

Vaccines Minister on the success of COVID-19 vaccine programme

Vaccine Minister Maggie Throup op-ed in the Express today (Wednesday 8 December 2021).

A year ago today, the UK made history by administering the first approved COVID-19 vaccine in the world to 90-year-old Margaret Keenan in Coventry.

It was a truly momentous occasion in which the entire globe breathed a collective sigh of relief that we finally had a way to fight back against this devastating virus which had caused so much pain and misery.

Since then, we have administered almost 120 million doses in every corner of the UK, saving countless lives and reducing pressure on the NHS.

This is testament to the brilliant work of everybody involved – NHS, GPs, pharmacists, local authorities, volunteers and civil servants – who set up the largest vaccination programme in British history and have demonstrated what can be done when we all work together.

At the height of our vaccination programme, we administered a whopping 844,285 vaccines in a single day – that's equivalent to vaccinating the entire population of Liverpool.

With the emergence of the Omicron variant, we're doing everything we can to rapidly expand and speed up the vaccination programme once again.

This will involve opening extra hospital hubs, vaccine centres and pop-up sites in convenient locations; deploying support from the military; recruiting 10,000 more NHS staff; extra payments to GPs community pharmacies and primary care staff, and a renewed communications push targeting people who might be more hesitant to get vaccinated.

Almost 21 million boosters and third doses have been administered in the UK and, on Saturday, almost 450,000 top-up jabs were administered in a single day – showcasing the strong progress we are making.

While we do not yet know how effective existing vaccines will be against the Omicron variant, it is likely they will provide at least some measure of protection, especially against severe illness.

Those who have received their booster are likely to have a stronger immune response, so it is absolutely vital that you get boosted as soon as you can to protect yourself and your family during Winter.

And I want to stress that the offer of a first and second dose will always be available if you haven't had the jab. There is still time.

I implore everybody to join the national mission and play your part by getting vaccinated so we can fight this virus, enjoy Christmas safely with our loved ones and keep the virus at bay.

[New Non-Executive Director](#)

News story

The Department of Health and Social Care has appointed Julian Hartley as a new Non-Executive Director.



Julian Hartley joined the Department of Health and Social Care as a Non-Executive Director on 1 November 2021.

Julian is the Chief Executive of Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and attends the Departmental Board and other DHSC governance boards and committees to provide external advice, support and challenge to the department.

Non-Executive Director at Department of Health and Social Care Julian Hartley said:

I'm honoured to have been appointed as a Non-Executive director at DHSC. I look forward to bringing my experience of many years of NHS leadership experience; in particular the importance of patient centred improvement and staff engagement, to inform the work of the Departmental Board.

I am also keen to support the Department's wider priorities as we recover from the significant impact of COVID-19 on our wider health and care system.

Published 8 December 2021

Gambling Minister's speech for the GambleAware conference

Good morning and thank you for that introduction.

I would like to start by thanking GambleAware for organising today's conference, which I am delighted to be part of. The theme is "Collaboration in the Prevention of Gambling Harm" and we recognise that as exceptionally important.

Gambling harm cannot be tackled effectively by working in isolation. It takes important input from various groups like the lived experience community, researchers, treatment providers, industry and, of course, the Government to build on each other's experience, knowledge and research and work together in preventing gambling harm. And I know one of the great things about the annual GambleAware conference is that it brings together people from across those groups.

I was appointed Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy in September, with two key priorities. Firstly, delivering on the manifesto commitment to make the UK the safest place in the world to go online and set the global standard for internet safety. Secondly, is the manifesto commitment to comprehensively review the Gambling Act to ensure we have the right protections for the digital age.

In my first months I have met a broad range of gambling stakeholders and people involved in preventing harm, including clinicians and people with personal experience. Thank you to those who are here today. It has been very clear to me that, when it comes to gambling harm, prevention is better than a cure.

The government considers gambling-related harm to be a health issue and a public health issue, and preventing harm is an essential objective of our gambling regulation. It's our duty in government and more widely to prevent people from being led down a path to a dark destination.

