

New UK Government Covid testing site opens in Glasgow

The UK Government has today, Saturday 21 November, opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre at St Francis Community Centre in the Gorbals in Glasgow. The centre is easily accessible for people without a car.

The new facility at 405 Cumberland Street (G5 0SE) is being provided by the UK Government as part of a UK-wide drive to continue to improve the accessibility of coronavirus testing for local communities. It is operated by Mitie on behalf of the UK Government.

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, 14 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 at 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).

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.

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 Glasgow, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.

Dr Linda de Caestecker, Director of Public Health, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde said:

I am very pleased that we have a new walk through testing centre in Glasgow to allow members of the public to access testing when they need it.

Our Public Health Protection Unit and Test and Protect Team continue to contact trace positive cases and clusters in our community. I want to thank the public for their cooperation in reducing spread of the virus and in getting tested as soon as they have symptoms.

Please remain vigilant. The general measures to minimise the risk of COVID-19 remain the same – social distancing, regular hand washing, and being on the look-out for symptoms.

[Ocean mapping satellite to help UK scientists tackle climate change](#)

In the past two decades, space has played an increasingly crucial role in efforts to monitor and combat climate change. Satellites are indispensable for collecting data on sea levels, with each year since 1993 seeing an average rise of just over 3mm. Sea level rises put coastal communities at risk and it is vital that researchers understand how climate change is reshaping Earth's coastlines and how fast this is happening.

Thanks to UK Space Agency funding, experts across the UK's ocean and climate community, including at the Met Office and National Oceanography Centre, will be at the forefront of analysing the most accurate data yet on global sea levels and how our oceans are rising in response to climate change.

The Sentinel-6 satellite, which is the size of a small 4x4 car and will orbit around Earth 830 miles above our planet, will collect data that is indispensable for ocean and weather forecasts and climate understanding over the next decade.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

Tracking rising sea levels is one of the most important indicators

of our planet warming up. This government-backed satellite will arm our leading scientists, researchers and meteorologists with critical data to measure the true impact of climate change on our planet, helping improve weather forecasting to better plan for floods and informing our ambitious efforts for a green industrial revolution.

The UK spends hundreds of millions of pounds every year on flood and coastal defences. Sentinel-6 will allow a more accurate prediction of sea level rise and storm surge, reducing the risk of damage from unexpectedly high floods.

Dr Matthew Palmer, lead scientist on sea level rise from the Met Office Hadley Centre, said:

Sea-level rise poses one of the greatest socio-economic challenges associated with climate change. Space-based observations since the 1990s have revolutionised our understanding of rates of sea-level rise around the globe.

The Sentinel-6 observations are critical for ongoing monitoring of global sea level and revealing the spatial pattern of rise associated with climate change. These new observations will play a key role in the development of improved modelling systems and projections on a range of timescales by providing invaluable insights into sea-level variability and change around the world.

John Siddorn, Head of Ocean Forecasting R&D and co-Chair of the National Partnership for Ocean Prediction, said:

Altimeter satellites are fundamental to ocean monitoring and prediction – it is no coincidence that most ocean reanalysis datasets, used to understand the marine environment, start around the early 1990s, to coincide with the launch of the first reference satellite altimeter missions.

The Sentinel-6 satellites ensure the continuation of this vital data record for the next decade, safeguarding our ocean monitoring and prediction capability that is so important for marine operations as well as understanding the changing world we live in.

The joint European and US satellite is named Sentinel-6 Michael Freilich, after Dr Michael Freilich, the former director of NASA's Earth Science Division. The European contribution is shared between ESA, EUMETSAT and the EU. It will provide the only means of measuring global sea level changes with sufficient accuracy to detect a sea level rise due to climate change, helping to protect the 600 million people who live in vulnerable coastal areas across the globe. It will also improve weather forecasts.

