

Life-saving vaccination programme to hit more major milestones as new vaccine added to armoury

- New approved Janssen jab boosts armoury in helping to defeat global pandemic
- Three quarters of UK adults expected to have had first dose of a vaccine this week as UK set to hit another vital milestone

The outstanding success of the UK's rollout of life-saving vaccines in its fight against COVID-19 continues to take significant strides with another new jab authorised and major milestones expected to be hit next week.

On Thursday, G7 Health Ministers will gather ahead of the leader's summit where the Health Secretary will praise the fantastic efforts of the NHS, volunteers and scientists over the last year in developing and rolling out the vaccine programme at pace.

Next week, it is expected that three quarters of adults will have received their first dose and almost half of all adults will have had their second dose of a vaccine. The UK remains on track to offer the vaccine to all adults by the end of July.

More than 13,000 lives have been saved so far thanks to the vaccines, reinforcing the importance of taking up the offer of a first and second dose when invited.

The G7 Health Ministers' summit follows the announcement that Janssen's single-dose COVID-19 vaccine has been authorised for use by the UK medicines regulator, the MHRA. This is yet another weapon in the UK's fight against the pandemic. Earlier this year, the Janssen vaccine was shown to be 67% effective overall in preventing COVID-19 infection and 85% effective in preventing severe disease or hospitalisation.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Vaccines are saving lives, are safe, effective and our way out of this devastating global pandemic. The rollout continues at pace and we are making fantastic progress.

I cannot express my thanks enough to every single person involved in making the vaccine programme such an astounding success. Whether it's researchers behind the science, volunteers valiantly taking part in trials, the NHS rolling out the jabs or the public playing

their part to help bring cases down and protect themselves and their loved ones by following the guidance – this really has shown the best of what the British can do.

We are seeing encouraging research of the vaccines' efficacy against variants, so when you get the call, get the jab.

Every week brings with it a new milestone, and recently the NHS invited everyone aged over 30 in England to receive the vaccine, and more than 60 million doses have now been administered overall.

As the data shows, take up of the vaccine has seen extremely encouraging levels, with NHS England announcing the NHS Covid Vaccination Programme has jabbed more than half of people in their 30s in just over a fortnight.

More than five million appointments have been made and 53% of people aged 30-39 have received at least one dose since the programme began opening up to the age group on May 13.

With such huge levels of support and vaccine take-up from the public, there are now over 500,000 people signed up to the Vaccine Research Registry, a register of individuals who are ready and willing to take part in large scale clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines.

The government has also invested £19.3 million into the Cov-Boost study, led by University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, to trial seven vaccines to inform plans for a booster programme.

Notes to editors

Recent milestones:

- This month, it was announced thousands of volunteers will receive a booster COVID-19 vaccine following the launch of a new clinical trial
- Janssen's single-dose COVID-19 vaccine authorised by the [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency \(MHRA\)](#).
- Every adult over 30 now able to book vaccine
- World first COVID-19 vaccine booster study launches in the UK
- More than 13,000 lives have been saved so far thanks to the vaccines, finds a study on vaccine effectiveness

[Artificial Intelligence used at sea for first time](#)

This Operational Experiment (OpEx) on the Type 45 Destroyer (HMS Dragon) and Type 23 Frigate (HMS Lancaster), is using the A.I. applications, Startle and

Sycoiea, which were tested against a supersonic missile threat.

As part of the Above Water Systems programme, led by Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) scientists, the A.I. improves the early detection of lethal threat, accelerates engagement timelines and provide Royal Navy Commanders with a rapid hazard assessment to select the optimum weapon or measure to counter and destroy the target.

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

It's vital that our brave and highly skilled Armed Forces stay ahead of the game for the security of the United Kingdom and our allies.

The Royal Navy's use of A.I. for the first time at sea is an important development in ensuring readiness to tackle threats we may face. I'm proud to see that two Scottish built Royal Navy vessels are at the heart of this exercise in the waters off the Hebrides.

Dstl has worked closely with industry partners Roke (Startle App), CGI (Sycoiea App) and BAE Systems to ensure the new A.I. based applications work alongside existing radar and combat management systems.

The Startle A.I. system is designed to help ease the load on sailors monitoring the 'Air Picture' in the Operations Room, providing live recommendations and alerts.

The Sycoiea system builds upon this with Threat Evaluation and Weapon assignment identifying the nearest threat and how best to deal with it.

Dstl's Programme Manager, Alasdair Gilchrist MBE said:

Dstl has invested heavily in the systems that are installed at the moment, but it's imperative that we continue to invest to make sure that the Royal Navy remains relevant now and in the future.

