

# Press release: Bluetongue virus detected and dealt with in two imported cattle

The UK's Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer has urged farmers to remain vigilant for bluetongue virus after the disease was successfully picked up in two cattle imported from France through our routine post-import testing regime.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and the Pirbright Institute identified the disease in the animals when they were brought to North Yorkshire in England from an assembly centre in Central France, where bluetongue continues to slowly spread.

Bluetongue does not affect people or food safety. The virus is transmitted by midge bites and affects cows, goats, sheep and other camelids such as llamas. It can reduce milk yield and cause infertility and in the most severe cases is fatal for infected animals. The midges are most active between May and October and not all susceptible animals show immediate signs of contracting the virus.

Action is being taken to ensure the risk of spread of the disease is reduced, with movement restrictions at the affected premises. The two cattle were isolated and have been humanely culled.

Strict rules on the movement of livestock from regions affected by bluetongue are already in place and farmers are reminded that animals imported from these regions must be accompanied by the relevant paperwork to clearly show they meet certain conditions designed to reduce disease risk, such as correct vaccination.

Following the successful interception of the infected animals, the UK remains officially bluetongue-free, the risk of the disease remains low and exports are not affected.

Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer for the UK, Graeme Cooke, said:

Bluetongue does not pose a threat to human health or food safety, but the disease impacts farming, causing reduced milk yield in cows and infertility in sheep.

This detection is an example of our robust disease surveillance procedures in action but must highlight to farmers the risks which come with bringing animals from disease-affected areas into their herds. Regulations and systems are in place for the benefit of our UK livestock industry.

It is also a clear reminder for farmers that the disease remains a threat, despite coming towards the end of the season when midges

are active.

Farmers must remain vigilant and report any suspicions to APHA. Farmers should work with their importer to make sure effective vaccination needs are complied with, source animals responsibly and consider the health status of their own herd if they are not protected

Movement restrictions will remain in place on the premises for at least several weeks until testing rules out spread via local midges.

Farmers have the option to send animals without fully compliant paperwork back to France or to cull them as a measure to reduce the risk of disease spreading to susceptible UK livestock.

The UK Government has worked closely with a number of groups to raise awareness of the threat of bluetongue through the Joint campaign Against Bluetongue (JAB). The most recent case of the disease in the UK came in 2007. The UK has been officially free from the disease since July 2011.

More information about bluetongue is [available here](#).

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## **Press release: Marking 12 months of the new Tonbridge to Pembury bypass**

35,000 drivers a day are benefiting from the major upgrade on the A21 linking Hastings and London, between Tonbridge and Pembury in Kent, which was officially opened on 21 September last year.

The upgrade to this busy section introduced a new dual carriageway to speed up journeys, improve safety, reduce congestion and boost the economy. Two new junctions were built, as well as better, safer, access to the A21 for the homes and businesses along it, with dedicated new facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

And residents are delighted with how much of a difference the new bypass has made. Melvyn, who has lived in the area for 34 years, said that the new bypass is his “favourite bit of road – it was terrible before but now it is absolutely brilliant!”.

Jade, who has lived in the area for four years, said:

It was dreadful before. But now, a journey that used to take me forty minutes now takes four.

And Siobhan who has lived locally all her life, said:

the road was awful before. It has massively improved the flow of the traffic and it has made my commute a lot nicer.

Local businessman Mark Chapman of Gillman Car Services, said:

From a business transport perspective it's made life an awful lot better, it really has improved things... It's easier, it's quicker and frankly it's prettier.

Local people have been making use of the shared use path which runs the full length of the scheme. This is also suitable for cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians. Working with Kent County Council, Highways England extended it to tie in with Tonbridge railway station at the north end of the scheme and Pembury hospital at the south, making it even more useful to residents, commuters and the local community.

The new A21 Tonbridge to Pembury bypass

It's not just the improvements to the A21 which have benefitted the communities and road users this past year. 18 hectares of new woodland have been created as part of the project – twice that needed for construction – with cutting edge translocation techniques, to preserve its ecological make up. New areas of heathland have been created and an ancient barn has been carefully taken down, restored and reconstructed at a heritage museum.

One of the South East's few surviving timber framed barns, built originally in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, has been restored as part of a multi-million conservation project thanks to funding from Highways England.

The buildings were in the path of the widening scheme of the Tonbridge to Pembury section of the A21 in Kent, so were painstakingly moved and rebuilt at the Weald and Downland Museum.