I've heard too many stories about people losing obviously unaffordable sums of money, not prevented by operators who had data to stop it from happening. Through our Review, I want to make sure we are doing much more to protect that minority of gamblers who are suffering life changing harms and to prevent others from falling into that position.

Our Review is looking at a very wide range of issues and our call for evidence received 16,000 submissions which we are considering carefully. We will publish a White Paper which sets out our vision for the sector in the coming months.

Today though, I want to focus on a few areas of work where I as a Minister for Tech and Digital Economy, see particular opportunity for innovation in the interest of consumers:

When an operator sees that a customer is at risk of harm, we need them to step in – to talk to them, impose limits or help them set their own, or perhaps even close their account. As part of this, a robust system to prevent unaffordable online gambling will have a transformative impact, and I know everybody here today agrees. We have all seen and heard too many cases of people spending enormous sums and operator interventions coming too late.

Of course, people's circumstances differ and not everyone who spends a lot is at risk. But unaffordable losses are a key sign of out of control gambling that is causing harm – as one of the conference panels will discuss later today. So it is essential the right checks are made and in a digital age we need to harness data to do this effectively.

To be workable and prevent harm, affordability checks need to be proportionate. As the Commission has said, demanding payslips or bank statements from every customer spending £100 or so is likely to be unwelcome, disruptive and disproportionate to the risks. But there is a level that is appropriate.

As minister for Digital, I am really keen to explore the role of technology and available data, such as that held by credit reference agencies, to make these sorts of checks work smoothly in a way that is acceptable to customers. At high levels of gambling, more intrusive checks are appropriate. I also want to be clear that checks based on spend and financial circumstances must supplement rather than supersede all the existing requirements on operators to monitor play data, identify risk and intervene accordingly.

The Commission will soon publish more on its requirements around interventions and we will continue to work closely with them on affordability in the run up to publishing our White Paper.

Operators definitely need the right processes to intervene and prevent harm on their own platforms and they have all made strides in developing algorithms that enable them to spot when to do this. But we know that on average, people who gamble online have opened 3 accounts with different operators, and young adults and problem gamblers usually have even more.

This means that the efforts of individual operators to prevent harm are undermined if a person in the grip of a gambling problem can simply switch to another operator. To me, shoring up our systems to prevent this must be a priority.

I take encouragement from the success of GAMSTOP, the multi-operator online self-exclusion scheme, as an example of the benefits from sector-wide protections which capitalise on the available technology to do things better. Like GAMSTOP, a single customer view (SCV) solution will protect a person, not just their account with one operator.

It is of course vital that any data sharing is done safely, securely and proportionately. I am glad the Commission has worked closely with the Information Commissioner's Office which has now confirmed that a single customer view can be delivered with these values at its core.

We know data sharing is well established in financial services. I know there are representatives from industry in the audience today, so I want to be clear in my message; now is the time for you to pick up the gauntlet and work closely with both regulators to develop a system that works.

Of course, the opportunities presented by data are wider than just sharing between operators. You will all be familiar with Public Health England's evidence review on gambling-related harms, which is an invaluable contribution to the evidence base for our ongoing Review. But as the Minister responsible for gambling, PHE's findings made clear to me that we have more work to do to understand the drivers of gambling disorder.

An important part of the solution is improving the quality of data that the Gambling Commission as regulator, we as government, but also researchers and clinical experts, have access to – which can in turn inform the best possible policies and approaches. I see great promise, therefore, in the development of a Data Repository as a pillar in our work to fill the gaps that still exist in our understanding.

This will of course need to be complemented by the appropriate analytical expertise, so as part of the Review, we are exploring the scope for more investment in data capability within the Gambling Commission. They need powers to regulate the enormous and innovative gambling industry, including the ability to requisition and analyse bulk account-level data from operators to identify whether they're doing what they're supposed to under their licence conditions.

This leads me on to the regulator, which of course has a huge role to play in our collaborative efforts to prevent gambling related harm. It is vital that they have the powers and resources needed to regulate the enormous and innovative gambling industry effectively. I am working closely with the new Chair and Chief Executive of the Commission as they set out their vision for the organisation, and through the Gambling Act Review it will be one of my priorities to ensure that they have all the tools that they need to uphold the licensing objectives.