Being able to bring A.I. onto the ships is a massive achievement, and while we can prove the A.I. works in the labs, actually getting Navy personnel hands on is brilliant.

As outlined in the recent Defence Command Paper, the MOD is committed to investing in A.I. and increased automation to transform capabilities as the Armed Forces adapt to meet future threats.

HMS Lancaster and HMS Dragon are currently trialling the use of A.I. as part of a glimpse into the future of air defence at sea.

HMS Lancaster's Weapon Engineer Officer, Lieutenant Commander Adam Leveridge said:

Observing Startle and Sycoiea augment the human warfighter in real time against a live supersonic missile threat was truly impressive – a glimpse into our highly-autonomous future.

Exercise Formidable Shield is Europe's biggest and most complex air and missile exercise. Designed to improve allied interoperability and capabilities, it is a three-week exercise that carries out live-fire Integrated Air & Missile Defence activity with more than 15 ships, 10 aircraft and around 3,300 military personnel from around the world taking part.

Using NATO command and control reporting structures, ten nations are taking part in the Exercise including Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Held every two years, Formidable Shield will run until 3 June and is led by Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO on behalf of the US Sixth Fleet.

[Dstl brings cutting edge science to large NATO 'at sea' exercise](#)

At-Sea Demonstration Formidable Shield 21 (ASD/FS-21) is a live 2-week exercise bringing together Allied nations in UK waters to demonstrate effective integrated air and missile defence, including interoperability and command and control.

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) is bringing its world-leading scientific expertise to the exercise – a culmination of almost 10 years of research and collaboration with industry partners. Dstl has enabled the latest artificial intelligence (AI) to be brought into the command spaces on a Type 45 destroyer (HMS Dragon) and Type 23 frigate (HMS Lancaster) for the first time, improving the ability to detect threats earlier and providing advice to operators. This will crucially increase engagement timelines and provide the Commanders with tools to support operational decision making.

The exercise is designed to improve allied interoperability in a live-fire joint integrated air and missile defence (IAMD) environment, using NATO command and control reporting structures. Ten nations are participating by sending ships, aircraft, ground assets, and embarked staff in Task Group IAMD, including Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

ASD/FS-21 is a significant exercise, with 15 ships, more than 10 aircraft, and around 3,300 military personnel involved. The exercise is taking place at MOD Hebrides Range in Scotland which is managed by QinetiQ. The range complex occupies 115,000km² of sanitised airspace with unlimited altitude and can be extended for specific trials. This large area makes it ideal for air-launched weapons operations and is a fully instrumented controlled environment which enables the test and evaluation of land, air and sea weapons, systems and training for UK forces and its allies.

Jayne Adamson, Dstl Principal Advisor for Maritime Information Systems and the MTMD Forum's Lead Systems Engineer, said:

A number of key scientists and military advisors will be on board a number ships checking that systems work together with command and control, both tactical and technically. The data will be gathered and used to refine future capabilities' responsiveness to threat, evaluation and weapon assignment.

Dstl has worked closely with BAE Systems and their radar and combat systems, and CGI and Roke who provide the AI threat monitoring systems.

Robin Abbot, Programme Manager, BAE Systems Naval Ships Combat Systems, said:

As a member of the UK Mission Systems Enterprise, we are incredibly proud to support At-Sea Demonstration/Formidable Shield 21. The exercise helps to stress test our integrated combat systems against new and evolving above water threats in a challenging environment. We are delighted to work with Dstl, Roke and CGI to demonstrate the benefits of novel tactical decision aids integrated with an open Combat Management System, deriving requirements for the next generation of operational systems.

Colin Sanderson, Senior Vice President for UK and Australia Secure Operational Systems at CGI, commented:

Automation and AI will help to improve the quality of information presented and support decision making for our Armed Forces in increasingly complex environments. Through our enduring relationship with Dstl we are excited to be taking part in the Formidable Shield exercise to prove the benefits of our applications integrated with open architecture combat systems in a realistic maritime environment.

Roke Managing Director, Paul MacGregor, added:

Roke is proud to support Dstl during the At Sea Demonstration

Formidable Shield 21. This exercise presents an exciting opportunity to further prove our AI threat monitoring system, STARTLE® in a complex operational environment. It will test and enhance our ability to put real-time situational awareness into the hands of the Royal Navy crew, and help to ensure that NATO allied nations are well-equipped to anticipate, prevent and respond to new and emerging threats.

Dstl's ultimate ambition is to develop systems that are complementary and can be integrated with its partner nations' armed forces.

[British Embassy San Jose: call for bids 2021/2022](#)

World news story

The British Embassy in San Jose is now accepting project proposals for the 2021/2022 financial year (August 2021 – January 2022).



