

News story: Government launches major new drive on internet safety.

Ministers have begun work on a new Internet Safety Strategy aimed at making Britain the safest country in the world for children and young people to be online.

Culture Secretary Karen Bradley is leading the new cross-Government drive on behalf of the Prime Minister – with a green paper expected in the summer.

A report by leading academic Professor Sonia Livingstone has been commissioned to provide up to date evidence of how young people are using the internet, the dangers they face, and the gaps that exist in keeping them safe.

Ministers will also hold a series of round tables in the coming weeks with social media companies, technology firms, young people, charities and mental health experts to examine online risks and how to tackle them.

The work is expected to centre on four main priorities: how to help young people help themselves; helping parents face up the dangers and discuss them with children; industry's responsibilities to society; and how technology can help provide solutions.

The focus will be on preventing children and young people from harm online and making the internet a safer place.

The round tables are also expected to examine concerns around issues like trolling and other aggressive behaviour including rape threats against women.

They will involve ministers and officials from departments across Government including the Home Office, Department for Education, Department of Health and Ministry of Justice as part of a co-ordinated effort to make the internet safer.

It comes amid growing fears that the threat from online dangers has grown far more quickly than society's response to them, and worries that tech-savvy young people are being exposed to risks that their parents never were and might not know how to confront – like sexting, cyber bullying, and content which promotes self-harm, suicide and eating disorders.

[A recent poll](#) found more parents were concerned about sexting than about their children drinking or smoking. The YouGov survey for the PSHE association showed 78% were either fairly or very concerned about sexting, compared to 69% who concerned about alcohol misuse and 67% who were concerned about smoking.

[A study last year](#) for the NSPCC and Children's Commissioner found 13% of 11 to 16 year-olds reported that they had taken topless pictures of themselves and 3% had taken fully naked pictures of themselves. □ More than one in 10

young people say they have been the victim of cyber bullying, and self-harm among children is on the rise amid evidence of a link between internet use and an increased risk of self harm.

Karen Bradley, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, said:

The internet has provided young people with amazing opportunities but has also introduced a host of new dangers which children and parents have never faced before.

It is increasingly clear that some behaviours which are unacceptable offline are being tolerated or even encouraged online – sometimes with devastating consequences. “We are determined to make Britain the safest place in the world to be online, and to help people protect themselves from the risks they might face.

To do that we want to understand the full scale of the problem and explore how everyone – including Government, social media companies, technology firms, parents and others – can play their part in tackling it.

This new work builds on a range of Government initiatives around internet safety, including the Home Office’s world-leading efforts to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse.

In December, Home Office minister Baroness Shields was appointed the PM’s Special Representative on Internet Crime and Harms, with an international focus on internet safety and security working with global technology companies and other governments to protect UK citizens. As part of the move, Department for Culture Media and Sport Minister Tracey Crouch took on responsibility for domestic online safety.

It also comes as the Department of Health is developing a green paper on children and young persons’ mental health, expected in the Autumn and measures in the Digital Economy Bill currently going through Parliament will introduce age checks for pornographic websites so under-18s cannot view harmful content – with powers to block sites which refuse to comply.

Sonia Livingstone is a professor of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics. Her empirical work examines the risks and opportunities from digital technologies, including for children and young people. She serves on the Executive Board of the UK’s Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) and has advised various Government departments and public bodies

Press release: Planned roadworks in Devon and Cornwall: weekly summary for Monday 20 February to Sunday 26 February

Planned new and ongoing road improvements over the coming week.

The following summary of planned new and ongoing road improvements over the coming week is correct as of 17 February but could be subject to change due to weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances. All our improvement work is carried out with the aim of causing as little disruption as possible.

Devon

A38 Belvedere Cross, Haldon to Splatford junction, Kennford, south of Exeter: bridge inspection

Eastbound carriageway will be closed overnight from 8pm on 27 February until 6am on 28 February. Diversion will be in place via old Haldon Hill.

