

Official shortlist announced to choose home of Great British Railways

Today (5 July 2022), I am announcing the shortlist of the most suitable potential locations for the national headquarters of Great British Railways (GBR), which will go forward to a consultative public vote to be held online and by post.

The confirmed list of shortlisted towns and cities is:

- Birmingham
- Crewe
- Derby
- Doncaster
- Newcastle upon Tyne
- York

I announced on 4 October 2021 that a competition would be run to identify the headquarters for GBR, to be located outside of London. This was launched on 5 February 2022 and was overseen by the GBR Transition Team (GBRTT). Prospective local authorities were asked to submit a short expression of interest to GBRTT by Wednesday 16 March.

GBRTT received 42 applications and has analysed their suitability against the published set of criteria for the national headquarters. The selection criteria are:

- alignment to Levelling Up principles
- connected and easy to get to
- opportunities for GBR
- value for money
- railway heritage and links to the network
- public support

GBRTT will launch [a public vote](#) today that will give the public the opportunity to express their views. The vote is consultative and will be used to test public support for each shortlisted location, allowing the people that the railway serves the chance to have their say.

Ministers will then make a final decision on the headquarters' location based on all information gathered and against the above criteria, with a final decision expected later in the year.

The new national GBR headquarters will be supported by a number of new regional headquarters across the country, putting decision-making and investment at the heart of communities that use those railways day to day.

The government is committed to levelling up, delivering jobs and investment beyond the capital.

The national headquarters will be at the heart of the rail network and provide strategic direction for the running of GBR. Based outside of London, it will bring a number of high-skilled jobs to the winning location.

[Recruitment Vacancy – Biological Assessor](#)

News story

Details of a recruitment vacancy in our Biologicals Section



This exciting and interesting job put you at the heart of the important work of the VMD's Biologicals Section, principally in the following areas: scientific evaluation of data packages, authorisation of novel medicines, review of scientific and regulatory guidelines and our international profile.

Job Title

Biological Assessor in the Biologicals Section

Grade

G7

Salary & Pension

£52,289 – £60,188 per annum with Pension Scheme

Annual Leave entitlement

Commencing at 25 days

Role

You will provide expertise within the biological/immunological veterinary medicine areas and be responsible for the assessment of quality, safety and efficacy data and benefit:risk of applications for:

- new marketing authorisations for biological and immunological veterinary medicinal products
- variations to existing marketing authorisations
- animal test certificates to conduct clinical field trials

How to apply

You must make your application via the [Civil Service Jobs website](#)

Closing Date

1st August 2022

Published 5 July 2022

[100th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW](#)

Ambassador Atiyah, Mr Chair, many congratulations on taking up your new role. The United Kingdom welcomes all the new members of the Executive Council.

In April and May, we marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In that time the OPCW has achieved the near elimination of declared chemical weapons stockpiles and supported capacity-building efforts around the world. The Convention is bringing us closer to the goal of a world free of chemical weapons and we pay tribute to the Director General and his staff.

However, the 100th Session of the Executive Council takes place during a particularly dark period. The United Kingdom restates our condemnation of the Russian Federation's unprovoked and barbaric military assault on Ukraine, a sovereign and democratic state. The Russian government's reprehensible actions are an egregious violation of international law and the UN Charter.

Mr Chair,

We must also acknowledge that chemical weapons remain a potent threat. We

have witnessed their use by the Russian state in Salisbury and in Russia against Alexey Navalny.

International investigations have so far confirmed eight separate occasions of chemical weapons use in Syria by Asad regime forces. This is an appalling record of attacks against the Syrian people. The United Kingdom will continue to press for accountability.

Syria's obstruction of the work of the Technical Secretariat and the disinformation it helps spread are deeply concerning. But the facts are clear and the OPCW has shown that it will act when states are found to have breached their legal obligations.

Syria must take the necessary steps to come into compliance with the Convention. That includes making a full declaration of its chemical weapons programme and complying in full with relevant Decisions of this Council as well as United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118.

