

Sellafield computer donation helps West Cumbrian school children

Almost 500 recycled laptops and computers have been donated by the company to schools across West Cumbria with further donations planned soon.

Although no longer needed by us, our Information Services Organisation team and supply chain partners ATOS and Allvotec, were able to identify which machines were still in good working order.

Ian Skipper, ISO head of integration support services and transition, at Sellafield Ltd explained:

An internal hardware and software update meant that we have equipment that was surplus to our requirements but of a high enough specification for use in schools.

After a quick clean down, memory replacement and new blank hard drives inserted they were packed up ready for new academic homes rather than being packed up for landfill.

This really was a Sellafield Ltd, Atos, and Allvotec joint initiative and I cannot give enough credit to the team who turned the donation idea into a reality.

The next challenge was making sure that the equipment made it into the hands of schools and children who really needed it.

Gary McKeating, head of community and development, at Sellafield Ltd said:

One of the key aspects of SiX – our social impact, multiplied programme is that we target the support we are able to provide to areas of real and demonstrated need.

We know that some students have struggled to access laptops to help with their learning during the first lockdown and if they need to isolate for any period of time.

Another feature of our social impact work is collaboration. We aren't best placed to say which schools need the support the most, which is why we've worked with the WELL Project to identify where the equipment should go.

The laptops have become available as a result of the company's migration to the Windows 10 platform. This has included a roll-out of new machines to all our employees. The process is ongoing and is expected to be complete next

year.

The donated equipment is now in use in schools across West Cumbria, including Dean School.

Chair of the local governing body at Dean School, Claire Kirkpatrick, said:

This equipment has made a massive difference to the way that lessons can be delivered.

Previously we only had a very small number of laptops, all of which were extremely old, that had to be shared between a large number of children across the school.

This was never ideal but especially in the current climate. However, thanks to Sellafield Ltd's kind donation, every pupil in a whole class can now have access to a laptop.

More than 137,000 people in UK receive first dose of COVID vaccine in one week

More than 137,000 people in the UK have received the first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in the first week of the largest vaccination programme in British history.

The government has today released provisional figures which show at least 137,897 people received their first dose of the vaccine by the end of Tuesday 15 December. 108,000 people were vaccinated in England.

The figures are provisional and subject to change. Formal statistics will be published every week from next week.

The majority of the vaccines have been administered to the over-80s, care home workers and NHS staff through more than 70 sites across the UK.

GP-led centres started vaccinating patients this week in England and the roll out will expand to care homes soon.

Over the coming weeks and months, the rate of vaccinations will increase as more doses become available and the programme continues to expand.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Thanks to the hard work of the NHS across the UK, over 137,000 people have already received the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine.

This is just the start and we will steadily expand our vaccination programme – ultimately helping everyone get back to normal life.

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is the first vaccine to be authorised for use by the medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Patients require 2 doses of the vaccine – 21 days apart – for the vaccine to be fully effective.

Thanks to the work of the government's Vaccines Taskforce, 40 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine have been secured for the whole of the UK.

Rolling reviews on the Oxford/AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines are underway and, if authorised by the MHRA, will mean there are more doses available to vaccinate those most in need.

All vaccinations in England are recorded between 8 December and 15 December and represent the first doses only.

The data for England is drawn from 2 sources depending on the vaccination site:

- for hospital sites the data is reported from the National Immunisation Management Service, which is the system of record for the NHS vaccination programme
- for local vaccination services this is an initial data extract from the Pinnacle system, which is being used by GPs to record COVID-19 vaccination events. This data will also be aggregated into the National Immunisation Management Service

A formal COVID-19 vaccine uptake publication will be published from next week.

[**New UK Government Covid testing site opens in Kilmarnock**](#)

The UK Government has today (Wednesday 16 December), opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre at the Grand Hall in Kilmarnock (KA3 7AA). The centre is easily accessible for people without a car.

The test centre is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises of six drive through sites, 21 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-in 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 500,000 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 helping all parts of the UK fight the coronavirus pandemic.

"Testing is vital, helping to manage local outbreaks and protecting people's livelihoods. The UK Government is providing the bulk of Covid testing in Scotland, and this new walk-through centre is just the latest in our extensive testing network.

"We are pleased to be working with local and commercial partners. These sites are not possible without the hard work of many people. I would like to thank everyone involved for their incredible efforts for the good of the country at this difficult time."

Lynne McNiven, Joint Director of Public Health for NHS Ayrshire & Arran, said:

“This testing centre in Kilmarnock will ensure those living in East Ayrshire have access to tests as quickly and easily as possible. This is vital so that we can identify cases quickly, allowing them to self-isolate and limit the spread of COVID-19.”

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 Kilmarnock, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.”

[Defence Secretary visits British troops defending NATO’s eastern flank in Estonia](#)

News story

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace gave his personal thanks to British troops deployed in Estonia over the Christmas period, during a visit to the Baltic state.



Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Estonian defence minister Jüri Luik have lunch with troops in Tapa

At Tapa base, the HQ of the UK’s largest overseas deployment, Mr Wallace discussed with members of the 5 Rifles battlegroup the vital deterrence and defence they provide in Estonia as part of NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP).

