

PM call with Chancellor Merkel: 8 February 2021

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to German Chancellor Merkel.



The Prime Minister spoke to German Chancellor Merkel this evening.

The leaders discussed the difficult road ahead on the coronavirus pandemic and agreed that governments should continue to work together to roll out vaccines around the world. They discussed the importance of support for the COVAX vaccine distribution scheme to ensure equitable vaccine access and resolved to cooperate closely through the G7 and beyond on our shared fight against coronavirus.

The Prime Minister and Chancellor Merkel discussed efforts to tackle climate change and reduce global emissions. The Prime Minister welcomed German leadership in this area and looked forward to our governments working closely together in the run-up to the UK-hosted COP26 Summit.

The leaders discussed a number of international issues including the situations in Afghanistan, Libya and Iran. The Prime Minister underlined the value of UK-German cooperation in these areas, both bilaterally and as NATO allies. Both leaders condemned Russia's ongoing detention of Alexey Navalny. The Prime Minister reiterated the need for Russia to declare its Novichok programme and uphold its international obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Prime Minister and Chancellor Merkel looked forward to seeing one another as soon as the coronavirus situation allowed.

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UK Statement: Human Rights Council organisational meeting

Thank you Madam President

I wish to join others in warmly congratulating you on your election as President. We know that we are in extremely capable hands and you can count on our support in your difficult work ahead this year.

I would like to inform the Council about three resolutions that the UK intends to present as part of Core Groups. The Syria Core Group intends to present a resolution on the Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic during the 46th session. The resolution will seek to renew the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria, and mark the tenth anniversary of the beginning of conflict and reflect key human rights concerns

The Core Group on Sri Lanka comprising Canada, Germany, Montenegro, North Macedonia and the United Kingdom will present a further resolution on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka. The resolution will be informed by the recent report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On South Sudan, in partnership with the other Core Group members Albania and Norway, the UK will present a draft resolution at the 46th session, which we anticipate will cover, amongst other possible topics, the comprehensive report of the Commission of Human Rights in South Sudan, due to be presented to the Council in this session.

All of the Core Groups will hold informal negotiations and we hope that all Council members will be able to support the proposed resolutions.

I would also like inform all delegations that on the first day of the Council, the UK Mission will host a high-level virtual event on Girls Education and Building Back Better from COVID-19. We will inform delegations more about this event in the coming days.

Thank you Madam President

Launching the Independent Review of Construction Frameworks

Lord Agnew is pleased to announce the appointment of Professor David Mosey of King's College London to lead an objective, independent review of public

sector frameworks. This review recognises the potential of frameworks as a powerful engine-room for implementing [Construction Playbook](#) policies that include strategic planning, integrated teams, continuous improvement and the delivery of better, safer, faster and greener project outcomes.

The Framework Review will lead to recommendations for:

- the components of a ‘gold standard’ against which new proposed frameworks and framework contracts can be measured
- standard contract terms that support the new gold standard
- training packages to enable adoption of the new gold standard

This will enable contracting authorities to easily identify those frameworks which meet best practices and embody the policies set out in the playbook.

The Construction Playbook was launched on 8 December 2020 containing 14 key policy reforms to enable ‘faster, better, greener’ construction by transforming how we assess, procure and deliver public works projects and programmes.

One of these key policy reforms is ‘Effective Contracting’, designed to ensure that contracts are structured to support an exchange of data, collaboration, improve value and manage risk with clear expectations for continuous improvement and consistent with the principles contained within the Construction Playbook.

The Construction Playbook contains a commitment to undertaking a review of current construction frameworks, this is integral to achieving the aims of effective contracting.

Commercial frameworks have been proven to provide a powerful tool for strategic planning, integrated teams, continuous improvement and the delivery of better, safer, faster and greener project outcomes. Across the public and private sectors, there are a wide variety of frameworks and a lack of clear guidance as to their preferred structure and ‘best practice’ features. As a result, the potential of frameworks is not always well expressed or well understood and they are not always successful in delivering their aims.

