

[PM call with Sultan of Oman: 24 November 2020](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al Said of Oman.



The Prime Minister spoke to Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al Said of Oman this morning, to discuss regional security, trade and the recent progress on coronavirus vaccines.

He reiterated the UK's strong commitment to Oman and pledged to build on our long-standing partnership under the Sultan's new leadership.

The leaders spoke about the crisis in Yemen, and the Prime Minister commended Oman's efforts to bring the parties together and reach a negotiated solution to the conflict.

They also discussed the UK and Oman's collaboration on security and defence, noting the new investment in the UK's logistics hub at Duqm Port.

Published 24 November 2020

[New British Ambassador presents his credentials to the President of Paraguay](#)

World news story

HMA Ramin Navai presented his credentials to President Mario Abdo Benitez as the UK's new Ambassador to Paraguay.



From left to right: Ambassador Ramin Navai, President Mario Abdo and Foreign Minister Federico González

Today, the new British Ambassador to Paraguay Ramin Navai presented his credentials to the President of Paraguay Mario Abdo Benitez, and reaffirmed the UK's friendship and support for Paraguay.

The ceremony for the presentation of credential letters took place in the Independence Hall of the Presidential Palace. President Mario Abdo, accompanied by Minister of Foreign Affairs Federico Gonzalez, also received the credentials from the Ambassadors of France and Japan.

The ceremony began with the HMA Ramin Navai's presentation. Ambassador Emmanuel Coucher of France followed, closing with Ambassador Yoshie Nakatani Otsuke of Japan.

President Mario Abdo received credentials from HMA Ramin Navai

After the protocolar ceremony, the new representatives had a brief exchange with President Abdo. HMA Ramin Navai said:

Our countries have a great history of collaboration and we share values that today allow us to have a true and deep friendship.

As British Ambassador I will do everything within my power to continue strengthening the relationship, working with you and your government in pursuit of the prosperity of both our nations.

Published 24 November 2020

[Geospatial Commission outlines actions to boost UK's geospatial ecosystem](#)

Today the Geospatial Commission has published its [‘Enhancing the UK’s Geospatial Ecosystem’](#) report. This report outlines the actions needed to nurture the growing UK geospatial economy and realise the vision set out in the [UK’s Geospatial Strategy](#). The recommendations are based on the findings of an independent research study by Frontier Economics into the state of the location data market in the UK, also published today.

Use of location data, also known as geospatial data, is growing across many sectors and industries. Businesses can and do use location data as both a foundational building block, such as in the housing and transport sectors, and within cutting edge technology and data science techniques, such as in the financial services and marketing industries.

The Geospatial Commission’s recommendations focus on three key areas: improving data access; maintaining public trust and driving business adoption. Success requires a whole system and collaborative approach, with action required across the public sector to overcome the barriers and embrace the breadth of opportunities that better geospatial data provides.

Sir Andrew Dilnot, Geospatial Commission Chair, said

Data about location is increasingly valuable to businesses throughout the UK economy, and it is important that the right conditions are in place to support its efficient access, trusted use and swift adoption. The Geospatial Commission has outlined key recommendations and actions, and looks forward to working with key partners across the public sector, to ensure that these conditions are enabled.

I am grateful to Frontier Economics for their thoughtful and rigorous analysis of the UK’s geospatial data market, which takes a unique approach to identifying the full impact of geospatial data throughout the UK economy and is the main basis for the Geospatial Commission’s recommendations.

Background

The Geospatial Commission has published its [‘Enhancing the UK’s Geospatial Ecosystem’](#) report. It outlines areas for action to nurture the growing UK geospatial economy, and is based on the findings of an independent research study by Frontier Economics into the state of the location data market in the UK, also published today.

The report highlights the following three areas and six recommendations that require action now to secure the full potential of location data to the UK:

Improving access to location data – Data holders should consider the public good as a main rationale when making decisions about access to location data.

Action 1: The Geospatial Commission will include the objective that ‘data holders consider the public good in decisions about access to location data’ in its forthcoming guidelines for measuring the value of location data, and for the ethical use of location data and technology in both the private and public sector.

Action 2: Competition regulators, including a future Digital Markets Unit and organisations within the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum, should consider the potential public good arising from the sharing and reuse of location data when evolving their regulatory approach for unlocking competition in digital markets.

