

Clive Dix appointed Deputy Chair of the UK's Vaccine Taskforce

News story

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The government has today (04 June) appointed Clive Dix as Deputy Chair of the UK's Vaccine Taskforce to help lead efforts to find and manufacture a coronavirus vaccine.

A leading figure in drug development, Clive Dix is CEO of [C4X Discovery](#), a pioneering drug discovery company, and is well qualified to help lead the Vaccine Taskforce, with extensive experience as a scientist and managing pharmaceutical companies.

His knowledge will be critical in supporting the Taskforce and the government in their efforts to find an effective vaccine – one of the long-term solutions to controlling the pandemic – and ensuring this is available to the public in large volumes.

The government established the Taskforce in March 2020, and it reports directly to the Business Secretary. Kate Bingham was [announced as the Taskforce's Chair](#) on 16 May 2020.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

The UK is leading the global response to finding a vaccine, and the work being done by the Taskforce complements and supports efforts worldwide.

As Deputy Chair of the Taskforce, Clive will bring his wealth of experience to support the vital efforts to discover a vaccine and ensure it is readily available to all who need it once found.

Chair of the Vaccine Taskforce, Kate Bingham said:

I am thrilled that Clive has accepted our invitation to join the Vaccine Taskforce as Deputy Chair. Clive brings a long and distinguished career in discovering and developing novel vaccines and pharmaceuticals for the treatment of serious diseases.

We are delighted that Clive has agreed to share his expertise to enable us to accelerate the development and manufacture of a coronavirus vaccine.

Deputy Chair of the Vaccine Taskforce, Clive Dix said:

I am honoured to be asked to take up this role. The pursuit of a vaccine for COVID-19 is one of the most important parts of the country's response to the virus and I look forward to working with Kate, applying all of my knowledge and experience to help the taskforce deliver an effective vaccine.

Published 4 June 2020

Transport Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 4 June 2020

Good afternoon.

And welcome to today's Downing Street press conference.

I'm joined today by Sir Peter Hendy, Chair of Network Rail. Peter was Commissioner of transport for the London Olympics and the person who has helped oversee the restart of our transport system.

Let me start by updating you on the latest information from the government's COBR data file.

First slide please...

This slide shows data on the use of different types of transport.

These graphs show significant falls in the use public transport – rail, buses, the tube in London – even before lockdown was introduced on 23 March. This is welcome, it shows the public have responded positively to our

requests to avoid public transport wherever possible.

The use of motor vehicles fell substantially initially and has since risen steadily, though not back to the levels seen in mid-March. Again, this is what we would expect as we have introduced some easements to the lockdown and encouraged people to return to work.

One form of transport which has seen a significant increase is cycling – it is great to see people switching to a clean, green mode of transport with significant public health benefits.

Second slide please...

This slide shows tests and cases.

The number of tests carried out or posted out in the UK has risen past 5 million for the first time, to 5,005,565. This includes a record 220,057 tests carried out or posted out yesterday.

281,661 people have tested positive, an increase of 1,805 cases since yesterday. The graph shows a steadily falling number of identified cases on a 7-day rolling average, despite the increase in testing.

Third slide please...

This slide shows the latest data from hospitals.

505 people were admitted to hospital with coronavirus in England on 2 June, up marginally from 475 a week ago, but down from the peak of 3,121 on 2 April.

604 coronavirus patients are in mechanical ventilation beds in the UK, down from 783 a week ago, and down from a peak of 3,301 on 12 April.

Fourth slide please...

This slide shows what is happening in hospitals across the country.

There are now 7,312 people in hospital with coronavirus in the UK, down 15% from 8,558 a week ago and down from a peak of 20,699 on 12 April.

As the graphs show, while there is some variation, most nations and regions of the UK are broadly following a similar pattern.

Last slide please...

This slide shows the daily figures for those who have sadly lost their lives after testing positive for coronavirus.

Across all settings, the total number of deaths now stands at 39,904. That's an increase of 176 fatalities since yesterday.

When measured by a 7-day rolling average, the daily number of deaths currently stands at 241, down from a peak of 943 on 14 April.

These figures are a reminder that COVID-19 still represents a very real threat...

That the fight still goes on to defeat it...

And that there are tragically still too many people across the country who are losing loved ones.

Our thoughts are with them all.

