

# British High Commission welcomes the start of COVID-19 vaccinations in Fiji

World news story

12,000 doses of the Oxford University/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Fiji on 6 March.



## UK Government

The British High Commission welcomes the start of COVID-19 vaccinations in Fiji today and congratulates the Fijian government on the speed at which is moving ahead with the first stages of its vaccination campaign, following the arriving of 12,000 doses of the Oxford University/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in Fiji on 6 March.

British High Commissioner, H.E. George Edgar, said:

This is a huge step on Fiji's road to recovery from the effects of the Pandemic. As Prime Minister Bainimarama has said, these vaccines represent more than the way back to normal life; they will help boost Fiji's economy and will help reconnect families separated by borders. No one is safe until we're all safe, and that's why the UK is supporting the GAVI. The Vaccine Alliance and their COVAX Advanced Market Commitment, which aims to ensure fair

and equitable access to vaccines so that lower and middle income countries are not left behind.

The UK has led an international effort to get one billion vaccines to the most vulnerable and was one of the first countries to back COVAX with FJ\$1.5bn committed. Our total funding to support the global response to the coronavirus pandemic in developing countries so far comes to FJ\$3.6bn. We have provided around FJ\$5m directly to the World Health Organisation to help Pacific countries prepare for and respond to COVID-19.

The UK Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Rt. Hon Matt Hancock MP, has said it is vital that countries work together to find global solutions:

I'm so pleased to see our Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine – which is having such a positive impact here at home – play such a vital role in saving lives around the world. We want to see it used wherever it can save lives, billions of doses of the Oxford vaccine will be the mainstay of global access.

Fiji is expected to receive 100,800 doses of the Oxford University/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine as its initial provision under COVAX.

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## [Move to boost transport connections across the whole of the UK](#)

- Prime Minister sets out vision to boost connectivity across the UK with improved transport infrastructure at the heart of government's levelling up agenda
- consultation to launch this spring on reforming Air Passenger Duty tax in further step to boost transport connecting the whole of the UK, while we explore new requirements to offset emissions and in parallel continue to decarbonise aviation
- Sir Peter Hendy's interim report into transport connectivity outlines potential for a UK Strategic Transport Network, with £20 million committed to develop plans

Prime Minister Boris Johnson today (10 March 2021) sets out his vision to build back better from coronavirus (COVID-19) by boosting transport connectivity across and between the whole of the UK, as part of ambitions to

level up across the country.

The government will also consult on cutting Air Passenger Duty (APD) on internal UK flights and will commit £20 million to develop plans for upgraded rail, road, sea and air links.

The measures were announced following the [interim report](#) of Sir Peter Hendy's [union connectivity review](#), published today. [In June, Sir Peter Hendy CBE was tasked by the Prime Minister with exploring ways in which transport can better connect all parts of the United Kingdom.](#)

Sir Peter Hendy's report sets out how a UK Strategic Transport Network would help deliver this ambition. Such a network would significantly expand and upgrade direct transport connections in the UK across road, rail, sea and air, helping to reduce delays and bottlenecks, and stimulate economic growth. Improving rail links helps cut carbon emissions and so, as well as considering how transport links can better connect the UK, the Prime Minister will consider their environmental and social impact – taking into account how they will improve the quality of life of the people that use them.

The potential network will now form the main focus of Sir Peter's continuing investigations, with his final report in the summer looking to identify specific transport upgrades that could form the backbone of the network's ambitions.

To jump-start some of the projects identified by Sir Peter, the government has today committed £20 million towards exploring the development of projects such as:

- improved rail connectivity between the north coast of Wales and England
- upgrading the A75 between Gretna, Dumfries and Stranraer – a key route for south-west Scotland and Northern Ireland but almost entirely single-carriageway
- significantly faster rail links from England to Scotland, including looking at options to enhance the West Coast Main Line
- rail improvements in south-east Wales, building on ideas from the [Welsh Government's Burns Commission](#)

The government is also announcing that the consultation on aviation tax reform, announced at [Budget 2020](#), will be published in spring 2021.