Maintaining public trust in how location data is used – There should be an informed public discourse considering the benefits arising from use of location data and the potential risks to individual privacy.

Action 3: The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) should provide further clarity on the distinction between personal and non-personal location data.

Action 4: The Geospatial Commission will lead an informed public discourse about the benefits and risks of new applications of location data, starting with a new programme of deliberative public engagement.

Driving location data adoption – Organisations should recognise the additional value that location data can deliver for their business.

Action 5: The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) should further incorporate location data capability as an essential component of their programmes for increasing growth, innovation and productivity within the UK economy.

Action 6: The Government Commercial Function should embed provisions within appropriate government contracts and spend approvals to require valuable location data, generated either directly or as a by-product of the provision of other goods and services, to be retained and made available for appropriate reuse by the government.

Frontier Economics and the Geospatial Commission are grateful to Sir Edward Troup, Sir Ian Diamond, Tera Allas CBE, Amelia Fletcher CBE and John Pullinger CB for their comments as part of the Market Study Expert Panel.

Recommendations from the Global Travel Taskforce

On 7 October, at the request of the Prime Minister, the government announced the launch of our Global Travel Taskforce. Co-chaired by the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the aim of the taskforce was to consider steps that government could take to encourage the safe recovery of domestic and overseas travel and tourism while reducing the risk of imported cases.

The taskforce was to report back to the Prime Minister in November; a commitment we met last week after a period of constructive consultation with the travel sector.

The message we received during those consultations was clear. The global COVID-19 pandemic remains an existential threat to the aviation and maritime sectors, as for all travel and tourism businesses, and we need to act now to help these industries get back on a trajectory towards strong economic growth.

That is precisely what the [Global Travel Taskforce report](#) aims to achieve, making 14 recommendations following 3 broad principles:

First, to ensure that journeys are safe.

Second, to increase demand for travel without compromising safety.

Third, to position the UK so we can take a leading role in driving the global standards required to support recovery.

The most fundamental priority in all this work is safeguarding public health. That is why we are introducing, as the first initiative resulting from the Global Travel Taskforce's work, a new regime 'Test to Release' for international arrivals from countries that are not on the Travel Corridor list.

Following extensive work by officials from the Department for Transport and Department of Health and Social Care, this will be rolled out in England from 15 December in time for Christmas. Travellers will have the option of booking and paying for a test from a list of private sector providers. They can take the test 5 full days after they left a destination not on the travel corridors list, which for most international arrivals will be after 5 full days of self-isolation. If the test result is negative, they will be free to go about their daily lives. A test on day 5 of self isolation provides a strong level of protection for the UK population from transmission of COVID-19 acquired abroad. It also provides much more freedom for people seeking to travel.

Individuals who opt in will be required to self-isolate until they receive a negative test result. Compliance checks are carried out by Public Health

England's Isolation Assurance Service (IAS) who contact randomly sampled international arrivals to ensure that they are self-isolating. Details of those found not to be isolating will be passed to the Home Office, who in turn pass relevant details on to the police for targeted follow-up enforcement activity. Anyone who does not comply with this requirement could be fined £1,000 for the first offence and up to £10,000 for repeat breaches. Only a negative test result from a provider on the GOV.UK list will enable a traveller to cease self-isolating early.

If a traveller tests positive for COVID-19, they will move into the UK's existing system for positive cases, meaning that they will self-isolate for a further 10 days from the day of the test and their contacts will be traced and notified as normal. Minimum standards have been set by clinicians to ensure that the tests give accurate results, but we are not specifying exactly what type of test must be used. This is to allow for innovation in the testing market. Tests will either be taken at a private testing site, or using a privately provided home testing kit, meaning the scheme will be accessible to the widest section of the community and across England.

As we emerge from this latest period of restrictions, the new testing scheme will allow people to see family, go away on business, or book holidays with the option of taking a test to shorten any self-isolation period in the UK and reduce disruption to their lives.

In addition to 'Test to Release for International Travel', we will of course remain open to new testing technologies and other approaches that help people travel overseas in safety. For example, mass testing may help more people to travel with fewer restrictions in the future. As our knowledge and capacity for testing develops, so will our policy.

