

Scottish Secretary reflects on stellar Commonwealth Games for Team Scotland

News story

As the Birmingham Commonwealth Games draws to a close, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack says cheering on Scotland's fantastic athletes was a highlight of the summer.



Scottish Secretary Alister Jack visited the Birmingham Commonwealth Games last week [Thursday 4 August], where he enjoyed watching Team Scotland in action and seeing the event build on the legacy of Glasgow 2014.

His day at the games involved cheering on Team Scotland in the boxing and badminton tournaments, before meeting opening ceremony flag bearer and badminton star Kirsty Gilmour.

He then paid a visit to Scotland House, the home away from home for Team Scotland's athletes during the games, where he enjoyed hearing more about legacy projects and community outreach initiatives the Commonwealth Games encourage.

As the games drew to a close on Monday [8 August], Team Scotland had tallied up 51 medals, including 13 golds, making it their most successful games ever outside Scotland.

Speaking before the closing ceremony, the Scottish Secretary said:

From Eilish McColgan following in her mother's footsteps, to George Miller and Rosemary Lenton becoming our oldest ever gold medallists, the Birmingham Commonwealth Games have kept us thrilled and inspired in equal measure.

I was lucky enough to see some of the action live last week, where cheering on Team Scotland was a highlight of my summer. With a total of 51 medals, including 13 golds, the games have undoubtedly been a roaring success for the team.

My warmest congratulations go to all the athletes who took part, and to Birmingham for putting on such a fantastic show.

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[Learner drivers urged to be test-ready as pass rate falls](#)

The latest data released today (11 August 2022) by the Department for Transport reveals the [car driving test pass rate for January to March 2022](#) was 47.1%. This is down from 48.1% in the previous quarter.

47.1% pass rate for car driving tests between January and March 2022

To provide support for learner drivers, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has recently launched the 'Ready to Pass?' campaign at www.gov.uk/ready-to-pass. It aims to improve pass rates, which will help to reduce the waiting times for tests.

The campaign gives learner drivers advice on:

- finding an approved driving instructor
- monitoring and checking progress of their driving lessons and private practice
- when to take a mock test
- how to manage test-day nerves – 1 in 10 learners who fail their driving test say the main reason they failed was because they were too nervous

The website also includes a checklist of the things learner drivers should consider when they and their driving instructor agree they're ready to take the test.

DVSA is asking learner drivers to [move their test back](#) if they are not ready, so their appointment can be used by someone else who is ready. They can do this free of charge up to 3 full working days before their test.

Driving examiners had to take physical action in 1 in 5 failed tests

Between April 2021 and March 2022, car driving tests were failed 786,400 times.

DVSA research shows that driving examiners had to physically intervene in 168,583 tests during that time to avoid a dangerous incident. This means driving examiners had to do things such as brake or steer the car in 1 in 5 failed tests.

Increasing the number of driving tests

DVSA has already taken unprecedented action to increase test availability. The latest statistics show that 425,887 car driving tests were carried out between 1 January and 31 March 2022 (up 14% compared to the same period in 2020).

425,887 car driving tests carried out between January and March 2022

Since April 2021, DVSA has created about 428,000 more test appointments than are normally available by:

- recruiting new driving examiners – this has created an estimated 140,000 extra appointments
- carrying out overtime, including at weekends and on public holidays – this has created an estimated 135,000 extra appointments
- getting all colleagues who are qualified to carry out driving tests but have moved to other roles to carry out tests – this has created an estimated 75,000 extra appointments
- increasing utilisation – this has created an estimated 60,000 extra appointments
- buying back leave from driving examiners – this has created an estimated 13,000 extra appointments
- inviting recently retired driving examiners to return to work – this has created an estimated 5,000 extra appointments

There may be an element of double-counting in some of the figures, as it's not possible to separate each of the measures fully.

Make sure you're ready – and delay your test if you're not

Loveday Ryder, DVSA Chief Executive, said:

We took swift action to tackle the impact of the pandemic and ensure as many people as possible could take their driving test. I'm glad to see the action we took – along with the hard work of driving instructors and our driving examiners – is working, and more test slots are available for learner drivers.

However, with less than half of learners passing, I'd urge them to use our Ready to Pass? checklist to make sure they're ready – and

delay their test if they're not. This will help make more tests available and prevent people having to pay to re-test.

[Huge increase in lorry driving tests following government action](#)

Official statistics released today (11 August 2022) by the Department for Transport reveal that the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) carried out [74% more lorry driving tests between 1 January 2022 and 31 March 2022](#) compared to pre-pandemic levels.