Mr Chair,

Despite the damaging record of a few, an overwhelming majority of States Parties remain determined to ensure the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Fifth Review Conference offers an opportunity to chart the way ahead, and ensure the Convention delivers for the next twenty-five years and beyond. We look forward to an open and inclusive process of preparation for the Review Conference, under the able Chairmanship of Ambassador Kuusing.

As we prepare for the Review Conference next May, the United Kingdom is looking forward to discussions with other States Parties on a range of issues.

Firstly, ensuring the verification regime is fit for the next twenty-five years and beyond.

Secondly, strengthening capacity-building efforts in support of full implementation of the Convention.

Thirdly, making sure the OPCW is ready to respond to new threats from State and non-State actors, seeking universality, and tackling re-emergence.

Fourthly, helping maintain the Technical Secretariat as an effective implementing body, with diverse, expert and high performing staff.

The new Centre for Chemistry and Technology will underpin delivery of all of these goals and the United Kingdom is proud to support this important project.

Mr Chair,

In challenging economic times, it is important that the OPCW has the resources it needs to deliver its mandate. We are pleased to have just finalised a voluntary contribution of 500,000 pounds from the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. This will help deliver capacity-building

programmes in Africa, protective assistance in Ukraine, and support to national laboratories in Africa and Latin America.

We are also pleased to see more observers able to take part in Executive Council meetings again and look forward to the full resumption of OPCW inspections and training programmes around the world.

Thank you, Mr Chair.

[Internet safety laws strengthened to fight Russian and hostile state disinformation](#)

- Social media platforms will have to proactively look for and remove disinformation from foreign state actors which harms the UK
- Firms failing to tackle online interference by rogue states face huge fines or being blocked

Social media platforms will have to proactively tackle Russian and other state-sponsored disinformation aimed at undermining the UK under changes ministers are making to new internet safety laws.

Many people are concerned about the threat that malicious state-linked disinformation poses to UK society and democracy, particularly following Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine.

The government will table an amendment to link the National Security Bill with the Online Safety Bill – strengthening this landmark and pioneering internet legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to go online. A new Foreign Interference Offence created by the National Security Bill will be added to the list of priority offences in the Online Safety Bill.

It means social media platforms, search engines and other apps and websites allowing people to post their own content will have a legal duty to take proactive, preventative action to identify and minimise people's exposure to state-sponsored or state-linked disinformation aimed at interfering with the UK.

This includes tackling material from fake accounts set up by individuals or groups acting on behalf of foreign states to influence democratic or legal processes, such as elections and court proceedings, or spread hacked information to undermine democratic institutions.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

The invasion of Ukraine has yet again shown how readily Russia can and will weaponise social media to spread disinformation and lies about its barbaric actions, often targeting the very victims of its aggression. We cannot allow foreign states or their puppets to use the internet to conduct hostile online warfare unimpeded.

That's why we are strengthening our new internet safety protections to make sure social media firms identify and root out state-backed disinformation.

Security Minister Damian Hinds said:

Online information operations are now a core part of state threats activity. The aim can be variously to spread untruths, confuse, undermine confidence in democracy, or sow division in society.

Disinformation is often seeded by multiple fake personas, with the aim of getting real users, unwittingly, then to 'share' it. We need the big online platforms to do more to identify and disrupt this sort of coordinated inauthentic behaviour. That is what this proposed change in the law is about.

Platforms will need to do risk assessments for content which is illegal under the Foreign Interference Offence and put in place proportionate systems and processes to mitigate the possibility of users encountering this content.

This could include measures such as making it more difficult to create large scale fake accounts or tackling the use of bots in malicious disinformation campaigns. When moderating their sites, the firms will need to make judgments about the intended effect of content or behaviour which they have reasonable grounds to believe is state-sponsored disinformation and whether it amounts to misrepresentation.

These judgements could be based on patterns of behaviours and tactics used, or aided by relevant knowledge of the political and geopolitical context, for example narratives from state-backed media being amplified online.

To help platforms in carrying out this duty, companies will also be able to draw on the regulator Ofcom's codes of practice. Ofcom will have the power to fine companies failing to act up to ten per cent of their annual global turnover, force them to improve their practices and block non-compliant sites.

Foreign Interference Offence

Under the National Security Bill, which is due in Parliament for Committee Stage next week, a new offence of foreign interference is established to deter and disrupt state threats activity including state-linked disinformation which undermines the UK.