Simon Elliott, Highways England construction programme manager said:

I am delighted that these much-needed improvements to the A21 are delivering such a wide range of benefits, significantly improving journeys on this busy road and making life easier for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders while simultaneously respecting the environment and our cultural heritage. We will look to take the same approach with the other road upgrades we are delivering in Kent and across the country.

One of the timber framed barns, originally in the path of the new Tonbridge to Pembury bypass, which has been moved to the Weald and Downland Living museum

Work started on the Tonbridge to Pembury bypass in spring 2015. The new road opened in phases, starting with the new flyover at Longfield Road, which partially opened in July 2017. The road layout has also been improved for properties along the A21 with a new junction to provide safer access.

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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# **[News story: Streets ahead: British AI eyes scan future frontline in multinational urban experiment](#)**

The game-changing technology developed by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) and UK industry partners, known as SAPIENT, saw British sensors making autonomous decisions, like what and how to monitor activities, as they searched a mock urban battlefield in the Canadian city and flagged dangers to soldiers taking part in the experiment.

With current in-service technology, troops have to man live feeds from systems similar to CCTV cameras to monitor enemy movement during urban operations on complex city streets. The SAPIENT tech takes that load off the soldier and reduces the risk of human error, as well as reducing troops in the operations room – freeing them up for other military activity.

The British system was featured alongside a whole host of experimental tech from a range of nations, including robotic exoskeleton suits to help soldiers with the burden of heavy loads, night vision and surveillance systems. British troops are also expected to test the tech in the UK in the future.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

This British system can act as autonomous eyes in the urban battlefield. This technology can scan streets for enemy movements so troops can be ready for combat with quicker, more reliable information on attackers hiding around the corner.

Investing millions in advanced technology like this will give us

the edge in future battles. It also puts us in a really strong position to benefit from similar projects run by our allies as we all strive for a more secure world.

The tech was put to the test in the Contested Urban Environment experiment (or CUE 18) – the biggest experiment of its kind in recent years, which is also set to come to the streets of Britain. It brings together Five Eyes allied nations of the Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and USA to put the very latest cutting-edge technology in the hands of soldiers on the ground.

Over 150 government and industry scientists and over 80 Canadian troops have been working in the city for three weeks, culminating in a complex exercise on the streets and other locations around the city, including an industrial location known as Silo 5, a huge abandoned grain store close to the historic Old Town area.

The Contested Urban Environment experiment took place this month over three weeks in Montreal, Canada. Crown copyright.

In addition to SAPIENT, a range of unmanned aerial and ground vehicles and soldier technologies were also used to relay information to an operations centre for analysis by the scientists and military personnel. Planes above the city sent autonomously refined information back to human operators down below. Combining all of these technologies from across the different nations, it was possible to generate information that could be fed to soldiers and military commanders – significantly enhancing their situational awareness.

The UK's SAPIENT technology is the result of multi-million-pound research which has taken just five years to develop. It was jointly funded initially with Dstl and InnovateUK, and from 2016, exclusively by Dstl. Standing for Sensors for Asset Protection using Integrated Electronic Network Technology, SAPIENT uses automation and artificial intelligence to ensure that the military user is presented with the information they need at the time they need it, including unusual activity – like people near a checkpoint or changes in behaviour.

Some of the sensors were actually carried by the soldiers, whilst others were placed on the ground.

Lt Col Nat Haden, S01 Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) Capability, Army Headquarters, said:

We need to develop the practical solutions to a lot of the aspirations that we want. It brings together our requirements as a user and Dstl as scientific advisers for the expert view. The strength of CUE is that we're developing things with our key allies in the five-eyes community.

Dstl's Chief Executive Gary Aitkenhead, said:

This is a fantastic example of our world-leading expertise at its best; our scientists working with our partner nations to develop the very best technology for our military personnel now and in the future.

The first Contested Urban Environment experiment took place in November 2017 in Adelaide, Australia. Two additional experiments are being planned for 2019 in the US and again 2020 in the UK. Technology tested during this time could mean availability to military personnel by 2025.

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## [Press release: Traffic officers earn top marks for road safety exercise in schools](#)

Traffic officers have been patrolling the A30 in the county during the holiday season as part of a trial this year, and they extended their patrols to visit three primary schools situated not far from the busy A30 route.

