

PM Build Back Better Business Council

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson co-chaired the second meeting of the Build Back Better Business Council



Prime Minister Boris Johnson this afternoon co-chaired the second meeting of the Build Back Better Business Council with the Chancellor.

Together with Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng and Trade Secretary Liz Truss, they set out how to drive forward the Plan for Growth as part of ambitions to make 2021 the year of economic recovery, and welcomed views from Council members on how businesses can help best deliver it.

They discussed the aims of the Plan for Growth, which is the Government's longer-term growth strategy to unite and level up the country, support our transition to net zero by 2050, and cement our position as a Global Britain – backed by investment in infrastructure, skills and innovation. Its publication came alongside the recent Budget, which the Chancellor reiterated will get UK businesses back on their feet, help them grow and seize new opportunities as we build back better from the pandemic.

A key part of today's Council meeting considered the innovation pillar of the Plan for Growth, as the Business Secretary set the direction for the Government's upcoming Innovation Strategy, which is expected this Summer. They discussed the importance of investing in new ideas, products and processes, and with the right financial backing, how this will be key to delivering on priorities such as reaching our ambitious climate change targets.

Ahead of the meeting, the Chancellor and Business Secretary wrote an open letter to businesses on the Plan for Growth.

Published 30 March 2021

Surge testing to be deployed in targeted areas in Bolton

Press release

We are taking swift and decisive action by making extra testing available to control and suppress the coronavirus (COVID-19) variant first identified in South Africa.



Working in partnership with the local authority, additional testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed in an area of Wingates Industrial Estate within the BL5 postcode in Bolton, where one case of the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found.

Enhanced contact tracing is used for individuals testing positive with a variant of concern. This is where contact tracers look back over an extended period in order to determine the route of transmission. Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help increase our understanding of COVID-19 variants and their spread within these areas.

Individuals working within this targeted area are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test when offered, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

People with symptoms should [book a free test online or by phone](#) so they can get tested at a testing site or have a testing kit sent to them at home. Those without symptoms should visit their [local authority website](#) for more information.

Published 30 March 2021

Joint Statement: WHO-Convened COVID-19 Origins Study

Joint Statement on the WHO-Convened COVID-19 Origins Study.

The Governments of Australia, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America remain steadfast in our commitment to working with the World Health Organization (WHO), international experts who have a vital mission, and the global community to understand the origins of this pandemic in order to improve our collective global health security and response. Together, we support a transparent and independent analysis and evaluation, free from interference and undue influence, of the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, we join in expressing shared concerns regarding the recent WHO-convened study in China, while at the same time reinforcing the importance of working together toward the development and use of a swift, effective, transparent, science-based, and independent process for international evaluations of such outbreaks of unknown origin in the future.

The mission of the WHO is critical to advancing global health and health security, and we fully support its experts and staff and recognize their tireless work to bring an end to the COVID-19 pandemic, including understanding how the pandemic started and spread. With such an important mandate, it is equally essential that we voice our shared concerns that the international expert study on the source of the SARS-CoV-2 virus was significantly delayed and lacked access to complete, original data and samples. Scientific missions like these should be able to do their work under conditions that produce independent and objective recommendations and findings. We share these concerns not only for the benefit of learning all we can about the origins of this pandemic, but also to lay a pathway to a timely, transparent, evidence-based process for the next phase of this study as well as for the next health crises.

We note the findings and recommendations, including the need for further studies of animals to find the means of introduction into humans, and urge momentum for expert-driven phase 2 studies. Going forward, there must now be a renewed commitment by WHO and all Member States to access, transparency, and timeliness. In a serious outbreak of an unknown pathogen with pandemic potential, a rapid, independent, expert-led, and unimpeded evaluation of the origins is critical to better prepare our people, our public health institutions, our industries, and our governments to respond successfully to such an outbreak and prevent future pandemics. It is critical for independent experts to have full access to all pertinent human, animal, and environmental data, research, and personnel involved in the early stages of the outbreak relevant to determining how this pandemic emerged. With all data in hand, the international community may independently assess COVID-19 origins, learn valuable lessons from this pandemic, and prevent future devastating consequences from outbreaks of disease.

