

Authorisation application deadlines for Christmas period 2021

News story

Validation during the Christmas period 2021 for an application for a MA, ManA, WDA, Batch Release, Specific Batch Control and Export Certificate.



Our offices will be closed on Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 December. Contact via telephone call maybe be limited but please continue to send enquiries to postmaster@vmd.gov.uk

New Marketing Authorisation applications

The last validation meeting to discuss applications for new Marketing Authorisations (MAs) will take place on 16 December. Applications to be considered for validation must be received on or before 13 December. Weekly validation meetings will resume from 4 January 2022.

For further information contact Ines Morreale i.morreale@vmd.gov.uk

Manufacturing and Wholesale Dealer Authorisation applications (new and variations)

The last day for validation of applications for Authorisations for Manufacturers, Blood Banks, Equine Stem Cell Centres and Wholesale Dealers (new and variations) will be on 17 December. To be considered for validation by this date, please ensure that your application reaches us by 13 December. The validation discussions will resume from 4 January 2022.

For further information contact: Alison Reynolds a.reynolds@vmd.gov.uk

Export Certificates

Your application for an export certificate must be received by 17 December to ensure it is dealt with during the Christmas period. Any applications received after this date will be dealt with from 4 January 2022.

For further information contact Sam Paterson s.paterson@vmd.gov.uk

Specific Batch Control-PVMP

Your application must be received by 17 December to ensure it is dealt with during the Christmas period. Any applications received after this date will be dealt with from 4 January 2022.

For further information contact s.response@vmd.gov.uk

Batch Release Requests-IVMP

Your batch release request must be received by 17 December to ensure it is dealt with during the Christmas period. Any requests received after this date will be dealt with from 4 January 2022.

For further information contact batchr@vmd.gov.uk

Published 17 November 2021

[Introducing the Government Data Maturity Model](#)

Following the publication of the [National Data Strategy](#) in 2020, the Government Data Quality Hub (DQHub) have been busy working alongside colleagues in the Data Standards Authority (DSA) to build a single data maturity model for government. Next month (December 2021), a pilot programme will begin rolling out across volunteer government departments.

But what is data maturity? How can it help improve data usage across government? And why is it relevant to you?

What is data maturity?

All organisations produce, process and use data in some shape or form. But the presence of data does not necessarily mean that it is being used effectively. Measuring your data maturity is a way of identifying how set up your organisation is to make the best use of its data. Many different elements can contribute to data maturity and building capability in each of these areas can strengthen the overall capability of your organisation.

Data maturity is fluid and can vary substantially over time, for example as a result of changes in data availability, analytical capability or even leadership. Commitment to continuous improvement is crucial to maximising data value.

Why data maturity?

Data maturity can be viewed through many different lenses to help you better understand some of the many different themes that contribute to it, for example:

- **Uses** – How do you get value out of data?
- **Leadership** – How much is data regarded as a major organisational priority?
- **Culture** – What are the attitudes to data in your organisation?
- **Skills** – How data literate are your staff?

This multi-dimensional approach allows you to consider if you and your users are benefitting as much as possible from the data you have.

How can I assess data maturity?

It is important to be aware of your own organisation's current level of data maturity. Otherwise, it can be difficult to identify potential areas for improvement. Developing data maturity doesn't need to be expensive – there are often small steps that can be taken to build it over time. However, identifying these areas for improvement can sometimes be daunting, and you might not know where to start.

This is why we are developing a single data maturity model for government, designed for assessing and optimising your organisation's data maturity. The Government Data Maturity Model is a tool that you can use to identify goals to help you achieve your target data maturity level.

Assessing data maturity can help you make best use of resources

Prioritising your data improvements can lead to increased savings and productivity across your organisation. As well as diagnosing your current level of data maturity, you can set aspirational targets, to be monitored and met in subsequent iterations of the model assessment. This is a convenient way to monitor and communicate progress for a diverse range of purposes, helping you to get more from your data.

The model can only reveal what needs to be done, rather than how to achieve it. Continuous monitoring and improvement are critical to getting the most value from your data. The data environment is by nature fast moving and ever-advancing – no fix will last indefinitely!

Establishing a consistent approach to evaluating data maturity can enable useful comparisons and facilitate the sharing of best practice, putting data at the centre of decision making. Following the pilot starting next month, the Government Data Maturity Model will be made available to all areas of government working with data. Please get in touch if you are interested in finding out more.

DQHub is involved in a wide range of projects aimed at improving data quality and usage across government. We also offer tailored advice and support, and you can contact us by emailing DQHub@ons.gov.uk.

[New 'Blue Shield' for UK Overseas Territories to Defend Oceans](#)

- The Blue Shield Programme provides comprehensive tools to defend oceans against illegal fishing activities.
- Suite of support includes innovative technology and surveillance techniques.
- Bermuda is announced as the first Overseas Territory to join the Blue Shield Programme.

The Blue Shield Programme is a new UK Government initiative aimed at tackling the challenges of illegal fishing and unlawful marine activities around the UK Overseas Territories. It will help UK Overseas Territories strengthen the management and enforcement of their oceans.

