

Susan Hopkins awarded the Irish government's Presidential Distinguished Service Award



Dr Susan Hopkins has been honoured in the Science, Technology and Innovation category.

The highly prestigious award comes from the Irish government and it honours Irish diaspora members around the world for their contributions to the nation and its reputation abroad.

On receiving the award, Dr Susan Hopkins said:

I am very honoured to receive this award and recognition from the government of Ireland for my contributions to science and technology, working collaboratively with colleagues in the UK and globally to combat infectious diseases threats.

Dr Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of UKHSA, said:

This is a fantastic achievement and completely deserved. A massive congratulations should go out to Susan for being honoured in such a prestigious way.

Susan has been at the forefront of this country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, working relentlessly to help keep the public safe. We all owe her a debt of gratitude.

Susan grew up in Kildare, Ireland and trained at Trinity College Dublin. She carried out her specialist training in Dublin hospitals before leaving to work in Seattle and Paris, before settling in London.

People receive this honour because they have:

- provided a distinguished service to Ireland or its reputation abroad

- actively and demonstrably contributed to Ireland or its international reputation, or Irish communities abroad in at least one of the listed categories
- a track record of sustained support and engagement with Ireland or its international reputation, or Irish communities abroad over a period of not less than 5 years, or
- given sustained and distinguished service on a global or international issue of importance

The Presidential Distinguished Service Award was established to recognise the contribution of members of the Irish diaspora, and the first awards were made in 2012.

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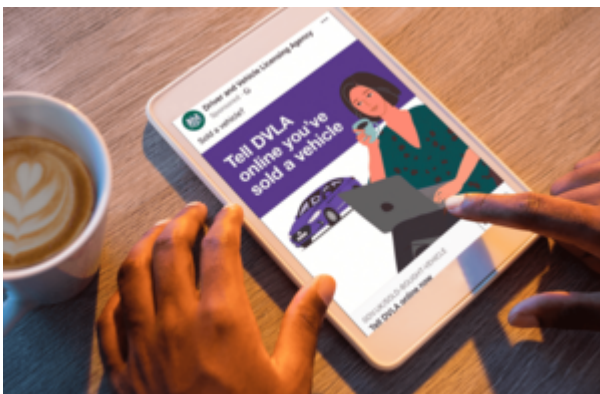
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[DVLA launches new campaign to help move customers online](#)

News story

The campaign highlights the ease, speed and security of DVLA's online services.



Millions of our customers already use our online services every single month, for example, 98% of all taxed vehicles in the UK are taxed via our digital services. However, we know that lots of customers continue to post their applications to us when they could be using our digital services, so encouraging those customers to go online rather than post their applications is critical to ensure customers can transact with DVLA efficiently.

The campaign promotes 3 key services, with the key message of 'quick, easy and secure' to remind customers of the benefits of using our online services:

The campaign launched on 9 November with a press notice [highlighting the financial savings customers could have made if they had used DVLA's online services instead of applying by paper](#). This is one of the many benefits of transacting online, along with the ease, speed and security of our online services being reinforced with our campaign messaging.

You may hear or see adverts over the next few months on radio, social media and on search engines. If you do, and you're able to use an online service, give it a go or tell someone who may need to [change their vehicle details](#), [renew their photocard driving licence](#) or [over 70 driving licence](#).

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[UK closing statement at the OSCE Ministerial Council 2021](#)

Thank you Madam Chair. At the end of a challenging year you have faced a tough challenge of hosting 56 other participating States, made harder with COVID-19 continuing to impact us all. So, first I would like to thank you and all your colleagues for the great hospitality which you have shown us all here in Stockholm.

The role of Chair comes with much responsibility, and we welcome both Estonia and Finland's willingness to take on the role. We congratulate Finland on their appointment for 2025 and regret that we have not reached consensus on Estonia's bid which has our strong support.

But to return to Sweden, Madam Chair, we have been grateful for your leadership in the face of numerous challenges. In their interventions many of our Ministers mentioned our failure to agree a unified budget until August and noted our inability to reach consensus leading to the delay of the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) and summer recess, and a failure to hold the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM).

Sadly the issues have not been linked solely to process. We have yet to see the full consequences of the refusal by Russia to renew the mandate of the Border Observer Mission along the Ukrainian Russian state border. This is especially troubling given that the ongoing restrictions to the access of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine impact on the Mission's ability to deliver its mandate as our eyes and ears. The Secretary General spoke movingly of the service by the men and women of the SMM. We are grateful for their work under difficult circumstances. We also recognise the contribution

of all those working for the OSCE in its many structures, institutions and missions and as the Secretary General said “getting on with their job”.

Recent events underline the need to fully implement the OSCE’s politico-military instruments – as well as to ensure they remain fit for purpose. We were disappointed that fruitful areas were blocked in the Forum for Security Cooperation for a second year in a row. We hope that next year will bring a renewed desire for constructive cooperation.

I have been honoured, Madam Chair, to have supported your Chairpersonship through my role as Chair of the Security Committee. I am disappointed that we were not able to reach consensus on any of the four strong draft Ministerial Council texts in the Committee this year – four texts on topics core to the work of the Committee. However, I believe that there were elements that were able to achieve a wide consensus and which provides a foundation to build upon next year.

As participating States we also have a role to play in meeting our principles and commitments and in holding one another to account. As we declared 30 years ago in Moscow, commitments in the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate interest to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of participating States. We heard yesterday in a side event that the human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate. We call again for the Belarusian authorities to live up to their OSCE commitments and international human rights obligations. We were disappointed we were unable to find consensus in the human dimension this year.

We also welcome the suggestions put forward on the unified budget cycle which we believe provide the basis for future collaboration.