The crews ran two highways awareness days, and presented to a total of 11 classes at Blackwater Community Primary School and Chacewater Community Primary School near Truro and Goonhavern Primary School, near Perranporth.

During the visits, pupils got the chance to chat to traffic officers Angela and Greg Fenne about their jobs and enjoyed being able to see first-hand their patrol vehicle and the equipment used every day as they patrol England's major A roads and motorways.

The schools were also presented with hi-vis clothing for the youngsters, and Chris Gould, Chacewater School headteacher, said:

It was wonderful to have the traffic officers from Highways England with us.

At Chacewater we are passionate about the children's learning being enhanced by real-life experiences. The children were able to understand this was a job they could do when they are older but also the vital role that the traffic officers provide about keeping us safe.

Staying safe in the world is an important part of the curriculum and the visit really supported the children in their understanding of safety.

Highways England's trial initiative saw traffic officers patrol the A30 in Cornwall for the first time during the bank holiday weekends and summer holiday season, and during the latter period the traffic officers attended a total of 134 incidents, including live lane breakdowns, road traffic collisions and debris clearance.

The aim of the initiative is to provide further assistance to motorists on the South West network, and extend the traffic officer service further south into Cornwall to continue an already close working partnership with Devon and Cornwall Police and Cornwall Council.

The traffic officers have been patrolling the A30 between Carland Cross and Lifftondown and, based at Bodmin police station and Cornwall Council's Castle Canyke depot during the peak holiday months, they have been much closer at hand to provide assistance along both the A30 and A38.

Rob Penney, South West Service Delivery Manager for Highways England, said:

The patrols have been really well received by both holiday makers and local residents.

And the school visits offered a nice opportunity to continue our engagement with communities close to the A30, explain our work and raise the issue of road safety with a young and receptive audience.

The highways awareness days launched a longer-term STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) initiative run by Highways England's A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross project team.

The schools' outreach programme, which will run from October, is designed to engage children from four to 18 in fun, hands-on activities which will teach them more about the interesting work taking place as part of the dualling scheme.

Josh Hodder, project manager of the A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross scheme, said:

The traffic officers have had a great reception and we're also looking forward to working with local schools to teach them more about the STEAM project and our work on the scheme.

For any schools interested in receiving a STEAM visit, or learning more about Highways England's work in the area, email [A30ChivertontoCarlandCross@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:A30ChivertontoCarlandCross@highwaysengland.co.uk)

Get more information on the [roles and responsibilities of a Highways England traffic officer](#)

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# **[News story: Deputy Chair and Audit and Risk Board Member Appointed to Ofcom](#)**

## **Maggie Carver**

Maggie Carver is Chairman of the Racecourse Association and of the British Board of Film Classification. She is also on the board of the British Horseracing Levy Board and Racing Authority. In addition, until its sale in December 2017, she owned and ran with her husband, a retail and online business specialising in the sale of goods for the elderly and disabled. Maggie's working life began in investment banking followed by a number of roles in the media industry. She was involved in the setting up of ITV franchise, Meridian Broadcasting, and was Managing Director of Channel 4 Racing producer and outside broadcaster, ThreeonFour. Additionally, since 1991, she has gained extensive experience as a non-executive director on the boards of seventeen companies, public, private and not-for-profit. These include Charing news and programme provider ITN and multiplex operator SDN as well as the boards of Channel 5 Television, RDF Media plc, Satellite Information Services, armed forces broadcaster, SSVC, and British Waterways.

## **Angela Dean**

Dr Angela Dean was a financial analyst of European communications and technology companies for almost twenty years. As a Managing Director of the investment bank Morgan Stanley, she headed its global technology research team. She was also Director for Socially Responsible Investment at Morgan Stanley, and produced its first Environmental Policy Statement. She was a member of the Working Group of the United Nations Global Compact for corporate social responsibility issues in investment.

Angela is currently Chair of International House Trust, a leading independent language organisation, a member of Council of King's College, London, and a trustee of York Museums Trust. She is a Senior Independent Panel Member for Public Appointments.

Previously she was a trustee of the Heritage Lottery Fund and a member of the

Museums, Archives and Libraries Council. Dr Dean holds an MA and D.Phil in Modern History from the University of Oxford.

This appointment has been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments)(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-code-for-public-appointments>]. The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Maggie and Angela have declared no such political activity.