Announced at this week's Joint Ministerial Council (JMC), the Blue Shield Programme is the latest project funded by the UK Government's Blue Belt Programme, which protects over 4 million square kilometers of ocean around the Overseas Territories.

The Blue Shield Programme will identify and analyse activities that may impact the health and sustainability of Overseas Territories' marine environments. Illegal fishing and overfishing can cause significant damage to marine environments threatening the sustainability of fish populations, ecosystems, and the livelihoods of those who fish legally. Effective monitoring and surveillance can help reduce those risks.

The activities surveyed could include illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, commercial and recreational vessel activity, as well as shipping activity.

Through the establishment of compliance and enforcement frameworks, Blue Shield will assist the territories to ensure their waters are protected and sustainably managed. Where necessary, Blue Shield will also assist them to

undertake enforcement action against non-compliance.

Overseas Territories will also be supported through specialist training for on-island staff to build local capacity, as well as providing access to innovative surveillance and enforcement techniques. These include:

- Autonomous drone technology that can monitor vast areas of ocean for human activity and report its findings in real time.
- Passive acoustic units, which once deployed underwater can monitor for the sounds of vessels which have their GPS positioning systems turned off.
- Latest satellite surveillance data can be used to monitor maritime activity across entire Exclusive Economic Zones.

Lord Zac Goldsmith, Minister for the Environment, commented:

The new Blue Shield Programme will help UK Overseas Territories protect their hugely important marine environments against Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing and other damaging activities.

The Programme will provide training and will use emerging enforcement technologies such as drones and satellite surveillance.

I am absolutely delighted that Bermuda is the first Territory to join the Blue Shield, and I look forward to an excellent partnership.

Bermuda today announced that it would be the first Overseas Territory to join Blue Shield. Support provided by the Programme, to combat IUU fishing, and manage vessel activity and marine development projects, will underpin Bermuda's existing protected areas management approach.

Honourable Walter Roban, Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs, Bermuda, commented:

I am very excited for Bermuda to be participating in the Blue Shield Programme and I thank the UK Government for their willingness to share vital technology that will help support the surveillance, protection and management of our marine environment.

Bermuda will continue to align itself with the highest standards needed for the protection of our oceans. Following on from our leading participation in the Sargasso Sea Commission, our Blue Shield involvement further strengthens Bermuda's role as custodian of one of the world's foremost marine ecosystems.

Notes to editors:

- For more detailed information about the Blue Shield Programme go to: [Blue_Shield_A4.pdf](#) (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Interviews are available on request
- A range of other Overseas Territories are in discussions about joining the Programme
- Attached photograph is a heatmap, produced in the surveillance assistance provided to British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) as part of the Blue Belt Programme, and an example of what is offered to overseas territories under the Blue Shield Programme. Photo Credit Blue Belt Programme/OceanMind About the Blue Belt Programme:
- The Blue Belt Programme is a UK Government initiative to enhance marine protection and sustainable management of activities in the UK Overseas Territories.
- Overseas Territories who protect their waters with the support of this Programme include Ascension Island, the British Antarctic Territory, British Indian Ocean Territory, South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands, the Pitcairn Islands, St Helena and Tristan da Cunha – covering over 4 million km², an area 17 times the size of the UK and over one percent of the Earth's entire ocean.
- Overseas Territories within the Blue Belt Programme have access to this important capability, but it is now available via the Blue Shield to all other interested Overseas Territories.
- This flagship Programme has been central to the UK Government's ambition of leading action to tackle the serious global problems of illegal fishing, species extinction and climate change. The Programme has underpinned the UK's 25 Year Environment Plan and supported the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals. More recently, it has supported the UK's commitment to ensure 30% of the world's oceans are protected by 2030.
- The Blue Belt Programme is delivered by the OTs with the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

For further information, please contact Karen.Leech@marinemanagement.org.uk

[Facebook paedophile has sentence increased](#)

Press release

A man who engaged in sexual communications through Facebook with a "paedophile hunter" has had his sentence increased



A man who engaged in sexual communications through Facebook with a “paedophile hunter” he believed to be a 13-year-old girl, has had his sentence increased following intervention by the Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP.

In June 2019, Kevin Talbot, 61, contacted whom he thought was a 13-year-old girl on Facebook, but who was in fact an adult member of a paedophile hunter group. Over the course of their online exchanges, the offender engaged in highly sexualised conversations, including sending explicit images and requesting sexualised images of the girl.

The offender encouraged the girl not to tell her parents or friends about their conversations and to delete messages to prevent the discovery of their exchanges. The paedophile hunter group attended the offender’s address on 11 June 2019 to make a citizen’s arrest. The police were contacted, attended the scene, and formally arrested the offender.

Talbot pleaded guilty to one count of arranging or facilitating the commission of a child sex offence and one count of attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child. On 17 September 2021, Talbot was sentenced to 12 months’ imprisonment suspended for 18 months at Shrewsbury Crown Court.

Following a referral to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme by the Solicitor General, on 17 November the Court found the sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 24 months’ imprisonment suspended for 24 months.

