

[PM call with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon: 9 May 2021](#)

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the First Minister of Scotland.



This afternoon, the Prime Minister spoke to the First Minister of Scotland to congratulate her on her party's success, having secured the largest number of seats in the Scottish Parliament.

They both agreed that their immediate focus should be and is on working together to build back from the pandemic. The Prime Minister stressed how recovery will be more effective if both Governments work together and reiterated his invitation for the First Minister to join a summit meeting to discuss our shared challenges on covid recovery and how we can overcome them.

The Prime Minister also discussed other areas of shared interest as a strong United Kingdom, including setting the green agenda and the COP26 Summit in Glasgow.

The Prime Minister concluded by emphasising the importance of focusing on covid recovery at this time.

Published 9 May 2021

[Government calls on industry for action to resolve rail disruption](#)

- government requests Hitachi set out a comprehensive safety inspection plan, and longer-term repair strategy for damaged Class 800 fleet

- rail industry asked to deliver a rolling stock strategy to provide additional capacity on network, and a rail replacement schedule
- passengers warned disruption expected to continue for some time

The government has asked the rail industry to urgently set out a comprehensive plan to resolve prolonged disruption following the discovery of cracks in Class 800 Series Hitachi trains.

The vast majority of GWR's fleet and a significant number of LNER and TransPennine Express trains have been taken off the network to undergo a full and rigorous inspection, after checks of the Hitachi fleet early on Saturday (8 May 2021) morning first identified cracks on part of the chassis of some trains.

To combat the expected continued delays, Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris has requested a comprehensive plan from Hitachi to identify the extent of the cracking and whether carriages can still run safely with them.

To support this, Hitachi will also be expected to set out a comprehensive inspection regime guaranteeing that safety is prioritised, building on the work that is already underway.

The independent safety regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#) (ORR), will be closely involved in overseeing this work, providing confidence to staff and passengers, while also helping to ensure any issues are rapidly resolved.

The rail industry has also been asked to set out a plan for how it will manage capacity, by moving rolling stock and proposing where alternative trains can be sourced. These will be brought into service as safely and quickly as possible.

The industry has also been asked to deliver a clear rail replacement schedule, including additional bus and coach services that will be in place to help alleviate disruption.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton Harris said:

Today (9 May 2021) I have directed the rail industry to urgently set out a comprehensive plan to ensure services can safely resume as soon as possible.

I expect operators to explore all options for replacement services to help people complete their journeys, and have asked Hitachi for a safety inspection plan, as well as longer term repair strategy.

Our focus is to ensure trains are returned to service as quickly as possible, once they are fully approved as safe. Only then can we start to rebuild a reliable and punctual timetable for passengers.

I also want to thank passengers for their patience during what could be a significant period of prolonged disruption, likely to

continue for some time.

The government has also commissioned Hitachi to present an initial assessment of when they expect problems to be resolved.

The Rail Minister called an urgent meeting with MPs today, to keep them fully updated on progress, with representatives from Hitachi and the train operators.

The department is working closely with operators to determine what level of train service is able to run into next week and are doing everything possible to minimise the impact on passengers, although significant disruption is expected throughout next week.

[COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma visits summit partner Italy](#)

Press release

The COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma will arrive in Italy, the UK's COP26 partner, tomorrow for talks to ensure we deliver an ambitious outcome at the summit in November.



- Mr Sharma to meet Italian President and ministers
- Italy is the UK's partner for hosting crucial COP26 climate summit
- Visit marks the next step on the President-Designate's work with countries to make COP26 a success

Mr Sharma is expected to meet senior government figures including the President of the Senate Maria Casellati and Ecological Transition Minister, Roberto Cingolani, as well as young climate activists and international organisations such as the International Fund For Agricultural Development.

During his visit, Mr Sharma will underline how important the UK and Italy's

close relationship is, as we work as partners to make COP26 and our G7 and G20 Presidencies a success for climate action.

The President-Designate has been travelling extensively ahead of the summit in Glasgow this November. He has been taking the Presidency's four goals for COP26 across the world: limit warming to 1.5 degrees, adapting to protect communities and natural habitats, mobilising climate finance and working together to accelerate action.

In Italy he will make it especially clear how vital it is to support countries vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This means making progress towards reaching the annual commitment developed countries made to raise \$100bn in climate finance each year.

Ahead of the trip, COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma said:

"I am immensely grateful to our COP26 partners Italy for the close relationship we have built together as we work towards a successful outcome from the summit in Glasgow this November.

"Both our countries recognise how urgently the world needs to act if we are to keep the chance of warming to 1.5C alive and protect our planet and people from the intensifying impacts of climate change.

"As hosts of the G7 and G20 respectively, the UK and Italy have a unique opportunity to demonstrate global climate leadership this year, and I look forward to meeting a range of ministers, organisations and climate negotiators."

Notes to editors:

The COP26 President Designate will be in Rome from Monday 10 May to Tuesday 11 May

Other recent travel includes Denmark, Japan and the Vatican City.

