair of the Environment Agency, said:

“Any water companies in breach of their permits are acting illegally. This is a major issue of public trust. Water company boards must certify every year that they have adequate resources to fulfil their regulated activities. Only now, just before new monitors are installed, have companies reported concerns over potential problems. The EA has begun an immediate investigation of more than 2,000 sewage treatment works and will prosecute where necessary.

The private sector is under increasing pressure to demonstrate tangible commitments on protecting the environment. This shows why we need robust and well-funded regulation to provide the public, investors and customers with assurances about what is being delivered on the ground. I would like to see the levels of penalties for corporate environmental crime in England go up significantly. More attention should also be paid to the directors of companies that are guilty of repeated, deliberate or reckless breaches of environmental law. Such directors should be struck off and in the most grievous cases given custodial sentences.”

Jonson Cox, Chair of Ofwat, said:

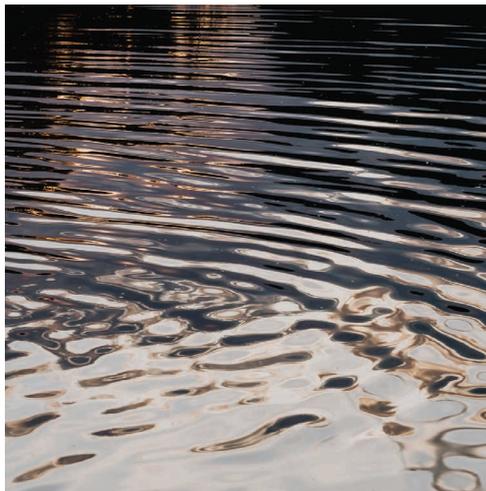
“Customers pay water companies to treat wastewater and protect and enhance rivers and wildlife. The public will be extremely disappointed if these reports are confirmed. Ofwat takes any reports of water companies breaking the law very seriously.

We have launched an investigation relating to companies’ management of their wastewater treatment works

which will examine any instance of systemic management failure, or the misreporting of data. If we find reason to act, Ofwat will use our full range of powers to hold companies to account for their failures and to require them to put things right in very short order.”

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

“This new information is shocking and wholly unacceptable. We have been repeatedly clear in Parliament in recent weeks that we need to tighten up existing rules but also raise



standards across the board when it comes to protecting our rivers. That means urgently addressing issues of non-compliance, but also going much further to reduce the harm caused by the discharges that should only be happening in exceptional circumstances. I want to see water companies spending far more on better infrastructure, and far less on payouts to shareholders.

I have made my expectations of water companies and their legal duties crystal clear. Water companies must take urgent and immediate steps to abide by their legal duties. I will also be remaining in close contact with the regulators about any fines, prosecutions or other enforcement action that is deemed necessary.”

The Government has been repeatedly clear that the amount of sewage discharged into our waters by water companies is unacceptable, and has taken direct action to accelerate progress in tackling it.

Through the Environment Act, it

has introduced clear new duties to legally require water companies to make progressive reductions in the adverse impacts of storm overflows.

Any water companies not abiding by their permits are also expected to take immediate action to urgently address any non-compliance while these investigations are ongoing.

- Full details of the investigation – including specific companies - cannot be shared at this stage as this may prejudice future legal proceedings.

- As part of an increased drive for better monitoring and transparency, the EA has pressed water companies to install monitors so that the frequency and duration of sewage spills into rivers or coastal waters, which should normally happen only during heavy rainfall, can be seen by all. More than 12,000 of England's 15,000 storm overflows now have Event Duration Monitors, and the remaining 3,000 will all have them by end 2023. All the data is published online, so the public can see what is happening in their local area.

- The EA and Ofwat are also now

requiring the companies to install new flow monitors on more than 2,000 wastewater treatment works to identify what is happening at those works during the sewage treatment process itself. This will uncover whether the companies are complying properly with the conditions in their permits on the volumes of sewage they must treat before they are allowed to divert any untreated sewage to storm overflows.

- This new monitoring programme is in addition to the many other measures that the government is taking to address the issue of storm overflows. The Environment Act was passed into law on 9 November. It will improve the performance of water and wastewater companies by introducing clear new duties, in addition to new measures on how the water industry plans for the future. The government tabled an amendment to place its expectations for reduction of sewage discharges on an enhanced legal footing. This bolsters a raft of measures already being taken by Government to deliver progressive reductions in the adverse impacts of storm overflows on the environment and on public health.