The Commission is central to all of the promising projects I have just mentioned and I want them to continue to build on the excellent work they have done over recent years to protect vulnerable consumers. The ban on gambling with credit cards, the strict requirements for online age verification, and the actions the Commission took during Covid to prevent harm demonstrate its ability to make gambling safer.

But on a more day to day basis, I want the Commission to excel in holding the industry to account. The operators who meet and surpass our high standards have nothing to worry about from this. Those who breach the rules do. The upcoming White Paper will provide further detail on how we will make sure

that the Gambling Commission is equipped to deal with the range of challenges that it faces across the gambling sector today and in the future.

Over the coming months I will continue to meet with industry, parliamentary groups, charities and people impacted by gambling harm as we prepare the Gambling White paper.

Next week I will be co-hosting a roundtable with my counterpart at DHSC with researchers and treatment and support providers to consider the very question which is the theme of today's conference – how we can collaborate to achieve our shared goals.

Today I have outlined just a few of the areas where I see great promise to make our gambling regulation fit for the digital age, particularly using data and technology. Of course, there will be much more to come in our white paper.

I would like to again congratulate Gamble Aware on organising this conference and I hope together we can continue this collaborative approach to tackling gambling related harm.

[Nuclear fusion and radioactive waste regulation: CoRWM members visit the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy](#)

By Claire Corkhill

Fusion will be ready when the world needs it.

This is what Ian Chapman, CEO of the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), tells us in his introductory talk. With COP26 having just finished, it's hard to argue that society does not need it now. In light of this, and following the recent publication of the UK government's [Fusion Strategy](#), which outlines the UK's ambition to become a fusion industry superpower, members of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management were delighted to visit the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy (CCFE) to learn how plans are progressing to implement and regulate this revolutionary new technology.

Located near the Harwell Campus in Oxfordshire, the CCFE has been quietly developing fusion energy for decades. Hiding behind giant doors several metres thick, CoRWM members were shown a peek of the JET – Joint European Torus – reactor, which is the world's first deuterium-tritium powered fusion reactor, operational since 1983. Only this fleeting glimpse was possible

because JET is currently engaged in a programme of deuterium-fusion experiments, testing the fuel for its successor, [ITER – the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor](#). ITER – meaning ‘the way’ in Latin – is currently under construction in France and will be the first fusion device to produce net energy. Its cousin, [STEP \(Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production\)](#), will be a prototype for the UK’s first energy-generating fusion reactor, due to be operational in 2040.

Rapid progress in the development of the technology, and the government’s ambitious fusion strategy, have led to the publication of a public consultation, [Towards fusion energy: proposals for a regulatory framework](#), to which CoRWM have provided input. One of the key areas of CoRWM’s interest is the regulation of radioactive waste arising from fusion energy, and its management and disposal, which is detailed in the recently published [CoRWM briefing paper](#), led by member Professor Neil Hyatt. Although nuclear fusion does not produce long lived fission products and actinides, neutron capture by the fusion reactor structural materials and components forms short, moderate and some long lived activation products. In addition to tritium emissions and contaminated materials, it is clear that there will be a need to manage radioactive materials and wastes produced by neutron activation, within regulatory controls, over the whole life cycle of a fusion reactor.

With this in mind, CoRWM members talked with the CCFE Fusion Safety Authority during the tour of the site. We saw the MAST (Mega Amp Spherical Tokamak) machine and learned the importance of reactor component design and materials selection in the minimisation of radioactive waste. The safety team explained that changes can be made to the materials used in the front wall, blanket, divertor and vacuum vessel, but that does not take away the fact that these may require management as low level waste, or otherwise as low-risk intermediate level waste, at the end of reactor life.

