

[HS2 Eastern Leg spot safeguarding](#)

I am today publishing [additional safeguarding directions](#) for the High Speed Two (HS2) railway for the West Midlands to Leeds (known as the Phase 2b Eastern Leg) section of the HS2 route to reflect the latest design of the HS2 railway.

Please note that the final design of the HS2 Phase 2b Eastern Leg and its integration with Northern Powerhouse Rail will be determined by the government's integrated rail plan, that I aim to publish early this year.

The latest safeguarding update includes a site east of Leeds. The site required by the HS2 rail project would support the potential integration between HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail.

The developer of the site has been made aware of the safeguarding directions prior to their publication as has the local planning authority, Leeds City Council.

By protecting the site now, the government guards against potentially conflicting development, which could otherwise disrupt the construction of HS2, as well as the risk of increased costs of building the new railway.

This protects the public's interest in spending taxpayer money in a proportionate fashion. The government periodically reviews land requirements needed for the project and updates the extent of safeguarding accordingly.

It's anticipated that the land requirements for Phase 2b of HS2 for the Crewe to Manchester (known as the Phase 2b Western Leg) section of the route will be updated prior to the deposit of the relevant hybrid bill.

A copy of the safeguarding directions will be placed in the libraries of both Houses for record, and are publicly accessible online.

[Two new UK Government Covid testing sites open in Fife](#)

The UK Government has today, Thursday 21 January, opened two new walk-through coronavirus testing centres in Fife at Glenrothes Miners Charitable Society in Glenrothes (KY7 5NL) and Dell Farquharson House in Dunfermline (KY12 7DS).

The centres are part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises of six drive through sites, 28 walk-through sites, 21 mobile units, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse

Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

In Scotland, the UK Government is providing all Covid testing and test processing outside of the NHS. Around two thirds of all daily tests are provided by the UK Government, in support of Scotland's health services.

Tests must be booked in advance at [NHS Inform](#) or by calling 0800 028 2816. People should only book a test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste).

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

To respond to the coronavirus, we have built a major testing and tracing system from scratch. We are constantly working to expand and improve it with new technologies and innovations so everyone with symptoms can get a test.

New walk-through sites like this one makes it even easier to get a test no matter where you live. If you have symptoms of coronavirus, I urge you to book a test today and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted to protect others and stop the spread of the virus.

Baroness Dido Harding, Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection, said:

Walk-through sites offer communities better access to coronavirus testing, so everyone with symptoms can get a test. This new site is part of our ongoing work to expand our testing network across the UK which now has the capacity to process more than 700,000 tests a day. We will continue to expand capacity to improve test turnaround times and push forward testing innovations to make sure anyone who needs a test can get one.

Please book a test if you have coronavirus symptoms: a new continuous cough, a high temperature and a loss or change in sense of smell or taste, and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

The UK Government is doing everything it can to support people in all parts of the UK through the pandemic.

Testing continues to play an important role in how we manage the virus alongside the roll out of vaccines, helping to identify local outbreaks, slow down the rate of transmission and protect

communities. I would like to thank the public for continuing to do the right thing and come forward to be tested when they display symptoms.

The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of testing in Scotland, with these two new centres in Fife just the latest in our extensive network. We have also secured and paid for millions of doses of the Pfizer and Oxford vaccines for all parts of the UK.

Hope is on the horizon, but we can't let up on our efforts to contain the virus.

NHS Fife Director of Public Health, Dona Milne, said:

NHS Fife Public Health welcomes the introduction of two new walk-through coronavirus testing centres in Fife. The centres are run independently from NHS Fife, by the UK Government.

The two new centres will be located at the Glenrothes Miners Charitable Society in Glenrothes and the Dell Farquharson House in Dunfermline and will help to support local access and capacity for Covid-19 testing.

Simon Venn, Mitie Chief Government & Strategy Officer, said:

Our priority during the pandemic is to support the nation's efforts to fight COVID-19 and help keep the country running. Testing is a critical part of the UK's strategy to combat coronavirus and we're proud to support the UK Government with this vital task. A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline heroes in Fife, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.

Reporting COVID-19 incidents to court and tribunal staff and professional court users

All suspected incidents and / or confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) within our court and tribunal buildings in England and Wales, and tribunals in Scotland, are reported to HMCTS. If you have been in a court or tribunal building and later test positive, you should inform managers in the relevant building at the earliest opportunity, as well as NHS Test and Trace.

If you get a positive test, [NHS Test and Trace](#) or local authorities' own contact tracing teams will contact you and ask you to share information about any [close contacts](#) (as per GOV.UK definitions) you had just before or after you developed symptoms. This information is handled in strict confidence and will only be kept and used in line with data protection laws.