UK Government

Thematic areas

The British Embassy San Jose is aiming to support short-term interventions in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, valued at up to US\$20,000 that focus on the following thematic areas:

- Open societies (democracy, human rights, media freedom)
- COVID-19, vaccines, recovery and global health security
- Climate and biodiversity

We are looking for projects that deliver real, measurable results in support of the abovementioned priorities in these countries and are particularly interested in proposals aimed at the following objectives:

- Strengthen democratic governance and rule of law;
- Support the rights of marginalised groups, including through the prevention of human rights violations and strengthening of protections for marginalised groups, such as women and girls, indigenous communities and migrants;
- Support media freedom, including strengthening of responsible journalism, fighting misinformation and improving the enabling environment in which freedom of the press is protected and respected;
- Deliver robust response to and recovery from the pandemic, including Covid-19 variant surveillance and data driven initiatives to tackle the virus. (Proposals in support of this objective must show evidence of matched funding or similar shared commitments.)
- Support delivery of ambitious environmental targets and plans ahead of COP26 and beyond, including technical support and capacity building to institutions, indigenous groups and youth working on climate issues. (Proposals in support of this objective must show evidence of matched funding or similar shared commitments.)
- Support delivery of strong sectoral action to accelerate transitions to clean growth nationally and in the global economy. (Proposals in support of this objective must demonstrate a strong UK link.)

Project bid guidance

- Projects will be funded for the period running from 1 August 2021 to 31 January 2022, with no expectation of continued funding beyond this period;
- Project bids should demonstrate 85% spend by 30 November 2021 and 100% spend by 31 January 2022;
- Proposals must be submitted in United States Dollars (USD) currency;
- Minimum project budget limit: \$5,000;
- Maximum project budget limit: \$20,000.

Project bids will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Alignment with the above mentioned thematic priorities and outcomes;
- Outcomes are achievable within the funding period (1 August 2021 to 31 January 2022);

- Project design includes clear monitoring and evaluation procedures, as well as risk and financial accountability procedures;
- Evidence of sustainability – demonstrating that project benefits continue after the funding ends;
- Alignment with the Paris Agreement, demonstrating that a climate and environmental risk and impact evaluation was done and no environmental harm will be done;
- The organisation’s safeguarding policies ensure protection of beneficiaries, tackle discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity for those with protected characteristics;
- Overall value for money;
- Administration costs should not exceed 10% of the total project budget.

Funding exceptions

Funding cannot be used to finance the following:

- Procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), vaccines, diagnostic tests/materials and COVID-19 related medicines;
- Purchase or maintenance of IT or capital equipment;
- Communications strategies or campaigns.

Key dates

17 June 2021 (midnight)	Deadline for receipt of project proposals
1 July 2021	Implementers informed of bidding round outcome
1 August 2021	Projects begin
30 November 2021	Projects to achieve 85% implementation and spend
31 January 2022	Projects to complete all activities, achieve 100% spend and submit project completion report

Bidding process

- Proposals must be submitted in English using the relevant Project Proposal Form (up to US\$10K or above US\$10K) and Activity Based Budget template provided below;
- All proposals must be received by midnight on 17 June (Central American time). Late proposals will not be considered;
- Proposals must be submitted to Denise.Lewis@fcdo.gov.uk with the subject line “Organisation name – Project Title” and include a point of contact in the body of the email;
- Successful bidders will be notified by 1 July 2021.

Additional information and documentation

All implementers will be expected to sign a standard FCO contract or grant agreement with the Embassy. The terms of the contract or agreement are not negotiable.

As all projects are expected to have achieved 85% spend by 30 November 2021, Activity Based Budgets must reflect this requirement.

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[Search for the next UK City of Culture launched](#)

- The competition is now live and applications are encouraged from towns and cities across the UK
- Winner will have baton passed to them from Coventry – UK City of Culture 2021

UK Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden has today launched the competition to find the UK's next City of Culture.

The competition, delivered by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in collaboration with the devolved administrations, will use culture as a catalyst for levelling up areas outside London and put culture at the heart of their plans to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

The new winner will take on the baton from Coventry and be at the centre of the UK's cultural spotlight for a year.

For the first time, groups of towns will now be able to join together and apply for the title to be awarded to their local area – widening the scope of which areas of the country could benefit.

Towns and cities will need to articulate a strong and unique vision for their future growth, celebrating local heritage and using culture to bring communities together, build a sense of place and inspire local pride. Bidders will also be asked to demonstrate how investment in culture and creativity will drive growth, how they will open up access to culture and to develop partnerships and celebrate links with places across the UK.

