

UK Government Covid testing site opens in Perth

The UK Government has today (Monday 16 November), opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre at Thimblerow Car Park (PH1 5QT), in Perth. The centre is easily accessible for people without a car.

The new facility 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 6 drive through sites, 13 walk through sites, 21 mobile units, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

A new Scottish megalab was announced yesterday. This will provide capacity to process an extra 300,000 tests a day, create thousands of jobs and play a key part of the UK's national infrastructure response.

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).

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 is 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.

Dr Emma Fletcher, Director of Public Health for NHS Tayside said:

This new walk through testing centre is very welcome and provides an additional opportunity for people to access testing in the Tayside area. People are reminded that if they show any symptoms of COVID-19 they should isolate, along with their household, and seek testing immediately.

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

Matt Warman's speech on digital identity at Identity Week 2020

Good morning. It's a great pleasure to be invited to speak at Identity Week 2020.

I truly believe that digital identity is one of the most exciting opportunities for growth and security in the UK economy, and I am excited to share my vision with you today.

Digital identity products are a vital building block for the economy of the future. They will enable smoother, cheaper, and more secure online transactions; they will simplify people's lives, and boost business.

Digital identity solutions can also ensure that people have greater control of their identity data, and provide greater security and privacy standards.

It has the capacity to allow more people to open a bank account, to allow more people to start a new job faster, and to improve the safety and security of travel both within and beyond the UK – whether for business or pleasure.

Covid-19 has increased the demand for online services: 63% of people are learning a new skill online; 20% are buying groceries online; 20% are managing their money online; and 19% are now accessing health services online.

It is essential that all those in society who want to access services online are able to do so. Use of digital identity is key to unlocking this.

We want to enable the formation of a successful digital identity ecosystem in the UK so these benefits and those increased demands and expectations brought on by the pandemic can be fully realised.

The government is committed to enabling a digital identity system fit for the UK's growing digital economy – without the need for identity cards – by working in partnership across government, the private sector, academia and civil society.

I want to ensure that UK values will be at the heart of this thinking to ensure that digital identity works for all who wish to use it, and that will be interoperable with as many markets and sectors as possible.

Last year we undertook a [call for evidence](#) so we could better understand the potential of digital identity to unlock the digital economy, improve user experience and access to services.

Respondents felt strongly that the government has an essential role to play in enabling secure digital identity solutions for the wider economy, and that the setting of standards is integral to this.

When we published [our response to the call for evidence](#), we also published a set of principles that would underpin our approach to developing policy, namely: privacy; transparency; inclusivity; interoperability, proportionality; and good governance.

Security and consent underpin our approach. I don't use these words lightly.

While we have been working with our international stakeholders to understand their approach to the development of digital identity policy, these principles have been developed deliberately and specifically to ensure that British values – your values – are the foundation upon which our digital world is built in the UK.

Policy on something as personal as the way in which we identify ourselves online can only be developed in this way.

By ensuring that the principles set out in our call for evidence response are at the heart of the UK's digital identity ecosystem, those who choose to make use of a digital identity in the future will have confidence that there are measures in place to protect them.

Consumers will be assured that data confidentiality and privacy are at the centre of their digital identity and will be able to understand who, why, and when their data is being used for digital identity verification.

Over the past few months we have been working closely with experts throughout the private sector, academia and civil society to fully understand the ways we can balance these key principles, mitigate the effect of associated risks, and ensure that digital identities will truly work for those who wish to use them.

I know from my own engagement with these experts that we need agreed standards, ways of working, and a way to check they are being adhered to.

We will do this by establishing a trust framework of standards, rules, assurance and governance for the use of digital identity, in one place, that different organisations using or consuming digital identity can follow.

Such a framework would also enable people to reuse their digital identity to access a range of products and services.

This trust framework will help organisations check identities and share attributes in a trusted and consistent way enabling interoperability, maintaining high levels of privacy, and increasing public confidence.

Because the foundation of this market will be based on trust, how we establish the framework is as important as what it says.

I have held a number of meetings with experts across the digital identity ecosystem – from supportive providers to hopeful private sector organisations to sceptical lobbyists. We are engaging openly with players across the ecosystem to hear your ideas – and your concerns – and incorporate them into our approach.

The development of this trust framework must be a collaborative, informed process to ensure that what we develop represents the very best of British innovation and British values.

We must also ensure that we work to enable an open, competitive market. The standards, regulations, and legislation that we are seeking to implement will not restrict innovation but, instead, will enable the implementation of safe and secure solutions that work for business and society alike.

This unique approach – building on lessons of those who have gone before us and developing an approach that works for the UK – will be critical in making us the world's leading digital economy.

We are keen to engage with our international partners too, who are developing their own rules and regulations to establish a framework that allows us all to work together.

We are exploring the ways in which we can make direct links to other markets and nations to establish and build international recognition and interoperability.