It will make it illegal for a person to engage in conduct for, on behalf of or with intent to benefit a foreign power in a way which interferes in UK rights, discredits our democratic intuitions, manipulates people's participation in them and undermines the safety or interests of the UK.

The offence includes conduct that involves making false or misleading misrepresentations, including using information which is true but presented in a misleading way or misrepresenting a person's identity

Online Safety Bill as drafted

As it is currently drafted, the Online Safety Bill will already force companies to take action on state-sponsored disinformation which is illegal and where there is harm to individuals – for example if it contains a threat to kill. Companies whose services are likely to be accessed by children will need to protect underage users from harmful misinformation and disinformation.

Additionally, Category 1 companies will need to address misinformation and disinformation which is harmful and could be accessed by adults – such as dangerous anti-vaccine theories or fake coronavirus cures. They will need to set out clearly whether this content is allowed in their terms of service, and enforce this consistently.

The Bill has strong protections for people's rights to freedom of expression. Clause 19 provides specific safeguards against the over-removal of content and requires platforms to have due regard for users' right to free expression. Companies will also have a duty to ensure they have effective and accessible reporting and redress mechanisms so that users can easily challenge wrongful content takedown decisions.

ENDS

Notes to Editor

- As the list of priority offences in Schedule 7 of the Online Safety Bill cannot include offences that are not yet law, the amendment has been tabled to the National Security Bill to ensure that once the Online Safety Bill gains Royal Assent, it contains the most up to date version of the Foreign Interference Offence.
 - The list of priority offences, which can be further updated by regulations, already includes:
terrorism, child sexual abuse and exploitation, assisting suicide, threats to kill, public order offences, harassment and stalking, hate crime, the sale of illegal drugs and weapons, people trafficking offences, exploiting prostitutes for gain, extreme pornography, revenge pornography, proceeds of crime offences, and fraud offences.
 - More information on the [Home Office's National Security Bill](#).
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Second ballot of the 2022 Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) for Hong Kong SAR passport holders

As in previous years there are a total of 1,000 places available to Hong Kong SAR passport holders for 2022.

The majority of places were allocated in the first ballot in January this year, while the remaining places will be made available in this second ballot in July 2022. If your application is successful you will be able to live, work and study in the UK for up to 2 years.

How to apply for the ballot

If you would like to be in with the chance to apply for the scheme you should send one email per applicant to: hongkong.YMS2022@fcdo.gov.uk between midday (12pm) on Monday 25 July 2022 to midday on Wednesday 27 July 2022 (Hong Kong time).

The header or subject line of your email must contain your name, date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY) and passport number as shown in your passport.

This must be written in English only. For example: WONG Janet – 31/03/2000 – Passport123456789 The main body of your email should include the following information, written in English:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Passport Number
- Mobile phone number

The email account will only be open for 48 hours and all emails received within this timeframe will be sent an automated reply confirming receipt. Please remember to check your junk inboxes.

Once the ballot closes, allocations for the remaining places will be chosen at random by UKVI. If you have been successful a second email will be sent to you by Friday 29 July to confirm acceptance and provide further instructions on how to make an appointment, along with documentary evidence required to apply for your entry clearance.

Please note successful applicants must prepare online applications and online credit card payments no later than 30 August 2022. Failure to submit your payment online by this date will automatically remove your name from the list and your allocation will be retracted. After you have paid online you have 90 days to book your appointment at the Visa Application Centre (VAC) and submit your paperwork for consideration.

If you are a Hong Kong SAR passport holder living overseas you can also apply following the instructions above, and if you are chosen to apply you will be able to do so in your country/territory of residence. Applications cannot be submitted for the Youth Mobility Scheme in the UK.

If you are unsuccessful you will receive an email by 29 July and no further action is required.

Further information about the scheme [can be found on gov.uk](#) and any enquiries relating to the application process, online application forms and questions in general should be directed to the [UKVI International Enquiry Line](#).

Additional information

British National (Overseas) passport holders are already eligible to apply for a visa under the Youth Mobility Scheme to the UK and are not subject to any quota or sponsorship requirements.