After the hearing at the Court of Appeal, the Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP, said:

Kevin Talbot illustrated that he was well aware that his actions were unacceptable, and of the consequences he could face, by continually trying to conceal his activity. I am pleased that the Court of Appeal agrees his original sentence was unduly lenient and has today increased it.

Nine soldiers of the Great War honoured a century after their deaths.

On Wednesday, 17 November 2021, just over 104 years after they paid the ultimate sacrifice serving their country, nine soldiers of the Great War were laid to rest with full military honours. The service was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), also known as the "MOD War Detectives" and was held at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Tyne Cot Cemetery near Ypres in Belgium.

Soldiers of the First Fusiliers stand ready with three coffins. Crown Copyright. All rights reserved.

His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent attended the moving service in his capacity as the Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and President of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Through a combination of military research, anthropology and DNA, the MOD War Detectives have successfully managed to identify seven of the nine casualties by name. An eighth casualty, who remains unknown, is believed to have been serving with the same regiment (11th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers) whilst the ninth and final casualty is sadly unknown by name or regiment.

Nicola Nash, JCCC said:

"After working on this case for nearly three years, it gives me an immense feeling of pride to see these men finally being laid to rest. It has been wonderful to share this emotional day with so many of the family members, who have travelled as far as Australia to attend.

"The sacrifice these men made will never be forgotten."

During civil engineering works on Oude Wervikstraat in Beselare, several sets of human remains were found on 8 June 2018. During their recovery by archaeologists from the Flanders Heritage Agency uncovered the remains of a trench, an adjacent bomb pit and a separate bomb pit outside of the trench. The majority of the casualties were located within the trench and appeared to have died at the same time as the result of an explosion, although one was found separately from the rest.

2Lt Ablett is carried to his final resting place.

Identifying the soldiers

The following soldiers were positively identified by DNA:

2nd Lieutenant (2Lt) Leslie Wallace Ablett; 11th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. Died 14 October 1917, aged 20.

2Lt Edward Douglas Bruty; 11th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. Died 14 October 1917, aged 21.

Serjeant (Sjt) Thomas Feasby; 11th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. Died 14 October 1917, aged 32.

Lance Corporal (LCpl) Stanley Blakeborough; 11th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. Died 13 October 1917, aged 21.

Private (Pte) Harry Miller; 11th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. Died 14 October 1917, aged 28.

Pte Joseph Patrickson MM; 11th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. Died 14 October 1917, aged 24.

Pte Arnold Sanderson MM; 11th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. Died 14 October 1917, aged 26.

The eighth casualty was closely linked with this group and, although not identified by name, was buried as an "Unknown Soldier of the Northumberland Fusiliers". The final casualty, having been found separately from the rest, had no artefacts found with him; he was buried as an "Unknown Soldier of the Great War".

The MOD War Detectives worked tirelessly during the process of identifying the soldiers before dedicating their efforts on tracing possible family members who could then be approached for DNA testing. Where there was a match the team invited those families to attend today's service, which five sets of family did and paid their respects during the service.

Five of the soldiers' families receive the Union Flag, regimental cap and wreath. Crown Copyright. All rights reserved,

Stephen Willis-Feasby, Sjt Feasby's great nephew and who provided his DNA in order for the testing to be completed, said:

"It has been an incredible story from the very first letter received to the event that we are here today to honour our relatives. It is a privilege to be involved, so from myself and my family we thank the MOD War Detectives, and all involved for making this a remarkable day."

Also in attendance was Rachel Fixsen, 2Lt Ablett's 1st cousin 3x removed who also provided DNA for testing. Rachel said:

"To take part in the right and proper burial of a member of your family is a normal thing, but this whole experience has been anything but normal for us. My sister and I and our wider family never met our dear cousin Leslie in his tragically short lifetime, but 100 years later, he is firmly in our hearts and we've been privileged to accompany him on his final journey on behalf of those who loved him in life.

"I'm so grateful to the MOD War Detectives for their dedication in identifying these brave soldiers who fought and died next to each other. It's awe-inspiring to stand here alongside all these members of the soldiers' families, as we mourn across the generations."

Despite returning a negative DNA test result herself, Elizabeth Richards attended the service in honour of the two two unknown soldiers. Elizabeth said:

"It is an incredible privilege to be here today to honour these brave soldiers who, after making the ultimate sacrifice, are finally able to be laid to rest.

"This service was a true testament to the wonderful work conducted by the MOD War Detectives, reuniting families with their long lost loved ones and ensuring a long lasting tribute."

The service was conducted by the Reverend (Captain) Gary Watt, CF, Chaplain to the First Fusiliers, who said:

"It is an honour and a privilege to preside at the service of these soldiers and officers at such a significant location. Whom with great bravery, and with no thought for their safety sacrificed their lives for the freedom of their country and the world."

The graves will now be marked by headstones provided by the CWGC, who will care for their final resting place in perpetuity.

Claire Horton CBE, CWGC Director General, said:

"The CWGC is honoured to have worked alongside the JCCC in the recovery and identification of these men and to now be caring for them in perpetuity in Tyne Cot, CWGC's largest cemetery. The fact that so many of them have been positively identified is testament to the collective dedication that continues to this day, to remember our fallen."