- Defra Ministers and Environment Agency representatives have also been speaking to researchers and campaigners for a number of months about flow requirements and how increased monitoring and technology can improve reporting and planning.

- As part of Ofwat's recent price review, it backed investment of around £1 billion every year for water companies to improve the natural environment by increasing the capacity of the wastewater system to meet growing demand. In July it approved almost £3 billion extra for green recovery plans to deliver lasting environmental improvements.

- Water company boards certify every year that they have the funding, management resources and systems and controls in place to fulfil their regulated activities, including to meet their environmental obligations. They must notify Ofwat if they are aware of anything that may materially affect their ability to fulfil those duties.

# COP26 Overview

by Paul Bazeley

## What was COP26?

As mentioned in the previous Government World, COP26 (standing for Conference of the Parties), also known as the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, was the 26th climate change conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The conference was seen as the time countries would gather to revisit the pledges made in the Paris Agreement way back in 2015. In Paris, it was requested that countries keep global warming below 2C, as a minimum, aiming for below 1.5C. The final result of the COP meetings is to reach net-zero emissions by the middle of the century.

## What were the outcomes?

There was a lot of hype in the lead up

to COP26, and expectations were high as the conference began. Accordingly, we have compiled a list of the main outcomes from the summit.

- Coal

While the original plan seemed to make strides to phase out coal, things did not quite pan out that way. Instead, late interventions by China and India, two of the most significant coal users, meant a commitment to 'phase down' instead of 'phase out' the use of coal was reached. So it seems that a farewell to coal, which is responsible for about 40% of annual carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, is still a little way off.

- Deforestation

More than 100 countries signed up to stop deforestation by 2030. One of the critical signatories was Brazil, where swathes of the Amazon have been cut down. Trees absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, the gas that



contributes to global warming, so the deal was seen as a big step forward, with £14bn of funding being made available. Some of the signed countries included Canada, China, Japan, Russia, the US and the UK. Nevertheless, how the pledge will be monitored to ensure it works is unknown and is where similar promises have previously fallen short.

- Developing Countries

Further money was pledged to help

developing countries tackle climate change, despite the previous promise of providing \$100bn a year by 2020 failing to be met. It is hard to know exactly how much money there is in the overall figure now as the money will come from governments, private companies and international lenders. However, it's approximated to be just short of \$100bn by the end of 2022, and the UK government said it believed the target of \$100bn would be met in 2023. While some stated it was a step forward and things were on the right track, African and Latin American countries believed the progress fell far short of the mark.

- Emissions

An agreement was reached that all countries would meet in 2022 to “revisit

and strengthen” their targets to cut CO2. If they are met, the United Nations believes that current agreements would only limit global warming to 2.5C. Although a better figure than the 4C predicted before the Paris Agreement was reached, the figure far exceeds the 1.5C the scientists say will prevent a “climate catastrophe”. To put it simply, in terms of emission, everyone seemed to agree they needed to do more, and so they've decided to meet again in 2022 to discuss it.

### Was it enough?

That depends on who you ask. The politician's answer would probably be along the lines of ‘we made great progress, and this isn't an overnight fix.’ On the other hand, those who joined in the massive rallies worldwide to protest a lack of action during the conference will probably say ‘no, absolutely not.

With a lot of talk, build up, and sentiments along the lines of now is the time to act to protect the planet, it would be relatively fair to say that most believed it was disappointing with what many would argue are less-than-adequate agreements in place. However, some of the initiatives do show a lot of promise;