Transport leading green recovery

As we've made clear in recent weeks, our road to recovery must be carefully and cautiously managed.

Most importantly, we must avoid a second infection spike.

This careful, deliberate approach has been central to the restart of public transport.

In advance of previous easing of the total lockdown, we ensured transport availability was increased to allow for adequate social distancing.

In addition, we also announced measures to help people choose other forms of transport.

For example, with a record [£2 billion investment in cycling and walking](#)...

As well as the acceleration of e-scooter trials, brought forward to the end of this month.

Meticulous planning – alongside the considerable effort of passengers avoiding public transport – has worked well so far.

There has been an absence of crowding, even as passenger numbers have ticked up... partly thanks to the work of Sir Peter.

But these challenges are about to increase.

We expect – conditions permitting – that the next easing of restrictions will occur on Monday 15th June.

Non-essential shops will re-open and some children will return to secondary school, if it is safe to do so. That means there will be more pressure on our public transport.

To help meet that demand, we're ramping up services on buses, trains and trams; with substantial government funding.

But still we need to do more.

So today I want to highlight measures to help keep us all safer, and reduce the risks of the Coronavirus coming back.

There are three points I want to highlight.

Work from home if possible

First, let me reiterate – and this is important – if you can work from home, you should continue to do so.

If you cannot work from home, you should avoid public transport wherever possible.

And if you must use public transport, you should follow the guidance, including avoiding the rush hour.

Updated guidance – face coverings

Second, I can announce that, as of Monday 15th June, face coverings will become mandatory on public transport.

That doesn't mean surgical masks, which we must keep for clinical settings. It means the kind of face covering you can easily make at home.

There'll be exceptions to the rule for very young children, disabled people and those with breathing difficulties.

But broadly, as we come through this phase, we're doing what many other countries have asked transport users to do.

And as passenger numbers increase, and we expect this trend to continue, we need to ensure every precaution is taken, on buses, trains, aircraft and ferries.

With more people using transport, the evidence suggests that wearing a face covering offers some – albeit limited – protection against the spread of the virus.

A face covering helps protect our fellow passengers. It is something that we can each do to help each other.

And whilst it also remains true that measures like maintaining social distance and washing your hands remain most critical, we also know that, on public transport, keeping two-metres apart is not always possible, all of the time.

Indeed, the guidance explicitly recognises this fact.

So, when more people return to the network, from the 15th June onwards, they will be required to wear a face covering on our transport network.

We'll make these rules changes under the National Rail Conditions of Travel and the Public Service Vehicle Regulations for buses.

This will mean you can be refused travel if you don't comply and could be fined.

Alongside transport operators, this will be enforced by the British Transport Police, as necessary.

But I expect the vast majority of people won't need to be forced into this, because wearing a face-covering helps to protect others, and most people simply want to help defeat this disease.

Of course, frontline staff – those in contact with passengers, doing such an important job at this crucial time – will also need to wear face coverings.

In the coming days, the government will work with unions, who have been supportive for which I am grateful, transport operators and police to ensure they have the supplies they need to be safe and provide reassurance to the public.

These measures apply in England, and we are working with the devolved administrations ahead of implementation.

Active and alternatives to public transport

Third, to ease pressure on public transport, I want to update you on the measures we're taking to boost alternative ways to travel.

Now that vehicle showrooms are open again, there's a growing range of electric cars, mopeds, motorbikes on sale...

And as our economy gets moving, their popularity will continue to increase.

Later this month we'll be introducing the Fix Your Bike Voucher – worth 50 quid.

We'll have hundreds-of-thousands more bikes roadworthy as a result of this programme.

Then there's the Cycle To Work scheme which enables employees to buy a tax free bike – an effective saving of 25 – 39%.

And that scheme has been extended to cover e-bikes as well, meaning that cyclists can cover longer distances by getting assistance on those uphill stretches.

And this is a great time to start using them...

As we redesign our street landscape to cope with millions more cyclists and pedestrians in the months ahead.

The evidence is that commuters are already responding...

Despite fewer people travelling overall during this crisis, we've seen around a 100% increase in weekday cycling.

And at weekends, that increase has been up to around 200%, compared to pre-COVID-19 levels.

We want to use this recovery to permanently change the way we travel.

With huge levels of investment....

We're bringing forward green transport improvements that otherwise would have taken years, if not decades, to achieve.