Innovation was at the heart of the visit. We were introduced to novel robots capable of entering the harsh reactor environment, thus reducing radiological risk to personnel. Hot cells (pictured) and state-of-the-art analytical equipment, housed in the [Materials Research Facility](#), that will be used to support development of fusion reactor materials of the future, were demonstrated. The [STEP siting process](#), which received a wide range of submissions, is a first-of-a-kind, making the giant leap from experimental physics to operational energy infrastructure. And, refreshingly, regulation of the technology, including its longer-lived radioactive waste, is already being carefully considered, even though the first energy-producing reactor won’t be operational for another 20+ years.

In our work, CoRWM will endeavour to ensure that the innovations in fusion power, and the resulting radioactive waste it generates, will be duly considered, regulated and safely managed into the future. We look forward to seeing the leaps in progress on our next visit.

On the left: the JET (Joint European Torus) fusion reactor at the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy

On the right: The operation of hot-cells in the Materials Research Facility

at Culham, showing equipment used to prepare activated fusion reactor materials for microscopy.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss: Building the Network of Liberty

The world is moving very fast, and ideas are moving even faster.

This revolution is why we enjoy incredible freedom, powered by free enterprise and technology. Our businesses are driving the Covid recovery; our scientists are saving the world through their miracle vaccines; and we're vaccinating the British population in record time.

Yet this progress shouldn't blind us to the pitfalls.

Hostile forces are using disinformation to undermine truth. Extremists are perpetuating malign ideologies through social media. Autocratic regimes are using this maelstrom of militancy, mistrust and misinformation to gain the upper hand.

Now is the time for the free world to fight back, and to use the power of economics and technology to promote freedom not fear.

Age of introspection

Let's be honest: in recent years, the free world has taken its eye off the ball.

After the collapse of communism, many breathed a sigh of relief and called it the end of history – confident that freedom and democracy would inexorably go global under its own steam.

Societies turned inwards. Rather than engaging with the big ideas shaping the world, failed ideas ran rife, like the post-modern philosophy that there is no objective truth.

In fashionable circles, people talked about how we should be ashamed of our history and doubtful about our future.

There was strategic drift. Defence spending fell. Countries became strategically dependent on cheap gas, or reliant on others for vital technology like 5G.

This complacency is being exploited by those who never stopped fighting the global battle of ideas. They've been relentlessly building their influence – offering a quick buck to anyone who would take it, with strings attached for sovereignty and national security.

It's time to wake up. The free world's age of introspection must end now.

Instead we need the age of ideas, influence and inspiration.

And that's why Britain is determined to work with our friends to form a network of liberty that spans the world.

As JFK put it, we will inspire others "not with an imperialism of force or fear, but the rule of courage and freedom, and hope for the future of man."

Britain taking the lead

We know we will succeed because we are free and democratic nations. We believe in individual liberty and humanity and dignity, and the power of people – the greatest transformative force on earth.

This is what our adversaries always get wrong. They put groups ahead of individuals. They want to make people work for the system. We want to make the system work for people.

We know that when people have agency over their own lives, when they have freedom and opportunity, they achieve incredible things.

This is the principle our country is based on – you can see it in the advancement of rights under Magna Carta, the establishment of the rule of law, or the pioneering of free market economics – all ideas that inspired the world.

So it's time to be proud of who we are and what we stand for. It's time to dump the baggage holding us back. Our history – warts and all – makes us what we are today.

Britain is the greatest country on earth. Whoever you are, wherever you come from, you can achieve your dreams.

And that's why when I speak to foreign governments and businesses, they want to work with Britain. In my 12 weeks as Foreign Secretary, we've already secured partnership agreements with 7 countries – from Greece to Israel to Malaysia.

People want to do business with Britain. They trust us. And they see things in Britain they would like for their own countries.

They see that in Britain your background is no barrier to becoming a chief executive, a top footballer, or the mayor of London.

They recognise we are a science and tech superpower, home to the third largest number of tech unicorns in the world.

They know that we are an economic powerhouse, growing faster than any other G7 nation.

From the Beatles to Sarah Gilbert to Tim Berners-Lee, we have unrivalled

influence in the world.