Recommendations for the adoption and use of the most suitable framework structures and features are necessary in order to provide clear drivers that will deliver the policies set out in the Construction Playbook.

[Capacity Market auction parameters:](#)
[open letter from BEIS to National Grid](#)

ESO, January 2021

Letter from Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth to National Grid Electricity System Operator (NG:ESO) setting out adjustments to the auction parameters for the 1-year ahead (T-1) auction for the delivery year 2021 to 2022, and the 4-year ahead (T-4) auction for the delivery year 2024 to 2025.

It is accompanied by a letter from the Panel of Technical Experts outlining their view on the NG:ESO's analysis of potential impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020 Electricity Capacity Report recommendations.

£9 million fund opens to railway innovators and inventors

- First of a Kind competition offers share of £9 million prize to rail ideas of tomorrow
- previous investment has driven forward UK's first hydrogen train, live seat rebooking and technology to remove age-old challenge of 'leaves on the line'
- Rail Minister launches competition with speech at the [Rail Innovation Exhibition](#)

A new £9 million competition to find cutting-edge ideas set to transform the future of the railways has opened today, as Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris and [Innovate UK](#) launched the [2021 First of a Kind \(FOAK\) competition](#).

Focused on developing pioneering technology and exceptional ideas that can improve journeys for passengers and decarbonise the rail network, FOAK is now entering its fifth round, with a particular focus on supporting innovations that make the network cleaner, greener and more passenger-friendly.

To date, the competition has seen the Department for Transport (DfT) and Innovate UK invest around £25 million to develop projects including:

- HydroFLEX – the first mainline testing of a hydrogen train
- inspection drones capable of rapidly assessing the safety of rail infrastructure
- controlled water addition to remove the notorious problems caused by leaves on the line
- concrete slabs that automatically heat up to prevent icy platforms and passengers slipping
- a 'sound-bending' wall to minimise the noise of passing trains in urban

areas

- hydrogen-based steam turbines to drive zero-emission, low-noise rail freight

To mark the launch, Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris addressed the Rail Innovation Exhibition and reaffirmed the continued efforts that are being made to drive innovation within the rail industry and establish new technologies to build the railway of tomorrow.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

This country pioneered the railway, and that spirit of innovation and ingenuity has never been more vital as we look to build back better from this pandemic.

Our railways will underpin this country's economic recovery and help realise our ambitions of a carbon-neutral future. Through initiatives like the First of a Kind competition, we are investing today to build the railway of tomorrow.

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

A greener railway, easier for everyone, with a better experience for users is the aim of this competition.

Delivered by Innovate UK on behalf of the DfT and through the [Small Business Research Initiative](#), it seeks the best and brightest ideas.

Innovative companies all over the UK have proved their mettle in previous rounds of this scheme. Now we call again for even more fresh thinking to help deliver a better and greener railway that delivers for passengers and freight users.

Organisations have until 10 March 2021 to bid for funding. In 2020, 25 projects received a share of £9.4 million of funding.

Past winners who have benefitted from investment include HydroFLEX, who used funding received from FOAK in both 2019 and 2020 to develop the UK's first full-size hydrogen-powered train to be run on the mainline railway. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps visited the site in September 2020 to see the project, which is now developing the first hydrogen-powered passenger train.

Another previous winner is Seatfrog for their project 'Train Swap', enabling passengers to quickly and remotely update their seat reservation to an alternative service, and giving train operating companies the ability to move passengers proactively, managing load across the network. This innovation could help the industry adapt to the pandemic and ensure appropriate social

distancing on services.

Dr Stuart Hillmansen, HydroFLEX's Technical Lead, said:

It is fantastic to see our early fundamental research on the application of fuel cells in the railway sector being implemented and delivering real benefits for today's railway.

James Eyton, Seatfrog's Chief Financial Officer, said:

The DfT and Innovate UK are incredible supporters of technology start-ups and scale-ups in the UK, providing funding to drive innovation that enhances passenger experience.

At Seatfrog, this funding has enabled us to fast-track our product development of Train Swap, delivering the fastest and easiest way to change your train in the UK.