I want to take a short moment to recognise the agreement we were able to reach on climate. This is particularly important less than a month after [COP26](#). We hope we can build on that work and also enhance our efforts to mainstream gender across all dimensions of the OSCE’s work. Advancing full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is essential for our approach to comprehensive security.

Madam Chair, as we look forward to next year, we offer our full support to Poland as incoming Chair. We are under no illusions. Their task will also be a challenging one, but we are fully committed in our support. We hope that others will also find the political will to work together to find consensus on the range of issues which merit our attention.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

New chair appointed at National Employment Savings Trust

News story

Brendan McCafferty has been appointed as the next Chair of the National Employment Savings Trust (Nest) Corporation.



The Minister for Pensions, Guy Opperman, has announced today that Brendan will take up the role on 1 February 2022 for a five-year term.

Nest was set up by the government to ensure every UK employer has access to a guaranteed, easy-to-manage pension scheme following the introduction of automatic enrolment and it has a public service obligation to admit any employer that applies to it.

Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion, Guy Opperman said:

I am delighted to confirm Brendan McCafferty as the next Chair of Nest Corporation. He brings a wealth of financial services knowledge to the role and will be a great fit.

Brendan will oversee an important five years as Nest transitions to a new service administrator. I am confident he will continue to develop its service and help millions of workers enjoy a more comfortable retirement.

I would also like to thank Otto Thoresen for his service as Chair. He successfully steered Nest through the ramp up of automatic enrolment and the establishment of its industry-leading responsible investment approach. He leaves behind a lasting legacy.

Brendan McCafferty said:

Nest is now well established and has shown itself to be an

organisation with the interests of its over ten million members at its heart.

As Nest sets about the next phase of its development, I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to work with the Trustee Board and wider stakeholders to help ensure we deliver the Nest purpose of helping millions of people enjoy a better retirement.

Nest currently supports around 10.5 million pension scheme members, working with over 940,000 employers.

Automatic enrolment, which has already affected more than 10 million workers, is continuing to play a major role in increasing private sector pension saving to record levels. Since 2012, private sector participation has almost doubled to 86% with 14.3 million eligible employees in 2020.

- [Nest](#) is an easy to access occupational pension scheme that employers can choose to use to meet their automatic enrolment duties. Nest has a public service obligation to admit any employer who wishes to use it to meet their duties.
- Nest Corporation is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- The Chair of Nest is appointed by the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions. This appointment was made following an open competition regulated by The Office for the Commissioner of Public Appointments.
- Otto Thoresen will step down as the Chair of Nest Corporation on 31 January 2022.
- Brendan McCafferty's appointment will commence on 1 February 2022. The appointment will be for a period of 5 years. The remuneration will be £91,000 a year for a commitment of 130 days a year.

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[CMA secures changes from major PCR testing provider](#)

As part of its ongoing engagement in the PCR tests sector, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) raised concerns with Randox – one of the largest providers in the sector – about some of its terms and conditions.

As a result, Randox has now reviewed its terms and conditions and has changed them to:

- Give clearer information to customers, in particular on when it will provide PCR tests and results
- Improve notification of customers' legal rights on cancellations and refunds, for example making it clear they have a right to a 'cooling off' period
- Remove terms that could suggest customers aren't entitled to compensation if things go wrong

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

With recent changes to the rules for travel, the spotlight is once again on PCR testing providers and their practices.

I am pleased that Radox has agreed to change its terms, which means consumers benefit from their legal rights to cancel and get a refund, and are not stopped from pursuing compensation if there is a problem. However, it's essential that all companies play by the rules and treat people fairly. We are clear that, if they fail to do so, they risk facing enforcement action from the CMA or Trading Standards.

We recently provided recommendations to government on changes to better protect consumers in this market and we hope that, given the reintroduction of PCR testing for travellers, these will be implemented as quickly as possible.

The CMA's engagement with Radox is part of a wider set of actions the CMA has taken to protect consumers in this market. In August 2021, the CMA published an [open letter to PCR providers](#), outlining how they should comply with consumer law. Practices of concern included:

- Advertising up-front prices for PCR tests which do not include additional charges
- Advertising cheap PCR tests which are only actually available in very small quantities or not at all
- Failing to deliver PCR tests or provide results within stated timescales
- Refusing to provide people with refunds where tests are not provided within advertised or agreed timescales

The CMA has also sent letters to 25 PCR providers, warning them to review their terms and conditions – and other practices – or risk facing enforcement action. It currently has [formal investigations open into 2 PCR providers, Expert Medicals and Dante Labs](#).

In addition, the CMA has provided [advice to the UK Government on ways to make the PCR testing market work better for consumers](#). The recommendations included improving the basic standards to qualify for inclusion and remain on the GOV.UK list; monitoring providers on this list and swiftly removing, and sanctioning, those firms that don't meet these standards; and adding

information to enable consumers to compare providers properly and find the best deals for them.

Visit the CMA's website for more information on the [CMA's rapid review of PCR testing for travel](#) and its [enforcement work](#) in the sector.

1. Randox Health London Ltd, is a company registered in England under company number 9102173 with registered office at 5 Finsbury House, 23 Finsbury Circus, London, EC2M 7EA. Randox Health London Ltd is a private provider of COVID 19 testing services. Randox Health London Ltd appoint their partner laboratory Randox Laboratories Limited to perform the testing and t/as RCLS, a company registered in Northern Ireland under company number NI015738, whose registered office address is Ardmore, 55 Diamond Road, Crumlin, Co. Antrim, BT29 4QY
2. For media queries, please contact the press office via press@cma.gov.uk or on 020 3738 6460.