I am excited to announce that we will be publishing the digital identity Trust Framework as an alpha in the new year.

You've now heard from me that I have been working diligently to understand the needs of citizens, civil society, and private sector stakeholders, and now I would like to invite you all to continue to give feedback and contribute to the development of the alpha once it is published.

Publishing the framework as an alpha gives us a unique opportunity to test digital identity standards in practice, highlighting their strengths, their challenges and together, identifying areas for improvement and agreement.

With your input into the alpha, we can together truly enable a successful digital identity ecosystem in the UK that works for everyone.

The trust framework is just one part of our commitment to establishing a vibrant digital identity market.

What became clear from my conversations with experts from industry, academia and civil society is that the ability to check trusted government data sources is a key priority for them.

However, it has to be something that the person being checked agrees to. It is vital that people who choose to use a digital identity understand and control when, why, and how their digital identity data is being used.

Confirmation from Government-assured datasets about individuals, such as their name or date of birth, are all important aspects of building trust in identity.

Government has always played this important role in the paper-based world – by issuing trusted documents like passports and driving licenses – and will

continue to work with the private sector and civil society to enable this to happen digitally.

Let's take the busy world of a student as an example. They often have to prove their age by showing their passport, for instances like onboarding at their university, applying for a part time job, for renting accommodation, or for purchasing alcohol.

Your passport is a critically important record about you and showing the whole record to a range of organisations gives away far more data than is really needed.

We are already working to improve this situation, and not just for students. We have been working closely with the Government Digital Service and Her Majesty's Passport Office to see whether organisations outside of government can use real-time passport validity checks to build useful digital services by [making the Document Checking Service available to a group of companies through a pilot](#). The pilot will run until summer 2021.

No organisation has been given direct access to Government-held data – instead, they receive a 'yes' or 'no' response as to whether their customers' passport is valid. This helps to protect people's privacy while clamping down on opportunities for identity theft and fraud.

I am pleased to announce that these digital passport checks have begun to be made, with over 500 checks completed over the last few weeks.

Six pioneering companies have been onboarded and are either preparing to connect to the Document Checking Service via this pilot or are now offering a live service; and more will be joining shortly.

This is an important step in testing industry demand for these kinds of services. It also shows how the government can work with industry to ensure that privacy is central to policy development and delivery, and ensure trusted identity verification.

This work marks the beginning of progress to ensure that digital identities are as inclusive as possible. We would like to take this work further by enabling digital identity checks to take place against a range of datasets.

In future, this will allow for more people to be able to utilise their digital identity within their day- to-day lives. With permission from the user, identity providers will be able to draw on a range of data, whether with regard to government documents, financial history, or other personal information to build digital services.

Digital identity is a crucial part of supporting the development of the digital economy in the UK. It will make life easier and more secure for people and businesses alike. And I am committed to creating a framework of standards and oversight, and to remove legal barriers where necessary.

We can't do this alone in Government, just as private companies can't do it alone either. And we need to listen and be proactive to meet the needs of the

end user, whatever their circumstance.

The answer lies in working together to create the conditions for success, and I look forward to working with you to make our collective ambition a reality.

Thank you very much.

[UK government's response to Moderna's publication of efficacy data for its COVID-19 vaccine](#)

Government response

Biotech company Moderna has published positive efficacy results from its Phase 3 studies of its potential COVID-19 vaccine.



Biotech company Moderna today (Monday 16 November) published positive efficacy results from its Phase 3 studies of its potential COVID-19 vaccine, showing it to be nearly 95% effective in preventing coronavirus.

A government spokesperson said:

The news from Moderna appears to be good and represents another significant step towards finding an effective COVID19 vaccine. As part of the ongoing work of the Vaccines Taskforce, the government is in advanced discussions with Moderna to ensure UK access to their vaccine as part of the wider UK portfolio.

Moderna are currently scaling up their European supply chain which means these doses would become available in spring 2021 in the UK at the earliest.

To date, the UK government has secured early access to 350 million

vaccines doses through agreements with six separate vaccine developers. This includes 40 million doses of Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine, which is based on the same platform as Moderna's vaccine and if approved by the medicines regulator, is expected to begin delivery as early as December 2020.

[Read Moderna's full announcement.](#)

We will know whether the vaccine meets robust standards of safety and effectiveness once their safety data has been published, and only then can the medicines regulator consider whether it can be made available to the public

We have secured early access to over 350 million vaccine doses through agreements with several separate vaccine developers at various stages of trials, including:

- 100 million doses of University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine – phase 3 clinical trials
- 40 million doses of BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine – phase 3 clinical trials
- 60 million doses of Novavax vaccine – phase 3 clinical trials
- 60 million doses of Valneva vaccine – pre-clinical trials
- 60 million doses of GSK/Sanofi Pasteur vaccine – phase 1 clinical trials
- 30 million doses of Janssen vaccine – phase 2 clinical trials

We have invested over £230 million into manufacturing any successful vaccine and an enormous amount of planning and preparation has taken place across government to be able to quickly roll out the vaccine, including ensuring we have adequate provision, transport, PPE and logistical expertise to do so. We are also working at pace to prepare for the delivery of any potential COVID-19 vaccination programme as quickly as possible.

