

Thailand joins forces with AstraZeneca on COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing



Today (12 October 2020), the Thai Ministry of Public Health, AstraZeneca, Siam Bioscience and SCG announced their intent to manufacture the University of Oxford's potential COVID-19 vaccine in Thailand. If the vaccine is successful, Thailand will receive doses with the aim of commencing the vaccination of the Thai population in the first half of 2021.

Large scale manufacturing at Siam Bioscience will strengthen broad, equitable and timely access to the potential vaccine in Southeast Asia and beyond. AstraZeneca is providing the potential vaccine at no profit during the pandemic and will work with Siam Bioscience to set up the manufacturing facilities through technology transfer.

COVID-19 is an unprecedented global threat. No one is safe until we are all safe. The UK funded the development of this, the University of Oxford COVID-19 vaccine, a leading candidate globally. British-Swedish pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca is working with Oxford University to make the vaccine globally available.

The UK is committed to ensuring rapid and equitable global access to safe, effective vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics for COVID-19. We are working, including by hosting summits and events and through donations, to fund a COVID-19 vaccine in developing countries so that we can all be vaccinated.

This important announcement by the Ministry of Public Health, AstraZeneca and Siam Bioscience is a key step in countering the pandemic in Thailand and Southeast Asia more broadly.

Speaking today at the ceremony Ambassador Brian Davidson said:

Defeating COVID-19 is – and needs to be – a global endeavour. The work of scientists, multilaterals and business as well as governments. It is a pleasure to witness the start of this critical partnership between Thailand's Ministry of Public Health, Siam BioScience, SCG and AstraZeneca.

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[Students to be given more time to prepare for 2021 exams](#)

Students now have more time to prepare for their exams next year, as most AS, A levels and GCSEs will be held 3 weeks later to help address the disruption caused by the pandemic.

The Prime Minister and Education Secretary are clear that exams will go ahead, as they are the fairest and most accurate way to measure a pupil's attainment.

Today (12 October), the government is announcing the summer exam series will start on 7 June and end on 2 July for almost all AS and A levels and GCSEs.

Results days are Tuesday 24 August for A and AS levels and Friday 27 August for GCSEs so students will start the following academic year as normal.

The government continues to prioritise children's education in its response to the pandemic, building on the remarkable efforts of teachers, students and parents in keeping pupils learning at school and at home.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Fairness to pupils is my priority, and will continue to be at the forefront of every decision we take in the lead up to exams next summer. Exams are the fairest way of judging a student's performance so they will go ahead, underpinned by contingency measures developed in partnership with the sector.

Students have experienced considerable disruption and it's right we give them, and their teachers, the certainty that exams will go ahead and more time to prepare.

Combined with our £1 billion catch-up programme and the changes proposed by Ofqual to free up teaching time, the changes I am

announcing today give young people the best chance of being ready for their exams without undermining the value of the qualifications they receive.

I will continue to work closely with stakeholders and I'm grateful for the commitment and willingness that's been shown in delivering this additional time to ensure young people have the best opportunity to succeed.

Schools and colleges have shown exams can be held, even in areas of local restriction. The autumn exam series – involving more than 20,000 entries – is already underway.

Given rising case numbers and the battle to suppress the virus, it is also right that there is consideration of the range of scenarios which might impact students' ability to sit exams and develop contingency plans.

The [Education Secretary has today written to Ofqual](#) (PDF, 180KB, 2 pages) to ask the regulator to work closely with him, school and further education leaders, exam boards, unions and the higher education sector to develop these arrangements.

The government will engage widely with the sector over the next 6 weeks to identify any risks to exams at a national, local, and individual student level, and consider measures needed to address any potential disruption. This could be a student unable to sit exams due to illness or self-isolation, or schools affected by a local outbreak during the examination season meaning centres cannot open.

More detail will be published later in the autumn, to ensure students have confidence that they will be fairly treated in terms of assessment in 2021.