11,197 more lorry driving tests were carried out between 1 January 2022 and 31 March 2022 compared to the same period in 2020

Period	Number of lorry driving tests carried out
January to March 2020	15,194
January to March 2022	26,391

Action to help deal with the HGV driver shortage

Changes to simplify the process to become a heavy goods vehicle (HGV) driver to help deal with the HGV driver shortage were introduced by the government in 2021. These included:

- allowing the off-road part of the lorry test to be carried out by non-DVSA assessors
- allowing drivers to take one test to drive both a rigid and articulated lorry
- removing the need for drivers to do a separate car and trailer test

In addition to these changes, DVSA recruited more vocational driving examiners to help make more tests available in the areas of where demand is highest.

The actions were part of the the government's [33 actions taken to deal with the HGV driver shortage](#) and protect the supply chain. This included:

- making 11,000 HGV driver training places available through [Skills Bootcamps](#)
- injecting a major and sustained boost to the number of HGV driving tests available
- investing £52.5 million in improvements in roadside facilities and lorry parking

Industry bodies are reporting the number of HGV drivers is stabilising

Since the government intervened, the sector has started to recover and industry bodies are reporting positively on the number of HGV drivers stabilising.

They indicate that the initiatives introduced by government and industry have started to yield results, showing that perceptions of the industry are changing as a result of government support and more people are looking to train and qualify as HGV drivers.

It comes as part of wider government efforts to help more people into work, since this is the best way to support families in the long-term while growing the economy to address the cost of living.

Grant Shapps, Transport Secretary, said:

We took swift action and introduced 33 measures to support our vital freight sector throughout a global driver shortage and maintain our country's supply chains. Those measures worked, with the number of lorry driver tests being taken on the rise, and the sector reporting driver numbers are stabilising.

We'll continue to work with the industry to remove any potential barriers to a rewarding, successful career in logistics and boost driver numbers.

Loveday Ryder, DVSA Chief Executive, said:

We recognise the haulage industry keeps the wheels of our economy turning. I want to say thank you to all vocational training providers and our vocational driving examiners for supporting the changes.

It's their hard work and commitment that has allowed us to offer an additional 11,197 tests and increase the number of drivers joining the industry.

[UK to give more multiple launch rocket](#)

systems and guided missiles to Ukraine

News story

Decision comes after the successful use of UK multiple-launch rocket systems by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, gifted earlier this year



Ukrainian troops training in the UK to use MLRS

The UK will send further multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS) to Ukraine as part of an enduring commitment to help the country defend itself against Russia's illegal invasion, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace has announced.

Britain will also give a significant number of precision guided M31A1 missiles which can strike targets up to 80km away, enabling Ukraine to continue to defend itself against Russian heavy artillery.

The decision comes following the successful use of [multiple-launch rocket systems by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, gifted by the UK earlier this year.](#)

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace MP said:

This latest tranche of military support will enable the Armed Forces of Ukraine to continue to defend against Russian aggression and the indiscriminate use of long-range artillery.

Our continued support sends a very clear message, Britain and the international community remain opposed to this illegal war and will stand shoulder-to-shoulder, providing defensive military aid to Ukraine to help them defend against Putin's invasion.

Ukrainian troops have been trained in the UK on how to use the launchers so that they can maximise the effectiveness of the systems. This is in addition to the UK's [commitment to train up to 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers in infantry battlefield skills](#) over the coming months. Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands have all announced they will be supporting the programme.

Building on this effort, the Defence Secretary will co-host the Copenhagen Conference for Northern European Defence Allies of Ukraine on Thursday 11 August, to discuss further, long-term support for Ukraine on training, equipment, and funding.

Recognising the relentless courage and determination of the Ukrainian people, the UK and its allies will begin to establish a plan of action to support Ukraine into 2023 and beyond for as long as necessary, as they continue to fight for their freedom and sovereignty.

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[PM appoints an Interim Chair of Senior Salaries Review Body](#)

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has appointed Ms Pippa Lambert as the Interim Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body.



Ms Pippa Lambert has been appointed as the Interim Chair to the Senior Salaries Review Body. The SSRB provides independent advice to the Prime Minister and senior ministers on the pay of many of the nation's top public servants. The appointment is for 12 months ending on 27 July 2023.

Pippa Lambert was Global Head of HR for the Deutsche Bank, with responsibility for the Bank's worldwide Human Resources organisation from 2013-2020. Previous roles include Director of Global Reward at the Royal Bank of Scotland from 2011-2013 and Global Head of Reward at Deutsche Bank from 2005-2011. She is currently a trustee for Breast Cancer Haven and a member of the Aviva Board.

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