Alongside the funding for Sentinel-6, the UK Space Agency also supports the UK's world leading capabilities in Earth Observation and climate change through national and international programmes such as the European Space Agency (ESA). In November 2019, the UK Space Agency committed over £200 million of investment in Earth Observation at ESA.

The UK is working on new missions to unlock our understanding of our planet, including the climate change missions TRUTHS and FORUM, a global forest-mapping mission Biomass, and MicroCarb which will measure sources and sinks of carbon, the principal greenhouse gas driving global warming.

Christine Gommenginger, National Oceanography Centre in Southampton, said:

New data from Sentinel-6 will benefit our ongoing research into quantifying and understanding the drivers of variability, trends and acceleration in coastal sea level and ocean surface waves.

New discoveries about these complex interactions and exchanges could hold the key to significantly broadening the research communities' understanding of the ocean and climate. Thus, we will be able to contribute expert research and insights to UK and international change makers, and to the public, for the benefit of all. We welcome the launch of the Sentinel-6 satellite and congratulate everyone involved.

Sentinel-6 is part of the European Copernicus Programme, which has revolutionised understanding of the critical role the ocean plays in climate and the ocean-atmospheric interactions which produce extreme weather events.

Airbus Defence and Space in Stevenage designed, manufactured and tested the propulsion module for the Sentinel-6 satellite. The hydrazine propulsion system with eight thrusters will maintain the 1.3 ton satellite in the correct orbit for its mission. Airbus in the UK has built more than 100 satellite propulsion systems, including for the twin mission Sentinel 6B, which is due for launch in 2025 and will advance these measurements for at least another five years.

This mission will take the role of radar altimetry reference mission, continuing the long-term record of measurements of sea-surface height started in 1992 by the French-US Topex Poseidon and then the Jason series of satellite missions.

[The Philippines and the United](#)

Kingdom: old friends, new horizons

As the United Kingdom's Minister with responsibility for relations with the Philippines, I was delighted to visit Manila for the first time this week. I met leading figures in government, business and beyond and was pleased to play my part in building on the broad and ever expanding range of areas where our two countries work together. Although I'm sorry that because of COVID-19 I wasn't able to get out and about to see the country and meet as many people as I would have liked.

Our countries, while separated by nearly 11,000 kilometres, enjoy close and longstanding links. But we have never rested on our laurels and have always sought to do more together.

I am delighted that next year, the 75th year of our formal diplomatic relations, will see the launch of an Enhanced Partnership. This will allow us to continue to drive forward our trade relations building on an already strong £2bn of bilateral trade and investment and growing the more than 200 British companies currently operating in the Philippines such as Shell, AstraZeneca, GSK and Diageo to name a few.

It will allow us to deepen our strong collaboration on combatting climate change, with the UK hosting COP26 next year, bringing together heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree coordinated action. The UK is already partnering the Philippines across areas such as low carbon energy transition and protecting the Philippines' incredible biodiversity.

We can strengthen our links on defence, security and counter-terrorism and foster stronger consular cooperation to protect our citizens and make their lives better when they are a long way from home.

Indeed, our bilateral relations would not be what they are without the close connections between our people. This includes the 20,000 British nationals who have chosen to make the Philippines their home. It also includes the 200,000 Filipinos who have settled in the UK including around 30,000 who have chosen to work in the UK's National Health Service where I can personally attest that they are respected for their compassion, dedication and professional excellence.

It was exciting to discuss our plans for the future this week. My visit also allowed me to spend time discussing the key political issues relevant to our citizens' lives, including human rights. And I was able to take steps to expand our already strong bilateral cooperation on higher education, by signing a statement of commitment, which will help widen the access of Filipino learners to quality higher education and build the competitiveness of higher education institutions in the Philippines.

I know the Philippines has faced great challenges already this typhoon season. I was saddened to watch the dreadful impact of Typhoons Quintas, Rolly and Ulysses in quick succession over recent days, and continue to be

inspired by the fortitude of the Philippine people. I was pleased the UK was able to donate £500,000 (PHP 32 million) through our Red Cross partners to support those in greatest humanitarian need immediately following Typhoon Rolly.