So our foreign policy will project pride in our country and in all its elements, including our great cities, our towns and our countryside. Whether by promoting our manufacturing, from Sunderland's electric cars to Derby's small modular nuclear reactors. Or by bringing the world to Glasgow for COP26 – which took a historic step forward in tackling climate change. Or by bringing the G7 to Liverpool this weekend – a city whose global influence in culture, sport and music is stronger than ever.

A stronger Foreign Office

We have so much to be proud of. So I am putting this at the heart of the Foreign Office's mission – to go out there, influencing and inspiring others to join our cause.

The Office itself is a national asset. We have the best diplomats in the world, and a diplomatic network with unique reach and expertise. It represents us across 180 countries, speaking 46 different languages – everything from Albanian to Urdu.

The Henry Jackson Society's league table ranks the UK as the second most powerful country on the globe, precisely because of our diplomatic clout.

We are united with our friends and family through the Commonwealth, covering a third of the world's population. And our diplomatic heft has been shown time and time again.

After the Salisbury attack, we worked with 27 other countries to lead the largest collective expulsion of Russian diplomats in foreign history.

We were the first European country to impose sanctions on Belarus.

And only last weekend, we lifted the US's decades-long ban on British lamb.

So we will keep increasing our reach and strengthening our network. I've just cut the ribbon on new embassy buildings in Mexico City and Bangkok.

And our formidable diplomatic machine will be put to work, relentlessly promoting Britain.

Our diplomats will go out there in a positive, proud and patriotic spirit. We won't lecture others, instead we will lead by example. We won't hang-wring, instead we will reach out with our ideas and inspiration.

We will be unashamedly commercial, hosting businesses delegations from our cities across the UK, and paving the way towards new trade, tech and security agreements which will help level up our country – from Govan to Gloucester.

And I, as Foreign Secretary, will empower the men and women across our embassies and high commissions with everything they need to go out there.

Winning the battle for economic influence

Because we need to be on the front foot with our friends across the free world, because the battle for economic influence is already in full flow.

China now spends over twice as much on development finance as the US. 44 low and middle income countries have debts to Beijing in excess of 10% of their GDP.

The EU relies on Russia for over 40% of its gas – and with some countries, Russia has had a complete monopoly of supply. If Russia gets its way, Europe will be increasingly hooked on its gas.

We have to end this strategic dependency, whether it's on energy, investment or technology. We have to provide an alternative.

And that means stepping up our engagement and our investment –it means shaping the economy, including the next wave of technology like quantum computing, 6G, artificial intelligence and much more.

And the United Kingdom is in a unique position to lead the charge on this.

After almost fifty years in the EU, once again all the levers of international policy are in our hands – diplomacy, development, trade and security.

It's a new opportunity for the UK to shape the international agenda. An unfrozen moment that we must capitalise on.

As an outward-looking, sovereign nation, we are rebuilding our muscle to fulfil the promise of Global Britain – ready to win opportunities for our country and win the future for freedom.

Our adversaries seek to use economics and technology as tools of control. We want to use them as tools of liberation. And we will use all of Britain's influence, ideas and inspiration to achieve this.

Investment, trade and development

Firstly, we are reaching out to build new economic partnerships.

Following our free trade agreements with 70 countries plus the EU, my successor Anne Marie Trevelyan is pursuing a trade deal with India and accession to the Trans-Pacific Partnership. And those will mean that two thirds of our trade is covered by trade deals.

We are also building new partnerships with low and middle income countries. We've launched British International Investment – our honest, reliable alternative, providing infrastructure finance and support for the green transition.

The BII will help to deliver £8 billion a year in UK-backed financing by 2025, up from £1.5 billion last year. We will leverage the firepower of the

City of London. For the first time, we will be supporting projects in South East Asia and the Caribbean, as well as Africa – drawing them closer to major free-market democracies, like the UK.

And early next year, I will be launching our new development strategy.

Alongside our new approach on investment, it will focus on providing women and girls with the freedom they need to succeed. It will commit us to stepping up our response to humanitarian crises around the world. And it will ensure our development policies support our belief in freedom and democracy.

Tech leadership

Second, as a science and tech superpower we will make sure that the free world leads the way in the technologies of the future.