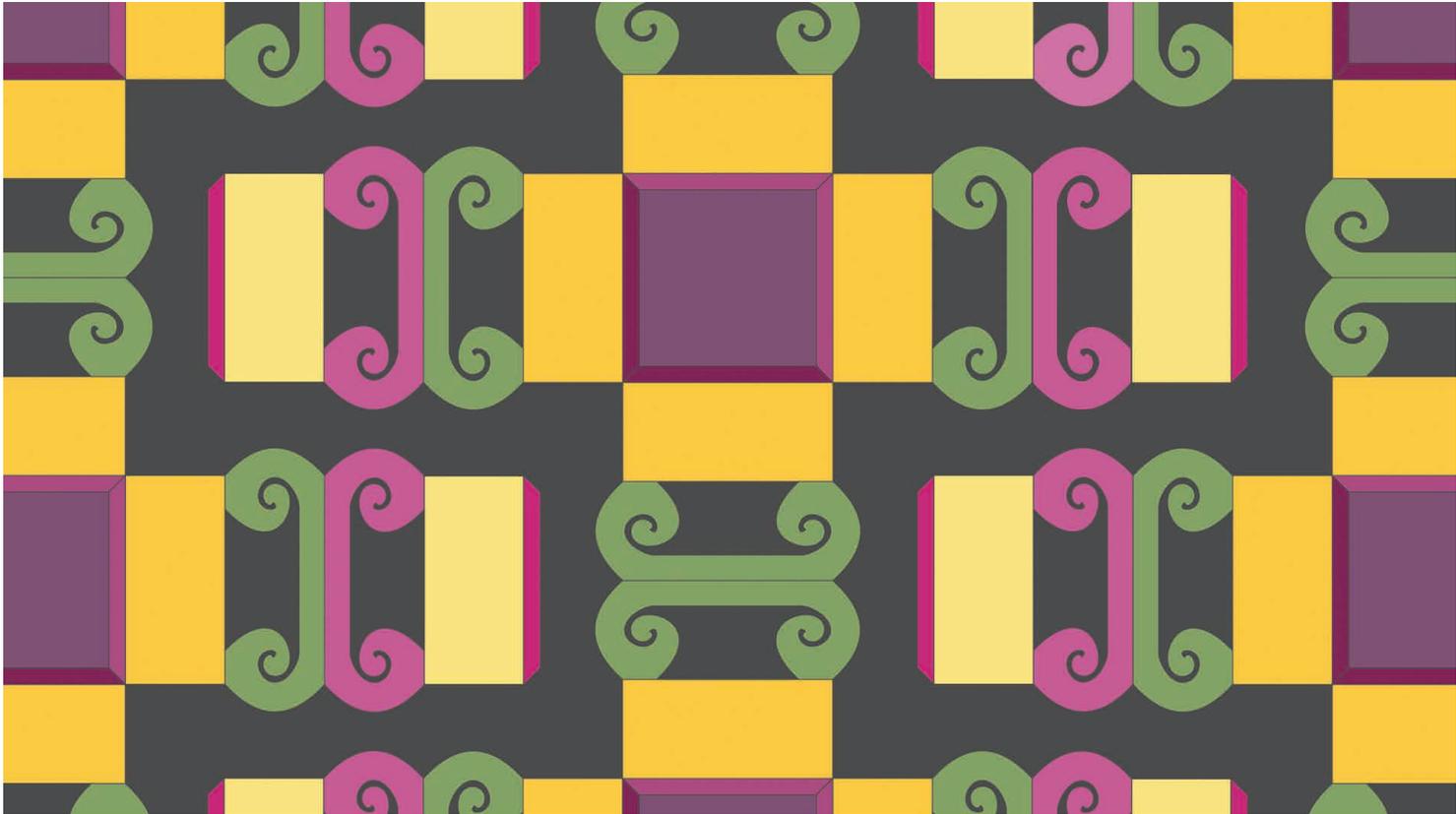
the issue is how they will be policed, with very few countries making their pledges legally binding. Perhaps the Greta Thunberg statement that it's all ‘blah, blah, blah’ and minimal action may well be how the COP26 is viewed in the future; only time will tell.

### What happens now?

Well, first, there's the question of whether the pledges put in place will be kept. As mentioned above, with very few legally binding, regulating such initiatives is challenging. There's no doubt that there was some progress made on things such as coal, deforestation, and funding to developing countries. While many are unhappy and feel like better agreements could have been reached, there is some promise. The disappointment for many will be the lack of advancement on emissions.

A deal to discuss the issue in 2022 is undoubtedly better than nothing, and COP27 taking place in Egypt the same year will hopefully spur the discussions further. However, at the moment, it's something many see as an unwanted delay to an increasingly time-sensitive subject.





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# Government cracking down on highly disruptive protest tactics

December

Crucial new powers to prevent the significant disruption caused by protesters determined to lock or glue themselves onto structures will be brought back to Parliament this week.

An amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will be re-tabled on Wednesday 1 December which would give the police the power to stop and search people in order to seize items intended to cause serious disruption by 'locking-on' – where there is reasonable suspicion. This could include equipment such as chains, glue and bamboo scaffolding structures.