The consultation will include options to change the APD treatment for domestic flights, such as reintroducing a return leg exemption or creation of a new lower domestic rate.

In addition to looking at the case for increasing the number of international distance bands, we will continue to decarbonise domestic aviation as part of our ambition to reach net zero, including through mandating the use of sustainable aviation fuels. All domestic aviation emissions are captured in carbon budgets.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

It's now time to build back better in a way that brings every corner of the UK closer together. We will harness the incredible power of infrastructure to level up parts of our country that have too long been left off the transport map.

This pioneering review by Sir Peter Hendy gives us the tools we need to deliver on our ambitions for a UK-wide transport network that encompasses sea, rail, and road – and I also want to cut passenger duty on domestic flights so we can support connectivity across the country.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

As we build back better from COVID-19, it is more important than ever that we level up every corner of our great country.

High-quality transport infrastructure is key to achieving that, which is why we are committed to boosting connectivity and bringing communities across the UK even closer together.

The government will work closely with devolved administrations on development studies. For example, the UK government will work closely with the Scottish Government on any feasibility study on the A75.

Sir Peter has spoken with over 100 organisations and received nearly 150 submissions to his [call for evidence](#). As a result, he has been able to identify some of the most pressing issues involved in connecting all parts of the UK.

Sir Peter Hendy CBE said:

Devolution has been good for transport, but it has also led to a lack of attention to connectivity between the 4 nations, due to competing priorities and complex funding.

A UK Strategic Transport Network could resolve this, with its core objective centred around levelling up across the whole of the UK.

The government will receive the final union connectivity review recommendations ahead of the Spending Review, where it will consider and confirm funding plans for delivering improved connectivity across the UK.

The review into boosting the transport options connecting the UK sits squarely at the centre of the government's levelling up agenda, with focus on providing high-quality transport infrastructure to communities that have been passed over for investment in previous decades a key pillar of the plans.

While the review looks to the future, the government continues to support current union connectivity measures and recently provided a further £4.3

million to fund a 2-year extension to the vital flight route between City of Derry Airport and London Stansted – beginning on 1 April 2021 – which will boost local economies on both sides.

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## Electrical appliances to be cheaper to run and last longer with new standards

- New tighter rules for how much energy white goods like washing machines and fridges as well as TVs can use will help save British consumers £75 a year on their energy bills
- manufacturers required to make spare parts for products available for the first time – helping extend the lifespan of products by up to 10 years and preventing them ending up on the scrap heap sooner than they should
- new energy labels introduced as part of UK plans to drive up product standards and build back greener

Fridges, washing machines and televisions will soon be cheaper to run, easier to repair and will last longer thanks to plans for new energy efficiency legislation announced by UK government today (Wednesday 10 March).

Ministers are set to introduce tough new rules for electrical products to tackle ‘premature obsolescence’ – a short lifespan deliberately built into an appliance by manufacturers which leads to unnecessary and costly replacements for the consumer.

From this Summer, manufacturers will be legally obliged to make spare parts for products available to consumers for the first time – a new legal right for repairs – so that electrical appliances can be fixed easily. The move is expected to extend the lifespan of products by up to 10 years – preventing appliances ending up on the scrap heap sooner than they should and reducing carbon emissions at the same time. The UK generates around 1.5 million tonnes of electrical waste every year.

The changes will also set far higher energy-efficiency standards for electrical products which, overall, will save consumers an average of £75 a year on energy bills. They will cut 8 mega tonnes of carbon emissions in 2021 by reducing the amount of energy products consume over their life-time – the equivalent of removing all emissions from Birmingham and Leeds each year.

Business and Energy Secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, said:

Our plans to tighten product standards will ensure more of our electrical goods can be fixed rather than thrown on the scrap heap, putting more money back in the pockets of consumers whilst

protecting the environment.

Going forward, our upcoming energy efficiency framework will push electrical products to use even less energy and material resources, saving people money on their bills and reducing carbon emissions as we work to reach net zero by 2050.