We underscore the need for a robust, comprehensive, and expert-led mechanism for expeditiously investigating outbreaks of unknown origin that is conducted with full and open collaboration among all stakeholders and in accordance with the principles of transparency, respect for privacy, and scientific and research integrity. We will work collaboratively and with the WHO to strengthen capacity, improve global health security, and inspire public confidence and trust in the world's ability to detect, prepare for, and respond to future outbreaks.

MHCLG appoints two new non-executive directors

The Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick has appointed two new non-executive directors to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Communities (MHCLG) Departmental Board.

They are Dame Alison Nimmo and Jeffrey Dodds.

Both will take up their new roles on 12 April 2021. The appointments will run for three years.

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

I'm delighted to welcome Alison and Jeff to the board of MHCLG. Their breadth and depth of experience will be vital to shaping our department's important work as we help the country recover and build back better from the pandemic.

Dame Alison Nimmo

Dame Alison currently serves as a non-executive director of the Berkeley Group plc & Imperial College's White City Syndicate.

She is also:

- helping to run a mutual aid programme for Leathermarket JMB, the UK's largest tenant-managed housing organisation
- helping set up a new "Greener Bermondsey" community programme
- advising the King of Bhutan on the establishment of a Royal Commission

to oversee the regeneration of its capital.

Prior roles include:

- Member, then chair, of the CBI's Economic Growth Board, where she helped to steer and inform the CBI's strategy and engagement with government during a time of change and uncertainty.
- Trustee of the UK Green Building Council where she helped champion and shape the strategic direction, focus and good governance. Part of the leadership network driving to net zero.
- Member of Imperial College's Council and chair of the advisory body White City Syndicate, where she oversaw the leadership & governance.
- Commissioner of The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 – a charity established to create an enduring legacy from the Great Exhibition, with the awarding of science research scholarships, and owner of a significant cultural estate, Albertopolis.

Other previous roles include:

Jeffrey Dodds

Jeff is the Chief Operating Officer of Virgin Media, a leading UK telecoms company with 6.1 million cable customers and 3.5 million mobile customers.

He is also the executive sponsor for Virgin Media's 'Belonging' strategy – the company's focus on diversity and inclusion.

Prior to re-joining Virgin Media in 2016, Jeff worked in the Netherlands as the CEO of telecoms company Tele2, overseeing the build and launch of its 4G mobile network.

In addition, Jeff sits on the board of the disability equality organisation The Valuable 500, and previously spent eight years as a trustee and director for Dallaglio Rugby Works, a charity focused on supporting excluded young people.

Jeff has acted as a mentor for the University of Oxford's Ascent mentoring programme – supporting women in business, and the Cultural Diversity Network mentoring scheme.

Jeff has an MBA and an MSc in international marketing.

Further information

MHCLG and the role of the Departmental Board

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is a ministerial department to create great places to work and live, and to give more power to local people to shape what happens in their area.

The Board is chaired by the Secretary of State and includes other ministers, senior officials (the Executive Team), a lead non-executive and a number of non-executive Board members. The Board's focus is on strategic leadership, performance and delivery. The non-executive directors (NEDs) also attend the 'non-ministerial board' which comprises the executive team and the NEDs and whose focus is on organisational effectiveness, people, and forward planning.

The Board operates according to recognised principles of good corporate governance:

- Leadership – communicating a clear vision for the department
- Effectiveness – challenging and scrutinising performance, to ensure our plans are realistic and challenging
- Accountability – promoting the government's goal of transparency through clear and fair reporting
- Sustainability – taking a long-term view about what the department is trying to achieve

[PM call with President Joko Widodo of Indonesia: 30 March 2021](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to President Joko Widodo of Indonesia earlier today.



The Prime Minister spoke to President Joko Widodo of Indonesia earlier today to reaffirm the strong partnership between the UK and Indonesia on climate, trade and international diplomacy.

They discussed the opportunities for collaboration to tackle climate change and protect nature, and the Prime Minister highlighted the importance of setting ambitious 2030 targets to reduce emissions.

The leaders also confirmed their commitment to boost trade and investment between our two countries to support a sustainable recovery from COVID-19.

They discussed the UK and Indonesia's shared concern over the situation in Myanmar, and agreed to continue working together to help restore democracy and safeguard regional stability. The Prime Minister noted the UK's interest in working more closely with ASEAN on a range of international issues.

He looked forward to welcoming President Widodo to COP26 in Glasgow in November.

Published 30 March 2021