

UK virtual events to boost economic ties with Guatemala

World news story

The British Embassy in Guatemala is holding a month of virtual business activities in response to the coronavirus pandemic with a message of rebuilding the economy.



The event's message and theme -British Business Season- was created as businesses reel from the effects of the COVID-19. It aims to strengthen the commercial and investment ties between the UK and Guatemala.

Attendees are going to be inspired and engaged by a notable roster of speakers and variety of interactive breakout sessions. It will bring the opportunity to learn more on infrastructure, trade and regulations, amongst other topics.

Virtual activities will run during October 2020 and will include:

- Infrastructure dialogue: an opportunity for companies to learn about the UK experience on PPP and COVID-19 reactivation linked projects.
- Business opportunities: to explore the ways of doing business with the UK, export tendencies and regulations in a post-Brexit world.
- UK prime products: a view of the mainstream imports from the UK to Central America and refreshed inventories of interest to potential buyers.

The British Embassy will also engage in a political dialogue with the authorities to keep advancing these interests in light of the implementation as from 1 January 2021 of the [UK – Central America Association Agreement](#).

The British Ambassador to Guatemala, Nick Whittingham, said:

The British Business Season is an opportunity to refocus our efforts on the business community by learning the best practices to help rebuild and re-emerge as more resilient and better-equipped to

withstand future economic impacts of COVID-19.

To keep abreast of these events and opportunities to join, please follow our social media on:

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Alternatively, register your interest at embajadabritanicagt@gmail.com

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Tackling the diverse challenges of COVID-19

Thank you, President Issoufou, and thank you to Niger for convening this very important meeting. May I firstly join with others in thanking you, Secretary-General, for your valuable insights and also commend your efforts at leading us through this global pandemic. I also wish to thank his excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat for his contribution and the specific focus and insight he brought from across Africa and the response of the African Union.

And if I may, Mr. President, I want to start with positives. As we face challenges, we often forget what has truly been achieved. The United Nations system, including importantly the World Health Organisation, has responded quickly to health, humanitarian and socio-economic needs, and deployed around the globe in places that are home to some of the world's most vulnerable communities. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have adapted their instruments to macroeconomic challenges posed by the pandemic, and worked importantly in partnership with the United Nations. And also the G20 moved swiftly to suspend debt service payments for the world's poorest countries so that nations are supported in their direct efforts to protect lives first and to alleviate economic and financial crises. And, as Minister for the Commonwealth, the 54 Commonwealth Heads of government issued a joint statement setting out a full range of international priorities in response to the pandemic, committing to work to mitigate the effects. And if I may importantly also acknowledge GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, to which the United Kingdom recently pledged over \$2 billion, that has seen nations coming together in search importantly for a solution to protect people with diseases.

Mr. President, these examples show the international community, the global response, at its best – when we work together, when we meet our collective

needs through multilateral working, through good faith and full cooperation between member states. Yet, as much as this crisis has brought us together, there have been times when it has driven us apart. At times, geopolitics have tampered cooperation and hindered our agility. The pandemic has tested the international system like never before. It is therefore in our collective interest to ensure the multilateral system doesn't just emerge from this crisis, but as it emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is stronger, more together, to cope with the challenges in the future.

There will be a time to reflect on the lessons of this pandemic and how we prepare better for the next challenge. The UN reforms implemented over the last two years have been shown to work and we must continue and strive to improve all our international organisations. But, Mr President, now is not the moment to reject international institutions. Those principles that emerged from one of the darkest periods of human history, as the Secretary General reminded us, are needed again to bring us out of the lockdown and back into the light.

Preventing the indirect effects of this pandemic may prove harder still, with implications for international peace and security. We know, for instance, that the hundreds of millions of people around the world face food insecurity. And sadly, this will get worse. Therefore global cooperation is both critical and necessary to avoid catastrophe. And that is why the United Kingdom has made a call to action to prevent famine, with \$150 million of new funding on top of the \$1 billion we have already contributed to the international response. We have also appointed a new special envoy on famine prevention, Nick Dyer, and we urge all member states to support our collective efforts.

To conclude, Mr. President, let me assure all colleagues, all partners, all member states, that the UK stands strongly by the values of the UN Charter. We believe strongly in its principles of peaceful international cooperation and, importantly, respect for human rights. This year, as we commemorate the UN's 75th anniversary, we should all reaffirm our commitment to these valuable principles and in doing so, rebuild, equipped and support to ensure that we come together to tackle the challenges and avail the opportunities that lie ahead.

Thank you, Mr President.

[New measures to deliver value to society through public procurement](#)

- New measures launched to promote new jobs and skills, encourage economic growth and prosperity, tackle climate change and level up the UK
- Social value in procurement model launched today will be used by

- government departments to assess a supplier's social impact
- New approach will mean more opportunities for SMEs and social enterprises to win Government contracts by demonstrating the full extent of the value they would generate
- Value for money will still be paramount, but a bidder's social value score will be incorporated into assessment of contracts.

Government departments will use the social value model to assess and score suppliers on the wider positive benefits they bring by delivering the contract. This will mean that value for money for the taxpayer can be maximised while also building a more resilient and diverse supplier base.