Meanwhile, from 1 March, new energy labels have also been introduced which simplify the way energy efficiency is displayed on a new scale from A-G. Today the vast majority of appliances are classified as A+, A++ or A+++. The new labels will improve the old system by raising the bar for each class, meaning very few appliances will now be classified as A.

The changes will provide more accurate information on energy efficiency, incentivising manufacturers to go further. They are also designed to encourage consumers to buy more energy efficient products, and boost people's confidence in the environmental credentials of the products they are buying. Now the UK is an independent nation outside the EU, the EU emblem on energy efficiency labels has also been replaced with the Union Flag.

Climate Change Minister, Lord Callanan, said:

We can all play our part in ending our contribution to climate change, even when we're choosing a new electrical appliance. The new energy labels we have introduced this week will help consumers make more informed decisions about how eco-friendly one smart TV or dishwasher is over another, helping us reduce our carbon footprint and build back greener.

Head of International Collaboration at Energy Saving Trust, Emilie Carmichael, said:

This is another positive step in raising the minimum energy performance for domestic products. Simplifying the way energy efficiency is displayed on labels will help consumers to make more informed choices to reduce their energy consumption and bills. Equally, every small step that consumers take in choosing the most efficient appliances will help the UK in reaching its net zero targets.

The government is also today publishing a summary of responses to a recent call for evidence on energy-related products, which explored the scope for introducing even more ambitious climate-friendly policy for energy consuming appliances now the UK has left the EU transition period. This work feeds into a forthcoming policy framework, which the Prime Minister included in his [10 Point Plan for a green industrial revolution](#).

The government consulted on updated [Ecodesign and Energy Labelling](#)

[Regulations for a range of industrial and domestic energy-related products](#) between September and November 2020, and we have now published the government response. These measures are estimated to lead to energy savings of 21.5 terawatt hours and savings of 1.7 mega tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent by 2050.

Ecodesign policies saved 45 mega tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent in the UK between 2010 and 2019.

Altogether, ecodesign measures for a range of energy-related products are estimated to save consumers £75 on their energy bills and save 8 mega tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent in 2021 – the equivalent of the average yearly carbon emissions of 12 million homes.

From 1 March 2021 retailers have been required to display a re-scaled energy label alongside washing machines, dishwashers, household fridges, and electronic displays at the point of sale. The re-scaled labels will better communicate a product's efficiency relative to other models on the market, so that consumers can make more informed purchasing decisions.

The draft Regulations will apply in Great Britain and reflect what was agreed by the UK as a Member State at EU level in December 2018 and January 2019. In accordance with the Northern Ireland Protocol, EU Ecodesign and Energy Labelling Regulations will continue to apply in Northern Ireland.

BEIS aims to lay Regulations before Parliament this Spring to bring these requirements into force in Great Britain in the Summer.

In June 2020, the UK government published a Call for Evidence on energy-related products inviting views on how the UK can maximise the benefits of energy-related products policy following the end of the transition period. Today we [published the summary of responses to that Call for evidence](#).

A second [consultation on draft ecodesign and energy labelling regulations for lighting products](#) closed on 27 January 2021. The government is analysing the feedback and will issue its response in due course.

It is estimated that the UK generated approximately 1.5 million tonnes of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) in 2017: find out more at [Valpak EEE Flow 2018 Report](#).

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## [Foreign Secretary visits “like-minded” Baltic and Nordic states ahead of Integrated Review](#)

The visit to a cluster of like-minded Nordic and Baltic states, comes as the

government prepares for the publication of the Integrated Review – its ambitious new vision for British foreign, defence and development policy.

The most comprehensive review since the Cold War, it will define the Government's ambition for the UK's role in the world and the long-term strategic aims for national security, development and foreign policy, including through enhancing partnerships with nations such as these.

Ahead of the visit, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The security threat posed by Russia is felt most keenly by its neighbours. The UK is committed to standing with our close friends in the Nordic and Baltic regions, both militarily as well as in tackling Russia's disinformation and destabilising regional activity.