The measure has been informed by the experiences of policing in response to the deployment of lock-ons in protest. Use of this disruptive and dangerous tactic has risen in recent years – including on some of

the UK's busiest and most dangerous motorways.

It has led to massive disruption on major roads in and around the capital, preventing people from getting to work or crucial hospital appointments, also resulting in a significant drain on police resources, due to the time it takes to remove complex lock-ons safely.

In support of the government's proposals to stop and search for lock-on equipment where there is reasonable suspicion, Metropolitan Police Service Deputy Commissioner, Sir Steve House, said:

“Public Order policing is one of the most challenging aspects of modern-day policing. Public order events often present unique challenges and complexity. Officers and command

teams have to balance the rights of everyone involved, including local communities, when considering how to respond.

The government's proposed amendments to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will support the policing response to the deployment of lock-ons in protests. The increased use of lock-ons by certain protest groups has added to the challenging nature of public order policing and created significant disruption to the public over recent years.

We have seen individuals lock themselves to the drive shafts of vehicles, locked together in tubes encased in concrete, locked onto structures at height, and glued to roads. Removing these lock-ons safely requires specialist policing

teams to be deployed to what can be high risk environments, taking time and significant resources. This is time that our officers are taken away from policing their local communities and local policing priorities.

It is ultimately for Parliament to decide

whether the new powers proposed by the Home Office should be enacted and we know that these decisions are rightly ones where the challenges facing policing are just one of many considerations which politicians need to consider.”

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

“The police have our full support to maintain the pace at which they deal with difficult protests and public order matters. We have seen some of the most self-defeating and dangerous protests ever seen in recent years with people gluing themselves to roads and locking themselves to vehicles and buildings, causing serious disruption to the law-abiding majority across the country.

These are selfish actions which drain the police of resources which should be used in our communities, protecting the vulnerable people who need them most. This government will always back the police. That’s why our Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is so necessary, and the public expects everyone in Parliament to deter this kind of disruption by

supporting this Bill.”

The government also intends to make the act of locking-on to cause serious disruption a criminal offence, which could see someone jailed for up to six months and faced with an unlimited fine.

Another government amendment will mean that blocking a motorway would meet the same punishment. The current law for this offence sets the penalty at a maximum fine of just £1,000 and is not an adequate deterrent for organisations determined to cause widespread disruption and break the law.

And Serious Disruption Prevention Orders will be brought in to tackle protesters who are determined to repeatedly cause disruption to the public. These will give the courts the power to impose orders on those with protest related convictions or a history of causing serious disruptions at protests in order to prevent them from continuing to commit such acts.



# Support for vulnerable young people in serious violence hotspots

December

Young people who are most at risk of serious violence or gang exploitation will receive targeted support to keep them engaged in education and attending lessons

The targeted support, backed by £30 million, is a part of a rollout of 10 'SAFE' (Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed) taskforces in 'hotspot' areas, where incidents of serious youth violence are highest. These will be led by local schools, bringing headteachers together to support vulnerable young people, and avoid them becoming involved in county lines and criminal activity.

The investment will help focus on improving pupils' attendance, reducing the likelihood of young people being permanently excluded from school, keeping young people focused on their education.

Children and Families Minister Will Quince said:

"Keeping young people engaged with their education has never been more important. These taskforces are helping school leaders and vital support services work together to support some of the most vulnerable young people across the country, helping to keep them on the right track and stop them missing lessons.

Through the work of these taskforces, combined with our ongoing SEND Review, the independent review of children's social care, and our investment in Alternative Provision and other specialist support, this government is levelling up opportunities for all young

people to help fulfil their potential and achieve better outcomes."

The government have also today announced the 22 schools benefitting from Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces, which work directly with young people in Alternative Provision settings to offer intensive support from experts, including mental health professionals, family workers, and speech and language therapists. Bringing this wider range of professionals together aims to reduce the risk to these pupils of being exploited and entering a life of crime, and helping them move into further education, employment or training after they finish school.