We are joining forces with our friends to win supremacy in areas like quantum, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and more.

We are forging new partnerships with fellow tech powerhouses like India, Indonesia and Israel.

We have a crack team of tech experts driving this forward in more than 40 diplomatic posts across the globe.

And we are working with our friends to set the standards in tech – from intellectual property to the free flow of data.

This is just a glimpse of what is to come.

We are negotiating new tech partnership with the US. We're in talks with Singapore and more. And in the New Year, I will set out a new approach for the UK's tech leadership on the global stage.

Security and defence partnerships

Thirdly, all of this has to be underpinned by stronger security ties.

We are building a network of security partnerships to protect our people, our partners and our freedoms, including on the high seas.

We are forging cyber security partnerships with allies around the world, from ASEAN to India, to Canada and more.

And we are building our traditional security capabilities, with the largest rise in the defence spending for a generation. We are putting our money where our mouth is by devoting over 2% of our GDP to defence, making us Europe's largest NATO contributor.

We are steadfast in NATO, the 5 Eyes intelligence partnership, and the Five Power Defence Arrangements, with Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore.

At the same time, we are going further and faster in other areas – such as our new AUKUS partnership. By joining forces with the US and Australia, we are protecting sea routes and stability across the Indo-Pacific. And we are deepening our work Canada to cover regions such as the Arctic and beyond.

We are working to advance our interests from a position of strength.

Last week I visited our troops in Estonia and joined NATO foreign ministers in Riga. Together we will send a clear message that any incursion by Russia into Ukraine would be a strategic mistake. As President Biden said, there would be “very real costs” to pay.

We stand with Ukraine in supporting their security and defence, and helping them become more energy independent. Later today, I will be meeting my Ukrainian counterpart Dymtro Kuleba to strengthen our ties further.

We will also work night and day to prevent the Iranian regime from ever getting a nuclear weapon. And we will continue to work with our partners to respond to the security and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

Network of Liberty – call to action

In all of these areas – and more – we are taking the lead, we’re seizing the initiative and we’re standing up for freedom and democracy.

We are using all of our weight as the world’s fifth largest economy: British International Investment, leadership in technology, increased defence spending, and new, deeper trade deals.

We are getting out there to build the network of liberty and advance the frontiers of freedom.

And I’m delighted to see that our friends are stepping up too. Japan has just appointed an economic security minister – and they are developing new technology like 6G. Australia is building trade and security links around the world.

I want to see all our allies step up and seize this moment. I want to see all freedom-loving nations calling time on introspection, protectionism, and isolationism.

When we put freedom first, we all benefit.

The more freedom-loving countries trade with each other, build security links, invest in our partners and pull more countries into the orbit of freedom, the safer and freer we all are.

New agreements between like-minded countries, even when you’re not part of them, are there to be celebrated.

It isn’t a zero-sum game. Friends want friends to be successful.

When the US works on a new economic partnership with Japan, as Ambassador Tai

has been doing with Minister Hayashi, or when the EU announces its new Global Gateway scheme to invest in developing countries, we all benefit.

But we need to go further – I want to see our partners stepping up in funding NATO, cutting strategic dependence on Russian gas, putting more investment into developing countries, joining CPTPP, and challenging malign acts.

The G7 covers half of global GDP – and even more with our friends across the world, including ASEAN. By joining forces and bringing other freedom-loving nations with us, we will create the future we all want to see.

Conclusion

So when I meet the G7 in Liverpool this weekend, my message will be clear: it's time to get on the front foot and join us in advancing the frontiers of freedom.

It is time to dump the baggage, ditch the introspection and step forward, proud of who we are and what we stand for, ready to shape the world anew.

Let's stop fighting about the past. Let's start fighting for the future.

By championing our ideas, building our influence and inspiring others with our cause, we can forge ahead as a global network of liberty.

That's how we will rise to the challenge in this fast-changing world. It's how we'll win the battle for ideas and influence once again. And it's how we'll ensure free societies and democracies don't just survive, they thrive.

Thank you.