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**[Register for the 2021 international
Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation
conference](#)**



Register for the 2021 CWD conference

- Runs from 2 to 4 November 2021
- Fully virtual event
- Hear from international experts
- Opportunities to network and work collaboratively

[Registration closes on 29 October](#)

After careful consideration, we have decided to hold CWD 2021 virtually on 2 to 4 November 2021 from 12 noon to 2.30pm GMT daily.

About the conference

The 23rd CWD Conference is organised by Dstl, the science inside UK defence and security, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. It's a unique opportunity to hear from international experts and to work collaboratively to help achieve a future free from chemical weapons.

The organisers took the unavoidable decision to cancel CWD 2020 due to the worldwide coronavirus pandemic and had hoped to hold CWD 2021 as an in-person conference. However, the emergence of the Delta COVID-19 variant in the UK, along with restrictions on international travel, has resulted in increased uncertainty around holding a major in-person event with an international audience. CWD 2021 will be held virtually, with the intention of returning to physical conferences from CWD 2022, next May.

Our virtual conference programme takes into account the changing demilitarisation landscape, including new threats, technical challenges and the approaching completion of destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles.

Its scope will include wider science and technology issues related to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), including chemical analysis and forensics.

Sessions will be held from 12 to 2.30pm GMT on 2, 3 and 4 November 2021 and all presentations can be accessed on demand on our virtual platform during, and after, the conference.

Key dates

- Registration closes on 29 October 2021

During the 3 days of presentations, there will be ample opportunity for discussion and networking. The conference is open to anyone with a relevant interest in CWD, and is attended by representatives of governments, industry, academia and the armed forces.

Why attend CWD 2021

Our conference supports the global effort to eliminate chemical weapons and fosters co-operation through the exchange of information and ideas relating to safe disposal. CWD is the primary international forum for making valuable professional contacts in this field.

- Participate in this unique forum for our community
- Exchange knowledge and expertise
- Network with others in the field
- Meet international experts
- Collaborate with your peers
- Learn about innovative and exciting new solutions
- Share your technical challenges
- Discover and offer fresh thinking, new ideas, different approaches
- Contribute to a future free of chemical weapons

Register

[Register now](#) to join us in demonstrating our shared commitment to eliminating this class of weapons of mass destruction, and discover ways we can overcome the challenges associated with their elimination.

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Last updated 4 October 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 4 October 2021

Updated conference information

2. 19 August 2021

CWD 2021 is now to be held in November as a virtual event, with an early bird discount for registrations before 10 September 2021.

3. 2 March 2021

The conference has been rescheduled to September 2021 and the deadlines for abstract submission and registration have been extended.

4. 21 December 2020

Updated conference information

5. 16 November 2020

First published.

Sellafield logistics provider wins two safety awards

Peterson received the awards in recognition of their consistent delivery of high safety standards and innovation.

Held annually, the awards celebrate the services and achievements of our contracting community and the important contributions they make to the safe and secure operation of our sites.

Peterson won our Chief Executive Officer's Award for their consistent excellence in health and safety performance, security and operational resilience, and providing value for our local communities.

Mark Neate, Sellafield Ltd's Environment, Safety and Security Director, said:

The commitment of everyone is paramount to successful safe operations. Maintaining our collective focus and personal responsibility to safety is crucial.

Our employees and contractor colleagues work together to safely progress our risk and hazard reduction mission, helping to create a clean and safe environment for future generations.

Peterson also received a Management of Contractors Safety Award for the second year running in recognition of their collaborative and innovative work at our off-site Security and Distribution Centre at Lillyhall in Cumbria.

Working closely with the Sellafield Ltd warehouse team, Peterson have introduced a number of innovations that have helped create a state-of-the-art facility at the centre; delivering fuel savings of £75,000 for the wider supply chain and avoiding over 190,000kg of CO2 emissions last year by maximising the consolidation of all goods.

Alan Matear, Peterson Site Manager, said:

Our team's relentless drive to deliver an excellent service has been exemplary since the start of operations at Lillyhall.

These awards are a reward for their hard work, dedication and

success achieved throughout the year.

We are excited about the future and will continue working with the Sellafield team to innovate and enhance our operations.

The Box Encapsulation Plant Direct Import Facility (BEPPS-DIF) delivery team, Jacobs Field Solutions and Nexus also picked up a Contractors Safety Award for their overall safety performance.