## Areas benefitting from a SAFE Taskforce

- Birmingham
- Newham
- Manchester
- Lambeth



- Leeds
- Southwark
- Sheffield
- Bradford
- Liverpool
- Haringey

### **Alternative Provision Settings benefitting from AP Specialist Taskforces**

- Bradford AP Academy Centre, Bradford
- Haringey Learning Partnership, Haringey
- Manchester Secondary PRU, Manchester
- Orchardside School, Enfield
- Saffron Valley Collegiate, Croydon
- Sandwell Community School, Sandwell
- Snowdon Village (Bristol Future's Academy), Bristol
- Southwark Inclusive Learning Service (SILS), Southwark
- Stephen Longfellow Academy, Leeds
- Tunmarsh School, Newham
- Unity Academy, Nottingham
- St Wilfrid's Academy, Doncaster
- Park Campus Academy, Lambeth
- Brent River College, Brent
- City of Birmingham School, Birmingham
- Ealing Alternative Provision (EAP), Ealing
- Everton Free School, Liverpool
- Leicester Partnership School, Leicester
- London East AP, Tower Hamlets

# £700 million to support NHS this winter

December

- £700 million targeted investment for 785 schemes across 187 hospital trusts to increase capacity and tackle waiting lists
- Government sets out plan to address NHS and social care challenges this winter including responding to high demand alongside COVID-19
- Public advised to play their part by getting COVID-19 and flu jabs, and contacting 111 for urgent medical advice

Hospitals across the country will benefit from a share of £700 million to expand wards, install modular operating theatres, upgrade outpatient spaces and MRI and screening technology, to help reduce waiting lists.

The funding, to be split across all regions in England, will help reduce waiting times for patients by expanding the number of operating theatres and beds, including new day surgery units to prevent people staying overnight and investment in technology to improve their experiences of care and help them manage their

conditions.

Alongside this, the government is today publishing a document setting out the key challenges facing NHS and social care services this winter, including COVID-19 and the potential threat of variants, preparations being undertaken to keep people safe and healthy, as well as the actions the public can take.

It comes after the COVID-19 booster programme was extended to all adults in England – with everyone aged over 18 to be offered a booster by the end of January – to help protect against the Omicron variant.

Today's investment is part of the £5.4 billion already announced to support the NHS response to the pandemic in the second half of the year. In total, the government is investing over £34 billion of additional funding in health and social care services this year.

The pandemic put unprecedented

pressure on the NHS. To fix this, the NHS needs to be able to offer more appointments, operations and treatments. New, innovative practices must be adopted so patients continue to receive the best possible care.

The allocations for the £700 million announced today include £330 million for upgrading NHS facilities, £250 million for new technology and £120 million for any supporting revenue costs.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Sajid Javid said:

“Ahead of what is going to be a difficult winter, we’re putting everything behind our health and care services, so everyone can access the services they need, when they need them.

Our £700 million investment will help more people get treated over the coming months by upgrading wards, operating theatres, and diagnostic kit.



We’re taking unprecedented steps to keep people healthy this winter, putting the booster roll-out on steroids, and delivering the largest flu vaccine programme in UK history.

We can all play our part in the national mission – when you get the call, please get the jab.”

The funding will cover the costs of:

- additional day surgery units to boost activity and avoid patients having to stay overnight or longer

- additional permanent and modular theatres and surgical hubs in multiple trusts to drive up the number of operations which can be carried out

- expanding outpatient space for those not staying overnight, to increase the numbers of patients that can be seen

- upgraded or new imaging equipment, including MRI and mobile breast screening units

In total, 785 schemes have been approved, including the following major projects:

- £13.8 million for new wards at University Hospitals Birmingham, delivering an expected 164 additional adult inpatient beds across the trust

- £14.4 million at St George’s Hospitals to deliver a new modular facility providing 20 intensive treatment unit beds

- £10.2 million to develop a new South Mersey Elective Hub, with 2 new theatres and recovery areas

- £10 million for a day surgery site in Castle Hill Hospital in Hull, which will house 4 theatres, as well as all supporting services

- £7.1 million to build a modular ward at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital with 32 beds

- £5.9 million at Bedford Hospital to create 20 flexible multi-purpose outpatient rooms

Prof Stephen Powis, NHS National Medical Director, said:

“NHS staff have pulled out all the stops since the beginning of the pandemic treating more than half a million covid patients, while continuing to perform millions of checks, tests and treatments for non-covid reasons.

There is no doubt that this winter is going to be tough with staff contending with the highest ever number of 999 calls in October and it remains as important as ever that

people do not delay seeking help from the NHS if they feel unwell.