Members of the battlegroup also provided the Defence Secretary with a visual demonstration of the fearsome capability of the Challenger II battle tanks deployed on the mission.

The UK is the lead nation of the multinational NATO eFP Battlegroup in Estonia with over 900 British troops deployed alongside Danish and Estonian forces. In meetings with Estonia's Minister for Defence Jüri Luik, Prime Minister Jüri Ratas and parliamentarians of Estonia's National Defence Committee, the Defence Secretary reaffirmed that the United Kingdom would maintain its persistent presence in the country for as long as necessary.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

While we celebrate Christmas at home, over 6400 of our Armed Forces personnel will be working away from their families to protect the people of the United Kingdom and its interests.

So I was delighted to be able to pass on all our thanks to troops in Estonia. Their presence provides a concrete deterrence to an increasingly assertive Russia and is a demonstration of the United Kingdom's unwavering commitment to European security.

Both Mr Wallace and Mr Luik agreed that the UK and Estonia see eye-to-eye when it comes to identifying the threats to regional security and would continue to deepen a tight knit defence relationship that has grown in strength since the UK first took the lead of eFP in the country nearly four years ago.

As well as being trusted NATO Allies, the UK and Estonia are both members of the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force and the Northern Group of north European nations. In addition to the Army's persistent presence, the RAF have deployed to Ämari air base in the north of the country for NATO Baltic Air Policing in 2016 and 2019. The UK also contributes around 150 personnel to the US-led NATO eFP battlegroup in Poland.

Our soldiers have fought side-by-side in Afghanistan and both are currently contributors to international efforts to bring security and stability to the Sahel region in Africa.

The strength of our defence relationship was also clear this July when the Ministry of Defence loaned four Jackal vehicles to the Estonian Defence Forces until next March for elite soldiers of the Estonian Armed Forces to use on their counter-terror deployment in Mali.

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Spring start for Ulverston's new Cross-a-Moor roundabout

Highways England is constructing the new roundabout along the A590 at Cross-a-Moor south of Ulverston. It is expected to cost around £7 million with partnership funding from Highways England, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and South Lakeland District Council.

The new roundabout will replace the existing staggered junction with Main Road running south off the A590 and Pennington Lane running north of it. Preparation work is scheduled to start in spring with the main construction work following in the summer.

Steve Mason, Highways England senior project manager, said:

“This new roundabout is a significant investment in the infrastructure of the Furness peninsula. It will reduce congestion and improve safety on the A590 and local road network as well as supporting the creation of new jobs and homes. We’re aiming to keep the road open during construction – certainly during the daytime – and minimise any inconvenience to drivers and other road users.”

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government Luke Hall MP said:

We’re supporting transport improvements in Ulverston by backing this project with a Local Growth Fund investment of over £900,000.

It’s great news that the roundabout will solve ongoing congestion problems, as well as unlocking new homes and jobs, which will improve quality of life for the community.

By investing in transport infrastructure across the country, we’re making all our towns great places to live, work and visit.

Councillor Keith Little, Cumbria County Council’s Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, said:

I’m delighted with this announcement. We’ve worked closely with the LEP, South Lakeland District Council and Highways England on this over a number of years, and it’s fantastic news for Cumbria that this funding is now secured. If the county is to meet the demands of our growing population, attracting more new businesses and welcoming more visitors, we need to improve and enhance our infrastructure. The new roundabout will make big difference, and is vital to unlocking the economic and commercial potential of

Ulverston and surrounding areas.

Steve Curl, Board Member for the Cumbria LEP, added:

We are delighted to provide Growth Deal and Cumbria Infrastructure Fund subsidy to support this project, which will generate significant economic benefits in Ulverston, South Lakeland and more widely, South Cumbria. It will unlock much needed new housing for our residents. It will importantly help our recovery from the economic impacts of COVID-19 by making Cumbria an even more attractive place for people and businesses to locate and grow.

South Lakeland District Council portfolio holder for Economy, Culture and Leisure Councillor Robin Ashcroft said:

The council's contribution to the junction improvements demonstrates our commitment to support growth in the local economy, deliver new employment opportunities and improve the lives of people living in this area.

We have a key council commitment to help create new affordable homes for rent in South Lakeland by 2025 and the housing being planned for that area of Ulverston represents about 20% of all the new homes to be built in the entire district. Improving the Cross-a-Moor junction will be a critical component in unlocking these developments by improving accessibility to help SLDC to deliver its wider plans and ambitions.

Improving safety on this busy stretch of the A590 will also help ensure that the local transport infrastructure is better protected, which is vital for maintaining strategic connectivity to the M6 corridor, attracting new investment and supporting business growth.

Highways England's contribution to the project has come from the Government's growth and housing fund, a special fund earmarked to support the creation of new homes and jobs by tackling congestion 'hotspots' acting as a brake on economic investment. The fund is part of the Government's £27.4 billion investment in the country's motorways and major A roads in the five years from April 2020.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448

and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.