To assist this process, we ask everybody to use the contact tracing app and QR code in our buildings. Contact tracing should only be paused within our buildings in those areas defined in [NHS guidance](#), which includes when behind a fixed Perspex (or equivalent) screen and fully protected from other people, or if storing your phone in a locker or communal area.

Where we are notified of positive (or suspected) cases in any of our buildings – whether that be a member of our staff or other court users – we initiate our own contact-tracing alongside the NHS test and trace service. Where there are two or more cases, we conduct an investigation.

Updating staff and professional court users

We also update local stakeholders and court users of the situation, while maintaining the confidentiality of those directly affected. Updates may contain a combination of the following pieces of information, depending upon the circumstances of each incident:

- date we were informed of suspected incidents and / or positive cases
- date those involved were last in the building (only if it is not shared in a way/with other information which could lead to identification)
- areas of the building in which the individuals concerned have worked for a sustained period of time and/or where they are likely to have come into contact with the public (only if it is not shared in a way/with other information which could lead to identification)
- action taken, for example if a section 16 clean was completed, or if part or all the building will be closed temporarily

Any personal information we collect is only for sharing with public health authorities who may require it as part of any support they provide for complex incidents.

Local health protection teams

In line with what is required of us, we alert local authority public health teams whenever the threshold for reporting is reached and act on their advice. This means that our policies, and how they are implemented at an operational level, are repeatedly reviewed by multiple experts who are independent of HMCTS.

Over three quarters of secondary schools order free period products

More than three quarters of state secondary schools and colleges in England have accessed period products from the free Government scheme, [according to new data](#) released today (Thursday 21 January).

Since the programme launched in January 2020, 9,702 schools and colleges have ordered period products, making them free and available to all their pupils and helping to reduce stigma around menstruation.

The Government is encouraging all schools and colleges to access period products through this scheme, as it is the quickest and simplest way of making sure they are available to everyone who needs them.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

No pupil should ever have to miss school because of their period. I am pleased to see over three quarters of secondary schools and colleges have accessed free period products, but I want everyone to know this support is available.

If you are a school or college leader, I urge you to please get in touch and order these products for your pupils so that together we can help end period inequality for good.

[New data](#) published by the Department for Education shows:

- 68% of secondary schools ordered eco-friendly or reusable products as part of their orders, rising to 80% for colleges.
- Pads accounted for two-thirds (66%) of all products ordered, while tampons accounted for most of the rest (32%). The total value of orders by the end of December 2020 was £2,791,000 – amounting to 48% of the total spend cap for all organisations.
- The number of orders increased steadily between January and March then remained constant during April and May, when schools were closed to most pupils due to the pandemic. Orders increased again in June as schools and colleges began to fully reopen. The scheme was – and continues to be – open throughout the pandemic.
- In November, for example, schools and colleges placed over 3,000 orders for period products through the scheme.

Warren Edmondson, managing director of supplier phs Direct said:

The high number of secondary schools and colleges participating in the scheme means that a significant proportion of menstruating-age pupils now have access to free period products. It is encouraging that so many have also ordered eco-friendly or reusable products to provide a more sustainable, long-term solution which is better for the environment.

The last year has been unprecedented with widespread closures across the education sector. Despite this, many have clearly recognised how important it is to order free period products and the phs order portal has been open throughout.

As the scheme has now been extended, we invite all schools and colleges to order free products now – whether it's their first or a repeat order. Deliveries are contactless and can be redirected to neighbouring schools in the event of closures. We'd urge anyone that needs support ordering to contact phs directly.

The free period product scheme for all young people in English state schools and colleges has been extended and will continue at least throughout 2021.

The scheme provides period products to all those who need them, including students who cannot afford products, have forgotten them, or come on their period unexpectedly.

The programme, delivered by phs Direct, part of [phs Group](#), is designed so that schools can order what they need and are given the option to order environmentally friendly or reusable products. Schools are not charged for the products or for delivery.

Schools and colleges should ensure they are making the products available and communicating with their students about the products and how to access the scheme.

This is part of the Government's drive to end period poverty, tackle inequality and support disadvantaged children in the additional challenges they face. At the start of the year the tampon tax was abolished, meaning from the 1st January VAT no longer applied to period products.

[37th Universal Periodic Review: UK](#)

statement on Nepal



The United Kingdom welcomes Nepal's progress since its last review. In particular, during my visit last year I witnessed first hand the good progress made on the political representation of women.

However, we remain concerned that fourteen years after the conclusion of the civil war, there is little accountability for conflict-era human rights violations and abuses. This feeds into a culture of impunity, which may further diminish confidence in institutions to deal with human rights violations.

We recommend that Nepal:

1. Harmonise the Foreign Employment, and Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act to ensure consistency with the Palermo Protocol.
2. Adopt an open, merit-based process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections.
3. Amend the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, addressing the demands of victim groups, to ensure victims of conflict-era violations and abuses are meaningfully engaged in the transitional justice process.

Thank you.

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