In the short-term, whilst there's still a threat from the virus, they'll help millions of people avoid public transport journeys.

And in the longer term, they'll help transform our country into a lower carbon, cleaner and greener place to live.

Conclusion

Our history shows us how quickly we can adapt as a nation.

Just as we did nearly 200 years ago, when Britain invented the railway...

And just as we did in the 20th century, when we embraced the motor car...

And then in the 1950s, when we launched the first passenger jet airliner, coincidentally designed and built in my Hatfield constituency.

Each of these transport revolutions was triggered by a unique alignment of people and events.

Brilliant engineers and entrepreneurs.

Cutting-edge new technologies.

Supportive governments.

And the needs of citizens.

Combining to bring about important change.

And now we stand on the verge of a new transport revolution...

This time, not limited to one particular means of travel, but rather to all forms of transport...

A green transport revolution...

Which will help us rebuild a stronger, more prosperous Britain, as well as a cleaner and healthier one.

UK aid-backed drone technology supports Ghana's coronavirus fight

A partnership between UK aid and Gavi: the Vaccine Alliance, is supporting the Government of Ghana to use Zipline drones to collect coronavirus test samples from across the country.

This world-leading technology has increased Ghana's ability to deliver vaccines for diseases like yellow fever and polio and collect testing kits for coronavirus, particularly in rural areas where access by road is difficult.

Together, the UK government and Gavi alongside the Gates Foundation and delivery company UPS Foundation have funded Zipline's drone stations.

Often in hard-to-reach areas, these stations allow health experts to safely collect test samples and deliver these to one of Ghana's testing laboratories. The stations are also used to load the drones with medical supplies to make sure they reach those most in need, as well as health workers supporting communities in rural areas in small community health centres.

Iain Walker, British High Commissioner to Ghana said:

"It is only through global collaboration that we will overcome this global pandemic. The partnership between UK aid and Gavi is an example of this collaboration in action.

"By supporting Gavi, UK aid in Ghana is helping to save lives by tracking coronavirus, getting medical equipment to those most in need and ensuring that children across the country have access to vaccines for the diseases that still needlessly devastate communities.

"I am proud that the UK government's recent pledge of the equivalent of £330million a year for the next 5 years will support Gavi's lifesaving work across the world, protecting lives and allowing developing countries to focus more resources on tackling coronavirus."

Accessibility to transport and poor roads means that it takes days for samples to arrive from rural areas at Ghana's test centres. This also leaves those transporting the tests open to transmission of coronavirus.

With UK aid support through Gavi, Zipline's drones are transporting test samples in a matter of hours meaning that cases are identified and treated quickly, lessening the spread of infection. Already coronavirus test samples collected from more than 1,000 health centres in rural areas across Ghana have been taken to laboratories in Accra and Kumasi.

As well as returning coronavirus tests and medical equipment, Zipline's drones are also transporting immunisation kits protecting children from

deadly disease such as diphtheria and measles which still impact communities across Ghana every year.

Cyril Nogier, Gavi Senior Country Manager for Ghana said:

“The government of Ghana has shown incredible commitment to immunisation for many years, working hard to ensure no child goes without protection against deadly, preventable diseases.

“Right now Ghana leads the world in its use of drone technology, which has already helped thousands of children in remote areas get access to vaccines. I’m delighted that this technology, with vital support from the UK and other partners, is now playing a role in the country’s fight against coronavirus.”

On 4 June, the UK government will host Global Vaccine Summit – this will support Gavi to gather much needed funding to deliver vaccines against diseases such as measles, polio and cholera around the world and to ensure global access to all new coronavirus vaccines.

Globally the UK government has already pledged up to £764 million (\$935.6 million) to combat the outbreak of coronavirus, and in April the UK pledged equivalent to £330 million a year over the next five years to Gavi. This vital funding ensures that through Gavi, UK aid will continue to support innovation such as the drone technology used in Ghana, saving lives around the world. In Africa, the UK has pledge to invest up to £20 million in the African Union’s new ‘African Union Covid19 Response Fund’ to tackle coronavirus and save lives.

Next steps for work on COVID-19 disparities announced

News story

Following the release of the Public Health England review into disparities in the risks and outcomes of COVID-19, the Government’s Equality Hub is today (4th June 2020) setting out how this work will be taken forward.



The work will be led by the Equalities Minister, Kemi Badenoch, and supported by other government departments and agencies.

Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, said:

“This government is rightly taking seriously the initial findings from the PHE report published earlier this week. However, it is also clear that much more needs to be done to understand the key drivers of the disparities identified and the relationships between the different risk factors.

“That is why I am now taking this work forward, which will enable us to make a real difference to people’s lives and protect our communities from the impact of the coronavirus.”

The full terms of reference for this work will be as follows:

- Review the effectiveness and impact of current actions being undertaken by relevant government departments and their agencies to directly lessen disparities in infection and death rates of COVID-19. Factors to be considered – but aren’t limited to – should include age and sex, occupation, obesity, comorbidities, geography, and ethnicity;
- Modifications to existing, or development of new policy, should be considered and discussed with the relevant Ministers responsible. This ongoing work will include looking at the extensive guidance that is already currently available;
- Commission further data, research and analytical work by the Equality Hub to clarify the scale, and drivers, of the gaps in evidence highlighted by the Report;
- Consider where and how the collection and quality of data into the disparities highlighted can be improved on, and take action to do so, working with the Equality Hub, government departments and their agencies;
- Lead engagement on the disparities highlighted with Departmental Ministers;
- Build on and expand the stakeholder engagement undertaken by PHE, to consolidate and develop the qualitative insights gained and how they may support further actions that should be taken to address the disparities highlighted;
- Strengthen and improve public health communications to ensure they can reach all communities across the country;
- Provide quarterly updates to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State

for Health and Social Care on progress being made to address health inequalities by departments and their agencies.

Earlier today, the Minister for Equalities answered an Urgent Question in the House of Commons before answering detailed questions from members on a range of issues related to the PHE review.

Further Information:

- To support the Minister for Equalities in fulfilling these Terms of Reference, the Race Disparity Unit in the Equalities Hub (Cabinet Office) will work with MfE directly. They will be supported by officials in PHE and other departments or agencies as relevant to take this forward.
- The Equality Hub sits in the Cabinet Office and is made up of officials working for the Government Equalities Office, Race Disparity Unit and Disability Unit
- The full PHE review can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes>

Published 4 June 2020

[Parliamentary elections in Tajikistan: UK statement](#)

We thank the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Assessment Mission for their comprehensive report on the 2020 parliamentary elections in Tajikistan.

We note the report's observations, assessment and full set of recommendations. In particular we note with concern the assessment that the "elections in Tajikistan took place in a tightly controlled environment" and that "systemic infringements on fundamental political rights and freedoms have left no space for a pluralistic political debate, and genuine opposition has been removed from the political landscape".

This followed the Needs Assessment Mission report of December 2019, which stated that "the level of respect of fundamental freedoms has further deteriorated since the last elections and the choice between political alternatives is limited in the absence of independent media and a functioning opposition".

The ODIHR Final Report stated that despite legal changes enacted in 2017, 2018 and 2019 in Tajikistan, the recommendations made by the 2015 ODIHR

Election Observation Mission have not been taken forward. As the 2020 Final Report notes, “all these shortcomings and infringements challenging the integrity and credibility of elections remained unaddressed, having a detrimental effect on the 2020 electoral process”.

We support the Election Assessment Mission’s report’s seven priority recommendations that would enable Tajikistan to enhance its election process and bring it in line with OSCE commitments, as well as international obligations and standards.

We draw special attention to the importance of an open and inclusive review of the electoral legal framework, an independent Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CCER) and the critical importance of freedom of the media and journalists at all times, especially when covering political issues. A free, independent and diverse media, online and offline, is crucial to the functioning of inclusive, peaceful and democratic societies.

We also fully support the report’s practical recommendations aimed at improving accurate elector registration, independent election observation, strengthening procedures for counting and tabulating results and the timely publication of all election results disaggregated by polling station.

We encourage Tajikistan to consider these, along with the report’s other 16 recommendations, and to further promote gender equality to enhance the representation of women in elected positions and political life generally. Finally, we strongly encourage the government of Tajikistan to take up ODIHR’s offer of assistance to further improve the electoral process and address these, and previous, recommendations from election-related activities. In support of this, we encourage an open, ongoing dialogue between the OSCE institutions, including ODIHR and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the government of Tajikistan.

As a valued partner, we stand ready to support Tajikistan and the OSCE in following-up on ODIHR’s recommendations.