One maths and one English GCSE exam will be held just before the May half-term, giving any year 11 pupils who are affected by COVID-19 the best possible chance of still sitting a paper in each of these core subjects.

The government is also confirming today that no further subject-level changes to exams and assessments will be made for GCSEs, AS and A levels. The changes outlined by Ofqual are designed to release time for teaching and to take account of public health considerations. This confirmation gives teachers, school leaders and pupils clarity on what will be assessed in exams next summer. This follows a public consultation carried out by the exams' regulator, Ofqual, earlier this year. Ofqual has also consulted on how assessments of vocational and technical qualifications will be adapted to free up teaching time and respond to any future public health measures.

Our £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up fund will help to tackle the impact of lost teaching time. The programme includes a £650 million catch up premium to help schools support all pupils and £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged students.

It is expected that for the majority of vocational and technical

qualifications that are taken alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, awarding organisations will look to align timetables with 2021 exams.

Disabled people to benefit from better journeys thanks to service station funding

- government awards 22 motorway service areas funding for Changing Places toilets
- second round of funding, extended to include A roads, launched by the Department for Transport
- next in series of improvements by the Secretary of State for Transport to create a more accessible transport network, helping disabled people travel safely and with confidence

Journeys will be easier and more comfortable for disabled people with more than a third of motorway service stations set to have Changing Places toilets.

The Department for Transport, in partnership with Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK), has today announced the 22 motorway service areas that have been successful in their bid for a share of government funding for [Changing Places toilets](#).

A second round of funding is now being launched, this time extended to include A roads, with operators of service stations on these routes, as well as on motorways, invited to bid.

A quarter of a million people cannot use standard accessible toilets and need access to Changing Places facilities, which have more space and equipment. This includes adult-sized changing benches and hoists, allowing people with conditions like muscular dystrophy and cerebral palsy to use the bathroom safely and comfortably.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

In a modern country, everyone should be able to travel.

Despite improvements in some areas, we need our roadside services to be better for the quarter of a million people who cannot use standard accessible toilets.

This is why we would like to go even further by extending this to the trunk road network. I encourage as many operators as possible

to apply for funding, to open up our road network to everyone who wants to use it.

Accessibility Minister Nusrat Ghani said:

I am delighted to be awarding nearly £750,000 to bring Changing Places toilets to 22 more service stations, helping ensure that everyone can use our roads easily and comfortably.

This is one of the commitments set out in our Inclusive Transport Strategy, an ambitious piece of work to complement the UN's sustainable development goals – helping make the world more inclusive for disabled people.

However, we know there is more to do which is why we are working hard on ensuring our wider transport network – not just roads, but railways, buses, aeroplanes and ferries too – is open to all.

The DfT's £2 million partnership with MDUK was announced last November to bring Changing Places toilets to more motorway service areas.

The fund was launched in April and motorway service area operators submitted their proposals for 50% funding support for specific new Changing Places toilet installations, which are expected to be ready by the early 2020s.

MDUK worked with the DfT to allocate funding which will support each individual operator's building work and equipment to add Changing Places toilets alongside other accessible facilities within their service stations. Catherine Woodhead, Chief Executive of Muscular Dystrophy UK, which co-chairs the Changing Places Consortium, said:

Too many disabled people and their families are excluded from doing things that others take for granted because there are not enough Changing Places. We're delighted that, thanks to the DfT's funding, 22 service stations will be installing these facilities.

This will make it easier for a quarter of a million people to go on holiday, enjoy a day out with friends, or simply visit the shops.

We won't stop campaigning until every service station in the country has a Changing Places toilet, and we would encourage businesses who haven't done so already to apply for funding in the next round of applications.

The investment is part of the government's [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#) which aims to provide equal access to the transport network by 2030, with assistance if physical infrastructure remains a barrier.