So anyone needing help should come forward through NHS 111 online so that staff can help you with the best option for your care, and the NHS is accelerating our COVID booster campaign so please accept your invite when asked, as well taking up the offer of a flu jab to protect you this winter.”

While the NHS and Department of Health and Social Care set out its operational guidance to health and social care services in the months preceding winter, today’s publication aims to set out clearly to the public what preparation has been done, what they can do themselves, and what they expect from health and care services this year.

Most importantly, eligible members of the public are urged to get their COVID-19 and flu jabs. This includes booster jabs when called upon, as the programme expands to everyone over 18 with second jabs for 12 to 15 year olds.

The NHS remains open, but anyone in need of urgent care should use the free 24/7 NHS 111 online and phone service to get urgent advice, and A&Es are open and ready to help those with emergency and life-threatening conditions. There are also 24/7 urgent mental health helplines across every mental health trust

in England for anyone experiencing or supporting someone through a mental health crisis.

To prepare for this winter, the NHS and national and local government has undertaken a range of actions, which include:

- working to recruit 18,000 more staff, including nurses, healthcare support workers, medical support workers, alongside making use of temporary staffing and staff banks
- supporting the workforce with access to health and wellbeing support and mental health hubs, which have helped 30,000 people so far
- keeping the nation protected against the virus, especially against the new Omicron variant, through vaccination with over 15.5 million boosters delivered in England and the biggest flu vaccination programme in UK history
- secured new COVID-19 antiviral and therapeutic treatments to help save more lives including Ronapreve, Lagevrio and Paxlovid, in addition to tocilizumab and dexamethasone
- continuing to provide free lateral flow testing alongside contact tracing, regular asymptomatic testing and the use of self-isolation and quarantine

- bolstering capacity across urgent and emergency care and the wider NHS, including with a £250 million investment in general practice and the forthcoming Elective Recovery Plan

- publishing an adult social care winter plan including £388 million to support infection prevention control and £162.5 million for workforce recruitment and retention

- investing £478 million for support services, rehabilitation and reablement care following discharge from hospital, and ensuring health and social care services are joined up

From April 2022, thanks to the new Health and Social Care Levy, UK-wide healthcare funding will rise by a record £36 billion over the next 3 years. The new funding includes a commitment to ring-fence an additional £8 billion to fund waiting list recovery – the biggest catch-up programme in NHS history.

The levy funding is on top of the government’s previous historic long-term settlement for the NHS, which will see NHS funding increase by £33.9 billion to a total of £148.5 billion by 2023 to 2024, which has been enshrined in law.

# More than 1,000 trees to be planted in Suffolk

December

The Environment Agency has planted over 600 trees in Suffolk so far this year with hundreds more planned this winter.

The winter months, from November to March, is the best time to plant bare root trees as the ground is generally damp. This gives them time for their roots to settle and become established before they come into growth in the

spring.

290 trees, including some rare native black poplar, will be planted at various locations alongside the River Waveney downstream of Diss and along the River Dove.

The black poplar is 1 of the UK's rarest trees, there are thought to be less than 8,000 in Britain, with around 430 in Suffolk. The rare tree has great wildlife value especially for insects, it also provides nesting sites for owls and roosts for bats.

So far the Environment Agency has planted 634 trees in Suffolk in 2021. 349 of these trees were planted along the River Gipping, 254 are in and around Stowmarket and Needham Market and 95 are in Ipswich. 200 trees were planted with Suffolk Wildlife Trust next to the Walpole River at Ubbeston.

Over 500 trees are scheduled to be planted between now and March 2022 with the River Waveney Trust and Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust. 343 trees will be planted along the River Alde, River Deben and the Earl Soham watercourse.

Naomi Boyle, Catchment Co-ordinator for Suffolk said:

“It has been a pleasure to work with landowners and partners to plant trees alongside our Suffolk rivers.

This planting will help our rivers to adapt to climate change. In time, they will not only provide shade to keep fish and invertebrate populations cool but the tree roots will help stabilise the river banks.

This will result in less sediment entering the water, which will help improve water quality.”





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## Forthcoming articles under consideration

(guest contributors welcome - please contact [office@government-world.com](mailto:office@government-world.com))

- History of the waterwheel
- Fuel prices
- COVID-19 - where are we now?
- Increasing tensions between Russia and Ukraine
- Winter Olympics
- The James Webb Space telescope - where is it going and why?

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considered by our Editorial Department for the Spring  
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