In the face of challenges such as climate change and protecting the polar regions, the need for like-minded nations to come together has never been more important.

Dominic Raab, will visit Tallinn today (10 March) to meet the Estonian President and attend talks with the group of three Baltic states – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – to discuss regional security and building back better from covid-19. While in Estonia, the Foreign Secretary will sign an agreement with Estonia to reaffirm our defence partnership and cement the UK-Estonia relationship.

He will then travel to Oslo on 11 March to hold talks with the Norwegian Foreign Minister and Development Minister. He will also attend talks with the group of Foreign Ministers of the five Nordic nations – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – to discuss climate change and international security, including threats from hostile states.

In Norway, the Foreign Secretary will sign a memorandum of understanding with Norway to drive forward future science and research cooperation on the polar regions, an important milestone ahead of the UK hosting the COP26 climate conference.

2021 is a significant year for the UK in the polar regions. It marks the 60th anniversary of the entry into force of the Antarctic Treaty, the 30th anniversary of the signing of its Protocol on Environmental Protection, and the 30th anniversary of the UK Arctic Research Station in Svalbard, Norway.

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# £20 million fund fuels search for electric vehicle innovations

- £20 million competition launched for innovative electric vehicle (EV) projects during British Science Week
- previous winners include pop-up EV chargers and hydrogen-fuelled ambulances
- funding to help the UK transition towards all new cars and vans being zero emission by 2035, as the government builds back greener

Innovative ideas for zero-emission vehicles could benefit from a share of £20 million in funding announced today (10 March 2021).

The government is launching a [research and development competition, open to some of the most promising electric vehicle technology innovations](#). This could include zero emission emergency vehicles, charging technology or EV battery recycling.

[Video about the £20 million research fund](#)

This investment will help ensure the UK remains a world leader in EV design and manufacture, which could create around 6,000 skilled jobs over the next decade, helping us to build back greener.

The government has also today published its [response to the consultation on ending the sale of petrol and diesel cars and vans](#). This cements our commitment to phasing out new vehicles of this kind by 2030, and for all new cars and vans to be zero-emission at the tailpipe by 2035.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Investing in innovation is crucial in decarbonising transport, which is why I'm delighted to see creative zero-emission projects across the UK come to life.

The funding announced today will help harness some of the brightest talent in the UK tech industry, encouraging businesses to become global leaders in EV innovation, creating jobs and accelerating us towards our net-zero ambitions.

Among the previous winners is a zero emission ambulance prototype for London Ambulance Service. Designed by ULEMCo, the ambulance can reach speeds of 90 mph and travel an average of 200 miles a day with zero emissions.

Another successful bidder was tech start-up Urban Foresight, which was given £3 million to develop pop-up chargers that rise up out of the pavement to provide a discreet, safe and low-cost EV charging solution to those without off-street parking.

Simon Edmonds, Deputy Executive Chair and Chief Business Officer, Innovate UK said:

Innovations to increase the uptake of zero-emission vehicles will make our air cleaner while supporting innovative UK businesses. Innovate UK has played a crucial role in helping businesses bring their innovations towards reality and we urge those innovators with bright ideas to apply for this vital funding.

Khadir Meer, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive of London Ambulance Service, said:

London Ambulance Service has the largest and busiest ambulance fleet in the country. We want to play our part in making the capital a cleaner, better place to live, and our work with ULEMCo and Innovate UK is a big step towards doing that.

Our ambition is for London to have the greenest, cleanest and safest ambulances that provide the best environment to deliver outstanding care to Londoners.

Gary McRae, Head of Electric Mobility at Urban Foresight, said:

We are delighted to see the next phase of funding announced through IUK, that will help accelerate the uptake of EVs in the UK and encourage businesses to get involved in this exciting and fast-moving industry.

The Office for Zero Emission Vehicles funding has really supported Urban Foresight's growth over the last few years, helping us to collaborate with likeminded organisations and public bodies to bring new and innovative products to market.

Find out more and apply for funding at [Transitioning towards Zero Emission Vehicles](#) and [Niche Vehicle Network](#).