UK Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

UK City of Culture is a fantastic showcase of the huge impact culture has in towns and cities across the country. From Derry-Londonderry, to Hull and Coventry, previous winners have shown how the competition can deliver greater cultural participation, drive economic regeneration and boost local pride. I encourage towns and cities across the UK to put forward bids for 2025 and champion their local arts and culture scene. I'm also delighted to confirm the competition will run in future years, as a sign of our

commitment to levelling up culture across the whole of the UK.

Scottish Culture Minister Jenny Gilruth said:

I encourage Scottish towns and cities to take this opportunity to celebrate their local culture and consider bidding to be UK City of Culture in 2025.

The competition can have a transformational impact on host communities and has the potential to bring a major boost to Scotland as we look ahead to the recovery and renewal of the culture sector.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

“The UK City of Culture competition offers a wonderful opportunity for the winning city to make its mark on the UK’s cultural landscape.

“Through raising a city’s creative and cultural profile and drawing in visitors, winning this prestigious title can also provide a real social and economic boost.

“It would be brilliant to bring the prize to Scotland for the first time and I’d strongly urge Scottish towns and cities to get involved.”

UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis said:

As Derry-Londonderry proved in 2013, the UK City of Culture is a prestigious title which served to harness its wonderful heritage and culture to change perceptions of the city, attract investment and create local employment.

I encourage cities in Northern Ireland to enter the 2025 competition to showcase the very best of what Northern Ireland has to offer the UK, as an integral part of the Union.

UK Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

A thriving arts and culture scene has long been at the heart of a successful Wales and will remain so as we recover from the pandemic.

The UK City of Culture competition represents an opportunity to not only bring significant financial investment and regeneration benefits, but also to boost Wales’ established reputation as globally-recognised creative hub.

I encourage towns and cities across Wales to get involved in the competition, to champion hidden talent and promote local art scenes so that we can continue to highlight the unique cultural and artistic talents of Wales.

The future for the competition has also been confirmed, with Oliver Dowden announcing today that UK City of Culture will become a regular event in the country's cultural calendar – running in 2029 and beyond.

The first city to take up the mantle was Derry-Londonderry in 2013, followed by Hull in 2017. The City of Culture title attracted millions of visitors and drew in significant investments for both cities. The cultural programmes have had a lasting positive impact on local people, with surveys showing that communities felt prouder and more positive about the place they live after their City of Culture year.

Bidding for the title in its own right can have a hugely positive impact on a place – helping to bring partners together and develop strategic cultural leadership. To encourage as many places as possible across the UK to bid and to benefit from the UK City of Culture process, DCMS will offer funding of up to £40,000 to up to six longlisted places to help develop their applications.

Coventry City of Culture 2021 is already providing a blueprint for how culture can be at the heart of social and economic recovery. It is expected that Coventry's status as UK City of Culture will see a significant boost in visitor numbers and economic investment with over £110 million in additional investment secured over the 2018-22 period. The programme aims to attract around 5,000 volunteers and create more than 900 jobs.

The bids for the 2025 title will be assessed by an independent panel chaired by Sir Phil Redmond. He is joined this year by Claire McColgan, Director of Culture Liverpool, as Deputy Chair. The panel of 11 members will include representatives for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. It will visit each of the shortlisted cities, to be announced later this year, before each city or town makes a final pitch to become the next UK City of Culture.

The formal application process for the 2025 competition is now open. The winning city or town will be announced in Spring 2022. Prospective bidders will be invited to join a two day workshop in Coventry which will provide further detailed information and advice on the bidding process.

Sir Phil Redmond, UK City of Culture Chair, said:

I am delighted with the announcement of the competition for 2025, with its expected continuance as a regular feature in our cultural calendar. The UK City of Culture years provide the UK with an opportunity to project its creativity to the world while providing cities the opportunity to reevaluate their place in the UK, to come together, forge stronger partnerships and reset both internal and external perceptions as Derry-Londonderry 2013, Hull 2017 and currently Coventry 2021 are experiencing. It is the excuse for

people to talk to each other, rather than at each other.

Martin Sutherland, Chief Executive of Coventry City of Culture Trust, said:

The impact that winning the UK City of Culture title has on a city is huge. Over the last four years in Coventry, we have seen significant investment come into the city as a direct result of being UK City of Culture 2021, leading to an ambitious reimagining of the city's public realm and cultural infrastructure as well as supporting the extraordinary artists, freelancers, cultural organisations and charities that make this youthful and diverse city so exciting. Our year as UK City of Culture has just begun, but we can already sense the long-lasting impact on the city, its business and its communities.

We wish the best of luck to those cities, towns and regions who are competing for the 2025 title.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

[Criteria for UK City of Culture 2025](#)

[Portal to submit an expression of interest](#)

[More information on how to apply for the UK City of Culture expert advisory panel](#)