Published 9 May 2021

[COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma to visit Vatican City](#)

Press release

COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma will arrive at the Vatican City tomorrow to meet with Church figures to discuss the importance of faith

leadership in tackling climate change



- Mr Sharma to meet leading Vatican figures including Cardinal Parolin
- Catholic Church key in promoting all-of-society approach to climate action
- Visit marks the next step on the President-Designate's work with countries to make COP26 a success

Mr Sharma is expected to meet Cardinal Parolin of the Holy See, as well as other Vatican leaders central in encouraging climate action on behalf of the Catholic Church.

The President-Designate has been travelling extensively ahead of the summit in Glasgow this November. He has been taking the Presidency's four goals for COP26 across the world: limit warming to 1.5 degrees, adapting to protect communities and natural habitats, mobilising climate finance and working together to accelerate action.

In the Vatican City he will make it especially clear how important it is that the international community unites to support people who are most vulnerable to the impacts of the changing climate in the run up to COP26.

Particularly, how together we can help secure climate finance and debt solutions to support a green and resilient recovery from COVID-19 in the world's poorest countries.

He will also express how pleased the UK is that the Pope last year committed the Vatican to achieving net zero by 2050.

Ahead of the trip, COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma said:

"I am delighted to be visiting the Vatican City to learn about steps Catholics are taking around the world on climate change.

"I am encouraged by the Catholic Church's recognition of how urgently the world needs to act if we are to limit warming to 1.5C and protect our planet and people from the intensifying impacts of climate change."

"Faith groups have a vital role to play in raising awareness and ambition around the world. Only through everyone working together can we bring about real change and leave COP26 with a successful outcome."

Notes to editors:

The COP26 President Designate will be in the Vatican City on Monday 10 May

Other recent travel includes Denmark, Japan. He will move on to Italy after the Vatican City.

Published 9 May 2021

[44,000 trees to be planted as Urban Tree Challenge Fund reopens](#)

Thousands of trees will be planted near schools and healthcare centres and in areas with fewer trees and higher social deprivation, as the [Urban Tree Challenge Fund](#) has re-opened for applications, Defra and the Forestry Commission announced today.

Across the country 44,000 large trees will be planted in towns and cities. These will support areas to improve health and wellbeing and help connect people to the outdoors.

[Evidence from Forest Research](#) shows the majority of adults surveyed agreed that their level of happiness when in nature has increased compared to before the pandemic. The new trees will also play a crucial role in the fight against climate change, supporting the UK's journey to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and commitment to increase tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares of trees a year by 2025.

Today's announcement comes ahead of the government setting out its wider plans on how it intends to deliver on its tree planting commitment. A new action plan for trees and woodland will be published shortly to outline how government will plant new high-quality, well-managed trees and woodlands and improve the condition and resilience of existing ones.

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund has reopened following the [success of the first two rounds](#) where a combined total of up to 134,000 new trees will be planted across England's towns and cities.

Forestry Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

I am delighted to announce the reopening of this hugely successful fund, made possible by £6 million from our Nature for Climate Fund. Ahead of our forthcoming ambitious action plan for trees, woodland and forestry, and to complement our manifesto ambition to have every new street lined with trees, the Urban Tree Challenge Fund

provides a fantastic example of how trees can be planted, managed and enjoyed to provide the greatest impact – in areas where they are needed most.

Forestry Commission Chair Sir William Worsley said:

The pandemic has shown us just how important trees and nature are, wherever you live.

Through targeting funding toward areas where they will have the biggest benefits, including near healthcare and educational facilities, this fund will deliver increased benefits for health and wellbeing, as well as contributing towards the government's ambition to increase woodland creation across England.

Illustrating the success of the fund to date, Slough Borough Council have planted over 8,500 trees under the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. Through the delivery of diverse community-led tree planting projects, the Council have seen wider health and educational benefits to the general public, students and schools, stakeholders and community groups.

Louise Handley at Slough Council said:

The funding from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund has allowed us to bring post Covid initiatives to the most deprived areas of our community, which focus on up skilling for employment, active lifestyles, citizen science and volunteering.

The design of the Urban Forest has facilitated a move away from close mown grass cutting regimes to one of biodiversity improvement and habitat creation. This initiative has the potential to reach all of Slough's population and its flora and fauna.

Over the next two years, up to £6 million will be available for planting in addition to necessary maintenance payments. The grants are administered by the Forestry Commission, and successful applicants are match-funding the money they receive.

Grants will fund the planting of trees and the first three years of their care to ensure they can flourish into the future.

Also being announced today is a new £1 million Woods into Management Innovation Fund which is due to open in May and will focus on improving the condition of existing woodlands. The aim of this scheme, as part of government's Nature for Climate Fund, is to increase the area of woodland in active management to improve their ecological condition, help them adapt to a changing climate and recover from the impacts of pests and diseases. The scheme is aimed at forestry businesses and conservation organisations who are

in a position to help owners better manage their existing woodlands.

This is part of a series of Nature for Climate Fund announcements this spring, leading up to the publication of the government's action plan on trees, woodland and forestry.

In recent months, we have announced the opening of the [Local Authority Treescapes Fund](#), [£12.1 million of investment for tree planting in Community Forests](#) across the country, as well as a [funding boost and new woodland creation partnership between Defra and Forest for Cornwall](#), and a [£3.9 million pot to support innovative planting schemes](#) in towns and cities and near rivers to reduce flood risk.

[Apply for the Urban Tree Challenge fund here.](#)