Published in 2018, it set out key commitments to improve disabled people's

access across all modes of transport by 2030. Achievements so far include:

- a commitment to extend the [Access for All](#) programme with an additional £300 million, delivering improvements at a further 73 stations between 2019 and 2024
- the introduction of the first impartial and independent [Rail Ombudsman](#), making sure passengers are heard and that they get a fair deal when train companies fall short
- the extension of the [Blue Badge](#) eligibility criteria to include people with non-visible disabilities

The government announced in May proposals for new, or majorly refurbished, large buildings used by the public to have Changing Places toilets for severely disabled people. This could add the toilets to more than 150 new buildings a year, including shopping centres, supermarkets, cinemas, stadiums and arts venues. This builds upon the government's announcement last December of £2 million funding to kickstart installation of [Changing Places facilities in NHS hospitals](#).

The [Changing Places application portal](#) will be open until December.

The 22 successful motorway service area operators are:

Motorway service station	Motorway	County
Moto rugby	M6	Warwickshire
Knutsford Services NB	M6	Cheshire
Ferrybridge Services	M62	West Yorkshire
Reading EB	M4	Berkshire
Heston WB	M4	Greater London
Hilton Park SB	M6	Staffordshire
Strensham North	M5	Worcestershire
Tibshelf South	M1	Derbyshire
Tibshelf North	M1	Derbyshire
Taunton Deane North	M5	Somerset
Strensham South	M5	Worcestershire
Sedgemoor	M5	Somerset
Rownhams South	M27	Hampshire
Northampton South	M1	Northamptonshire
Northampton North	M1	Northamptonshire
Maidstone	M20	Kent
Durham	A1(M)	County Durham
Clacket Lane West	M25	Surrey
Chester MSA	M56	Cheshire
Gloucester NB	M5	Gloucestershire
Tebay SB	M6	Cumbria
Birchanger	M11	Essex

The second round funded areas are:

Motorway service station	Motorway	County
Birch EB	M62	Lancashire
Birch WB	M62	Lancashire
Blyth	A1(M)	Nottinghamshire
Burton	M6	Lancashire
Chieveley	M4	Berkshire
Doncaster NB	M18	South Yorkshire
Frankley NB	M5	Worcestershire
Frankley SB	M5	Worcestershire
Grantham NB	A1	Lincolnshire
Heston EB	M4	Middlesex
Hilton Park NB	M6	Staffordshire
Knutsford SB	M6	Cheshire
Lancaster NB	M6	Lancashire
Lancaster SB	M6	Lancashire
Leeming Bar	A1(M)	North Yorkshire
Leigh Delamere	M4	Wiltshire
Lymm	M6	Cheshire
Pease Pottage	M23	West Sussex
Reading WB	M4	Berkshire
Rownhams NB (RC)	M27	Hampshire
Southwaite SB	M6	Cumbria
Severn View	M48	Bristol
Stafford NB	M6	Staffordshire
Stafford SB (RC)	M6	Staffordshire
Tamworth	M42	Staffordshire
Taunton SB (RC)	M5	Somerset
Tiverton	M5	Devon
Toddington SB	M1	Bedfordshire
Todhills NB	M6	Cumbria
Todhills SB	M6	Cumbria
Washington SB	A1(M)	Tyne and Wear
Washington NB	A1(M)	Tyne and Wear
Wetherby	A1(M)	North Yorkshire
Winchester SB	M3	Hampshire
Winchester NB	M3	Hampshire
Woolley Edge SB	M1	West Yorkshire
Woolley Edge NB	M1	West Yorkshire

Sellafield's 'industrial activism' provides blueprint for regional recoveries

News story

Jamie Reed, head of development and community relations has recently spoke at a panel discussion on social impact at a New Statesman virtual conference.



Sellafield Ltd's Social Impact Programme has recently relaunched as SiX: Social Impact, Multiplied]

A 'place-based' approach, backed by business, is the key to rebuilding regional economies post-covid, Sellafield Ltd's Jamie Reed, head of development and community relations has said..

Sellafield Ltd's Social Impact Programme, recently relaunched as [SiX: Social Impact, Multiplied](#), invests over £10 million a year into its local communities.

We need a unified approach to post-pandemic recovery, with the private and public sectors working together, Jamie told the conference delegates.