A38 Smithaleigh, east of Plymouth: drainage work

Westbound carriageway will be closed overnight between the exit and entry slip roads from 8pm on 3 March to 6am on 4 March. Diversion via the exit and entry slip roads.

Cornwall

A38 between Dobwalls and Turfdown, east of Bodmin: stabilisation work

24-hour one-way system will be in operation between the Halfway House and Trago Mills until 14 April. A 30mph speed limit will be in place between Two Waters Foot and St Neot junction with a 24-hour westbound diversion via the A390 and North Lane to rejoin the A38 west of Two Waters Foot. Trago Mills can be accessed via the A38 as per normal.

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.

£1.8m to help Fire and Rescue Services deal with water rescue and flooding

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement on a visit to the Cardiff International White Water Centre, where South Wales Fire and Rescue Service personnel were undertaking water rescue training and gave a demonstration of rescues from vehicles in water, inflatable sled rescues and swift water boat rescues.

Whilst Fire and Rescue Authorities already respond to flooding and inland water rescue incidents using their existing general powers and resources, they are not required to do so. The Cabinet Secretary has therefore signed an Order which will create a statutory duty on the three Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales to respond to such incidents.

To support the introduction of the new duty, funding has been made available to replace ageing flooding and water rescue equipment, and to purchase a second high volume pump in North Wales.

The Cabinet Secretary said,

“The demonstration of water rescue skills here today clearly shows the dedication and professionalism of our firefighters. As a result of their excellent work, we have been hugely successful in reducing the risk of fire in Wales.

“Flooding can be just as hazardous as fire, and more wide-ranging. It can devastate whole communities, threaten widespread casualties, and destroy property and the environment. We need to be sure that our fire services will be ready to respond – and our firefighters need to know what is expected of them. This is why I have created a new duty on our fire and rescue services to respond to flooding or water rescue incidents which pose a direct threat of death or injury.

“They also need the equipment to do this safely and effectively. I am therefore also pleased to announce an extra £1.8 million over this financial year and the next, to enhance and update the boats, pumps and protective gear that our fire services need.”

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service’s Chief Fire Officer, Huw Jakeway said:

“It was a pleasure to welcome the Cabinet Secretary to Cardiff International White Water and for him to see our dedicated crews in action, as part of their ongoing training programme when it comes to water rescues. For us as Fire and Rescue Services in Wales, keeping our communities and firefighters safe in and around the water has always been a priority and the new funding for equipment, over the next two financial years, will enable us to continue to serve our communities to the highest standard.”

Labour hold emergency business roundtable to discuss business rates “ticking time bomb” – Rebecca Long-Bailey

Labour

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Senior

Labour politicians met today with representatives from ten major business organisations to discuss the mounting business rates crisis.

New

rates are due to kick in on 1st April but thousands of businesses are unsure whether they will be able to pay.

Labour

joined forces with businesses to put pressure on the Government to provide emergency transitional relief for struggling businesses in the budget next week. They also agreed to begin an ongoing dialogue about how to fundamentally reform business rates in the longer run.

The

meeting followed Labour’s earlier announcement of a five point plan for business rates, which is intended to help businesses through this difficult period, and develop a system of business taxation that is fairer on businesses and local communities alike.

Labour’s

Five Point Plan for Business Rates:

1.
Set up an emergency transitional relief fund for businesses facing “cliff edge” increases in their rates, and revise the appeals process to ensure businesses get a swift and fair hearing
2.
Bring forward CPI indexation so that businesses aren’t paying more because of how inflation is measured
3.
Exclude new investment in plant and machinery from future business rates valuation
4.
Introduce more regular valuations in law to stop businesses facing periodic, unmanageable hikes
5. Fundamental reform of the business rates system to ease the burden on traditional high streets and town centres in the age of online shopping; support the traditional fabric of our communities, including community pubs and incentivising free cash machines; and create a fairer system of business taxation.

Rebecca Long-Bailey, Shadow Business Secretary, said:

“We’ve called this emergency meeting with business organisations today because time is running out to save our local businesses and we need to keep the pressure on.