However, we have always known that testing alone is not a silver bullet, nor a comprehensive solution to the challenges we face. The taskforce has made further recommendations, including:

- to advocate the development of a global framework for the validation of tests and vaccination records
- to assess the feasibility of short stay exemptions for businesses and tour groups
- to publish the criteria for when cruises can restart and implement a phased return for cruising when the public health advice makes clear it is safe to do so
- to boost consumer confidence about inbound and outbound travel through targeted communications and marketing campaigns
- to provide assurance to passengers, we will work with our world-leading aviation regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority, to ensure that the aviation industry is doing everything it can to make air travel as low risk as possible, as well as continuing to work with the maritime sector to ensure that it operates safely and that industry guidance remains in line with best practice

As soon as the time is right, we want to encourage people to travel with confidence. That means British people being able to go abroad safely, and

welcoming back overseas visitors to our country to do business, and enjoy our hospitality, entertainment and world-famous tourist sites.

The recommendations outlined above provide a springboard to ensure the safe and viable recovery of the sector.

However, while the taskforce's work has concluded, ours does not end here. The collapse of the market this year has not just affected airlines but airports, ground handlers and other airport services too. The government has already made available an unprecedented package of economic measures to companies across the aviation industry. This includes schemes to raise capital and flexibilities with tax bills, as well as financial support for employees.

We have worked closely with the sector during the course of the pandemic and listened to its concerns. Airports have highlighted specific challenges arising from a lack of passengers, and the relatively high fixed costs they face. Therefore, we will shortly be making available a support scheme providing financial assistance to commercial airports and ground handlers in England to help with business rates.

These businesses will be able to apply from the new year for the equivalent of their business rates costs in this financial year, up to a maximum of £8 million per eligible site, subject to certain conditions which the Department of Transport will take into account when considering applications.

The government is committed to giving people the freedom to travel with confidence and supporting the wider travel industry. I will publish this statement on GOV.UK and will place a copy in the libraries of both Houses.

WTO Thailand Trade Policy Review: UK statement

On behalf of Her Majesty's Government, I am pleased to add my welcome to the delegation of Thailand, led by the Honourable Mr Rachavitch Piyapramote. The UK is encouraged by the improvements made during the previous review period, such as the consideration of ways to strengthen protection of intellectual property rights. We likewise appreciate Thailand's responses to our written questions.

We would like to thank Her Excellency Sunanta Kangvalkulkij (the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the WTO and WIPO) for her leadership, and Her Excellency Silvia Alfaro Espinosa (Peru) for her insightful and illuminating remarks as discussant.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created difficult circumstances for us all. We note

that Thailand has taken recent steps to stimulate its economy and has implemented a number of measures to facilitate the movement of goods during the pandemic. We welcome this commitment to keeping global value chains open.

2020 marks the 165th year of diplomatic relations between the UK and Thailand. Our two countries have had a long and historic relationship, with shared values and, particularly, an interest in mutual prosperity and maintaining the rules based international system. Thailand is one of the UK's most valued trading partners. Our total bilateral trade in goods and services was £6.2bn in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2020, an increase of £20m from the previous year.

The UK is pleased to be conducting a bilateral Joint Trade Review with Thailand, due to conclude this year. Through this, both sides are identifying opportunities to enhance bilateral trade relations and set the groundwork for future cooperation, supporting the UK's ambition to use our voice as a new independent trading nation to champion free trade, strengthen the rules-based international system, fight protectionism and reduce trade barriers, including by working specifically with our closest trading partners.

We enjoy extensive trade and diplomatic collaboration, particularly within the WTO where we are both founding members. An example of a service sector where we have close collaboration is education. The British Council has worked in Thailand for over 60 years and has six offices in the country providing English courses, teacher training and collaboration in the arts and creative industries. The UK now has an Education cooperation MOU with Thailand which was signed in 2016 and around 6,500 students take part in educational programmes in the UK each year. We are also keen to collaborate with Thailand on tech, through the UK's new Digital Trade Network in the Asia Pacific region, an investment of £8m with one of our key resources based in Thailand.

The United Kingdom looks forward to continuing to collaborate with Thailand as our bilateral Joint Trade Review process nears conclusion. In closing, allow me to extend our warmest wishes for a successful WTO trade policy review and to thank you for your engagement with this process and the World Trade Organization.