Business has to play its part by prioritising social value alongside shareholder value.

If we can get business to act in this way: to embrace a place-based approach where they prioritise responsibility to local communities as well as employees and shareholders, we can create an irresistible force.

At Sellafield Ltd, we've been doing this for years: building

schools, diversifying the local economy, creating vibrant supply chains, and helping develop resilient families.

Our approach is built on the United Nations' sustainability goals, a ready-made template for businesses to follow.

We're seeing encouraging moves already with initiatives like the Embankment Project for Inclusive Capital (EPIC) where banks are trying to do more for communities.

And the US Business Roundtable's redefinition of the purpose of a business, emphasising place-based economic growth as well as shareholder value.

We already have legislation on the statute book in the Social Value Act 2012 which allows organisations procuring public services to consider local economic factors as well as cost in their decision-making.

The tools are there, we just need a collective desire to work together and a recognition that there's no such thing as a public or private sector economy, there's just one economy.

Jamie was joined on the panel by Seema Malhotra, Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Steven Broomhead, chief executive of Warrington Council, and Jessica Bowles, of property developer Bruntwood

Click on the [link](#) to watch the full recording of the virtual webinar.

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[Commission issues Official Warning to charity linked to clothing recycling banks](#)

The Charity Commission has issued an [Official Warning](#) to the trustees of [Helping Our Future](#) for repeated failure to engage with the regulator in response to serious concerns about the charity.

Helping Our Future has charitable objects to support children in the UK, Pakistan and India. The charity is based in Wolverhampton.

The Commission opened a regulatory compliance case into the charity in

December 2016 following concerns about the charity's use of clothing recycling banks.

Complaints included that companies connected to the charity had removed other charities' recycling banks and had failed to obtain the relevant permission from landowners before situating their own banks. The charity took no action in response.

When asked about these companies by the Commission, the trustees could not explain how they worked, how the amount due to the charity was calculated or what clothing had been collected.

The trustees also did not demonstrate any oversight or control over funds being raised in the charity's name through its clothing recycling banks.

Other concerns included:

- contact with the trustees was difficult; the correspondent changed frequently, it was unclear who was the CEO and meetings were cancelled or postponed at short notice
- when the Commission did meet with the trustees, they had little knowledge of their roles and responsibilities, or why certain activities had been undertaken by the charity
- the trustees were unaware of their financial responsibilities, filed late accounts for 2018 and 2019, and their bank account was closed with no new account opened
- the trustees attempted to amend their charitable objects without obtaining the relevant permission from the regulator, misrepresented these charity objects in places including on the charity's website and carried out activities that did not further those objects.

The Commission tried repeatedly to engage with the trustees and resolve its concerns, over several years.

However, as a result of successive failures by the trustees to address concerns and engage with the Commission, the regulator has taken the significant step of exercising its power under section 75A of the Charities Act 2011 to issue an Official Warning to the trustees, directing them to take specific actions.

Helen Earner, Director of Regulatory Services at the Charity Commission, said:

Good governance is not a bureaucratic detail – it underpins the delivery of a charity's purposes to the high standards expected by the public. It's the way in which trustees can ensure they are meeting their responsibilities to their charity and its beneficiaries.

The trustees of Helping Our Future did not demonstrate good governance or act even after significant concerns were raised with them. They have also been obstructive in response to our approaches. We expect the trustees to now act quickly to comply with the required actions and address our continued concerns.

Failure to comply with the actions set out in the [Official Warning](#) will lead to the regulator taking further action against the trustees.

The Commission has an ongoing regulatory case into Helping Our Future.

Ends.

Notes to Editors:

1. The Official Warning was issued to the trustees in place at the charity at the time. Note, trustees were removed, added and some re-appointed as trustees during the course of the charity's interactions with the Commission.
2. The trustees issued with the Official Warning are Marcia Vargova, Saffron Amber Hill, Chris Williamson, Ella Simone Hall and David Usher.
3. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.