It’s clear that there is a way out of this crisis, the question is whether the Government are going to take it.”

Jim McMahon, Shadow Minister for Local Government, said:

“Our town centres and high streets are already struggling – and this latest hike in rates threatens to send many businesses under. Small businesses in particular need far more support than the Government is currently offering.”

“This business rate revaluation has exposed the inherent flaws in this antiquated and unfair system. That’s why we are calling for a full review of business rates. The Government must move towards a system which works for businesses, and their

local communities.”

Mike

Cherry, National Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

“Business rates are an outdated tax. FSB is keen for all political parties to help those small firms hardest hit by the current revaluation, and to start to focus on fundamental longer-term reform of business rates to make sure it’s fair for small firms. It is incredibly important to support small businesses and the self-employed so they don’t face shock tax rises, so we are delighted to take part in the roundtable.”

Andrew

Silvester, Head of Campaigns & Deputy Director of Policy at the Institute of Directors said:

“It’s hugely important that politicians on all sides look for constructive ways to reform business rates. This is a 20th century system and in a 21st century economy it looks painfully out of date.”

Christopher

Richards, Senior Business Environment Policy Adviser at the Engineering Employers Federation, said:

“Establishing the principle that plant and machinery has no place in the business rates system is an important first step for all political actors to take, this is the top priority action for industry. The inclusion of plant and machinery in business rates bills represents a tax on productive investment and undermines the international competitiveness of UK manufacturing. Excluding future investments from being taxed is therefore a significant step in the right direction, is consistent with the government’s industrial strategy aims and if enacted would give some confidence to manufacturers about the likely post-Brexit investment environment in the UK.”

[Wing-Loong II UAS conducts maiden flight](#)

A Wing-Loong II, the new reconnaissance and strike multi-role endurance Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), is on static display at the 2016 China Int’l Airshow in Zhuhai on Nov. 2, 2016. [File photo by Chen Boyuan / China.org.cn]

China's home-developed Wing-Loong II, the new reconnaissance and strike multi-role endurance Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), successfully completed its maiden flight Monday.

With a more than 20 meter wingspan, the yellow Wing-Loong II No.01 made its appearance on the runway of a highland airfield in western China at noon Monday, before conducting a 31-minute flight.

"Its flight marks China's new generation reconnaissance and strike UAS. Following the United States, China becomes another country capable of developing such new generation large reconnaissance and strike UAS," said Li Yidong, chief designer of the Wing-Loong UAS series.

The Wing-Loong UAS series were developed by Chengdu Aircraft Design and Research Institute (CADI) of the state-owned Aviation Industry Corporation of China.

Li said it showed that China had the capability to deliver new generation reconnaissance and strike UAS products to foreign military customers.

In fact, the Wing-Loong II has already won the biggest overseas purchase order in the history of Chinese UAS foreign military sales, even before its maiden flight.

The Wing-Loong II is a medium-altitude, long-endurance, multi-role UAS integrated with both reconnaissance and strike capabilities.

It is composed of the Wing-Loong II unmanned aircraft, GCS, mission payload and a ground support system.

Its unmanned aircraft is 11 meters in length, 4.1 meters in height, and 20.5 meters in wingspan. The maximum flying altitude of the aircraft is 9km, with a flying speed reaching up to 340km per hour.

It has a maximum take-off weight of 4.2 tonnes, with an external carriage weight of 480kg, and can fly for 20 hours in a persistent mission cruise.

Li said that the Wing-Loong II could perform reconnaissance, surveillance and ground strike missions.

"It can rapidly identify then strike against time-critical and fleeting targets. The capability is not possessed by previous unmanned aircraft, even manned aircraft," Li said. "Taking a look at the UAS in same class around the world, the Wing-Loong II is equivalent to the U.S. MQ-9 Reaper, and ranks in the first level on the UAS list."

With a system extension, it can also perform intelligence collection, electronic warfare, search and rescue missions, and has several uses, including military, anti-terrorism, peace keeping, border patrol operations and civilian use.