Similarly, we must continue to work together to beat the COVID-19 global pandemic which continues to affect our daily lives. I am proud of the work my country has taken forward to ensure that all nations and people around the world will be able to have access to safe and effective vaccines when they are ready. Progress is happening fast. During my time in Manila I discussed cutting-edge collaboration with the Philippines on global access to vaccines, and learned how the UK's public health partnership and support programmes are having an impact.

Alongside our Enhanced Partnership with the Philippines, the UK has deep and enduring relationships with countries across the ASEAN region, and we are committed to bolstering our relationship with ASEAN. We want to cement our commitment to ASEAN through becoming a Dialogue Partner. We believe this status reflects the strength and breadth of the UK offer, both now and in the future. We are grateful for the warm support we have received from the Philippines for this ambition.

Whilst our countries may indeed be old friends, I am confident that we are ready to embrace some brand new horizons in our relations.

[Foreign Secretary marks 25th Anniversary of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

Press release

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab remembers the victims of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords.



On the 25th anniversary of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has reiterated the UK's commitment to supporting reform which improves the lives of citizens and reconciliation in the country and across the wider Western Balkans.

The Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab said:

Today we remember the victims of the bitter conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and celebrate 25 years of peace.

I know personally from my time in The Hague pursuing those responsible for this dark chapter in European history, how important it is to help rebuild the countries affected.

The UK has played a crucial role in supporting the necessary reform to improve the lives of the country's citizens including helping them deal with the legacy of the war.

The progress citizens want to see is often thwarted by those who profit from fear and division. So I call upon the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to set aside divisive rhetoric and renew efforts to focus on a peaceful future and democratic rights for all.

Twenty-five years ago today the Dayton Peace Accords were agreed in Dayton, Ohio, marking the end of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina and paving the way for peace and democracy in the country. The Accords were formally signed in Paris on 14 December. Approximately 100,000 people were killed in the 1992-1995 conflict, tens of thousands were victims of sexual violence, and more than 1.8 million people were displaced.

The UK now provides £80 million of support annually to support peace and stability in the region and has introduced a number of initiatives to support citizen focused reform. This includes the digitisation of government services, promoting an independent media, professionalising the armed forces, and supporting war crime prosecution.

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[Culture Recovery Fund will bring Blackpool Tower Ballroom back to former glory](#)

- The home of British ballroom dancing will receive £764,000 from the

Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund

- Funding will restore period plasterwork to bring the Blackpool Tower Ballroom back to its former glory
- Major grant announced as Strictly Come Dancing celebrates iconic venue with studio special

The Blackpool Tower Ballroom is the latest venue to receive a lifeline grant of £764,000 from the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund, the Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden has announced.

The ballroom, located in the Grade I listed Tower Buildings, first opened to the public in 1894 and has a rich history as the home of British ballroom dancing. Millions of viewers will know the spectacular 19th century venue as the site of Strictly Come Dancing's annual ballroom special which airs this evening.

Blackpool's funding builds on more than £115 million which has been awarded to heritage sites across the country from the Culture Recovery Fund, including more than £39 million in grants dedicated to kickstarting construction and maintenance projects that have been paused due to the pandemic.

The £764,000 grant, awarded to Blackpool Council by Historic England on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, will enable the legendary venue to carry out comprehensive repair and restoration work on the ballroom's period plasterwork ceiling. The work will be undertaken during the building's current period of closure and will provide work to local specialists.

Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, said:

The Blackpool Tower Ballroom has been an iconic home for British dance for more than a century. The Culture Recovery Fund will help restore this beautiful ballroom so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Shirley Ballas, Head Judge – Strictly Come Dancing, 3 x Blackpool British Open Professional Latin American Champion

Blackpool holds a special place in the heart of every ballroom dancer all over the world. It is a town steeped in Ballroom dance history and somewhere everyone hopes to dance one day. For me, I won my 3 British Professional Latin Championships in Blackpool, titles that I cherish. I am overjoyed to learn of the Government's investment to aid in the restoration of one of Blackpool's historic ballrooms, all of which house the memories and history of the ballroom dance industry. Thank you Oliver Dowden MP, I still owe you that cha cha cha lesson!

Anton du Beke, Judge – Strictly Come Dancing

How wonderful to hear the news about the investment in the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool. Such important funding to keep the art of ballroom dancing alive for generations to come! Keep Dancing!

Duncan Wilson, Historic England Chief Executive said:

Blackpool Tower Ballroom has played a hugely significant role in the history and popular culture of our country for over 125 years, as a landmark in British seaside architecture and tourism, to the special place it holds in the nation's heart as the iconic venue for TV's Strictly Come Dancing.

In these challenging times, our shared heritage is more important than ever. This vital funding will allow essential repairs to take place, providing employment for skilled craft workers and ensuring that we preserve this much-loved ballroom for everyone to enjoy, both now and in the future.

Historic sites, arts organisations and cultural venues in all four nations are benefiting from the UK Government's biggest ever one-off investment in culture, with £188 million bannetted to the Devolved Administrations – £97 million for Scotland, £59 million for Wales and £33 million for Northern Ireland. This is in addition to £500 million awarded across England already. This funding is enabling them to increase the support already available to the arts and cultural sectors in each nation.

ENDS

Additional quotes:

Sammy Stopford MBE, 5 x Blackpool British Open Professional Latin American Champion, Blackpool Dance Festival Hall of Fame, President World Dance Council Amateur League said:

Blackpool has been home to prestigious Ballroom dance festivals for almost 100 years and is considered by all to be the home of Ballroom dancing. As such, I believe the generous economic contribution towards the restoration of Blackpool's historic ballrooms is a sign of this Government's intent to preserve an art form deeply ingrained within the identity of this country. Thank you, Oliver Dowden CBE MP and the Department for DCMS; we are truly grateful for your actions!

Richard Gleave OBE CBE, 8 x Blackpool British Open Professional Ballroom

Champion.

One of the Jewels in the Crown of Blackpool, the legendary Tower Ballroom is one of the most magnificent and famous Ballrooms in the World

Bryan Allen, Former President – British Dance Council

For International ballroom dance relations and overseas visiting ballroom dancers, this is fantastic news!

Marcus Hilton MBE & Karen Hilton MBE

Having won multiple British and World titles in this most iconic, world famous dancing town of Blackpool, Karen and I are absolutely thrilled that this magical arena has been awarded over £750k from DCMS as part of their Cultural Recovery Plan.

Mark Lunn, President – Dance Promoters Association

Wonderful news! The importance of ballroom dance to the town of Blackpool is difficult to quantify. Add to that the historic value of the Tower Ballroom itself. This is a great gesture from the UK Government

Councillor Gillian Campbell, Cabinet Member for Tourism & Culture, Blackpool Council, said:

We are thrilled to be awarded this grant which will help bring the ornate ceiling of the magnificent Tower Ballroom back to its former glory. The ballroom has provided entertainment for generations of people for more than a century and is a national treasure, not least because of its relationship with Strictly.

We are enormously appreciative that its importance to the cultural heritage of this country has been recognised in this way.

Kate Shane, Head of Cluster, Merlin Entertainments, operators of The Blackpool Tower on behalf of Blackpool Council, said:

I am remarkably fortunate to be able to appreciate the splendour of the Tower Ballroom every working day. I see at first hand the sheer joy that it brings to people whether they are ballroom dancing, enjoying afternoon tea or simply taking in the extraordinary

surroundings.

The timing of the grant could not be better as the ballroom is currently closed because of pandemic restrictions and we cannot wait to see the work on the restoration of this beautiful plasterwork ceiling to commence.