The social value model which departments will assess contracts on includes:

- Supporting COVID-19 recovery, including helping local communities manage and recover from the impact of COVID
- Tackling economic inequality, including creating new businesses, jobs and skills, as well as increasing supply chain resilience
- Fighting climate change and reducing waste
- Driving equal opportunity, including reducing the disability employment gap and tackling workforce inequality Improving health and wellbeing and community integration

The new approach will apply tests that all bidders, irrespective of their size and type, will be capable of meeting and therefore further levels the playing field for the UK's small businesses, start-ups and voluntary and community sector organisations and social enterprises.

Government is determined to unite and level up the country, including in places that feel left behind. At the heart of these new social value measures is supporting businesses and communities.

The new measures launched today will come into effect on 1st January 2021.

Welcoming the new rules, Cabinet Office Minister, Julia Lopez said:

Government has tremendous buying power, spending £49bn each year on contracts for vital public services. Value to the taxpayer should lie at the heart of our procurement decisions.

Too often, however, 'value' has been narrowly defined by price without taking into account other important factors such as the number of local jobs or apprenticeships a contractor will provide, the care they show the environment in their business practices or the number of SMEs involved in their wider supply chain.

We want to see a greater variety of companies deliver government contracts, from every corner of our country – not just because that benefits local economies and communities but because it helps diversify our risk, create a more resilient supplier base and deliver some of our critical priorities.

If we can use government's buying power to drive that broader value, the better our chances of levelling up our country and investing in our people as part of our COVID recovery.

Commercial teams in all government departments will also be expected to complete training courses in implementing the new model and how to ensure the maximum social value is derived from each contract.

The changes mean that central government will now be required to go further than the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 to ensure that all major procurements explicitly evaluate social value, where appropriate, rather than just consider it.

The Minister for Civil Society, Baroness Barran said:

This hugely positive change will ensure taxpayers' money supports levelling up across the country, encouraging businesses to give back to their communities and offering more opportunities for our dedicated charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups. This way we can ensure government contracts are helping to tackle economic inequality and support our recovery.

The move has also been welcomed by both business leaders and experts in the field of social value.

Arnab Dutt, the chair of the Social Value Policy Unit at the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

I welcome the announcement on social value procurement as an important step forward for public sector supply chains. Its focus on addressing economic inequality, the climate emergency and societal wellbeing is a 21st century agenda.

Social value has the potential to be transformational in bringing opportunity to all parts of our country and to the many small businesses that are the lifeblood of our communities.

The Federation of Small Businesses continues to help shape policy for a dynamic ecosystem for our UK SMEs in collaboration with the public sector, acknowledging that the government's SME growth agenda and social value policy go hand in hand.

Mark Fox, the Chief Executive of The Business Services Association, added:

This is a good initiative putting people first by focussing on social value. It helps push up standards and best practice.

Denmark, Slovakia, Iceland and Curaçao removed from UK travel corridor exempt list

- Denmark, Iceland, Curaçao and Slovakia removed from list of travel corridors for UK arrivals, following data showing a significant increase in confirmed cases
- people planning to go overseas urged to check the latest advice from the FCD0 before travelling
- all travellers will be required to fill in a [passenger locator form](#) before arriving into the UK

People arriving in the UK from Denmark, Iceland, Curaçao and Slovakia from 4am Saturday 26 September 2020 will need to [self-isolate](#) for 2 weeks as the countries are removed from the [travel corridors list](#).

Data from the Joint Biosecurity Centre and Public Health England has indicated a significant change in both the level and pace of confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in all those destinations, leading to ministers removing these from the current list of travel corridors.

There has been a consistent increase in COVID-19 cases per 100,000 of the population in Iceland, with data showing a 921% increase in newly reported cases over the past week. In Slovakia, there has been a consistent increase in the weekly case rate of COVID-19 over the past 4 weeks, with a 115% increase in weekly cases per 100,000 between 2 and 23 September 2020.

There has also been a 508% increase in newly reported cases per week in Denmark over the past 4 weeks, and a 481% increase in newly reported cases over 7 days per 100,000 between 2 and 23 September 2020 in Curaçao.

At the same time, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCD0) has also updated its [travel advice](#) to advise against all but essential travel to Denmark, Iceland, Curaçao and Slovakia.

The government has made consistently clear it will take decisive action if necessary to contain the virus, including removing countries from the travel corridors list rapidly if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

People currently in [Denmark](#), [Iceland](#), [Curaçao](#) and [Slovakia](#) are encouraged to follow the local rules and check the FCD0 travel advice pages for further information. The government is urging employers to be understanding of those returning from these destinations who now will need to [self-isolate](#).

COVID-19 has profoundly changed the nature of international travel.

Travellers should always check the latest advice from the FCD0, given the potential for changing coronavirus infection rates to affect both the advice about travelling to other countries and rules about self-isolation on return.

All travellers, including those from exempt destinations, will still be required to show a complete [passenger locator form](#) on arrival into the UK unless they fall into a small group of exemptions. Border Force carry out spot checks, and travellers who refuse to provide their contact details via the passenger locator form, face a fixed penalty starting at £100.

More than 1 in 10 people in England have now been tested for coronavirus

- More than 1 in 10 people in England have been tested at least once since the service launched
- Weekly statistics show NHS Test and Trace has now successfully reached almost 500,000 people testing positive and their contacts
- The median distance travelled for in-person tests is 5.2 miles 'as the crow flies', with 28 new local test sites opening this week to help reduce distances even further

This comes after it was announced that those people asked to self-isolate who are on low incomes and are unable to work from home will be eligible for [financial support of £500 to stay at home](#), while those breaking the rules risk fines of at least £1,000.

Since the launch of NHS Test and Trace on 28 May, more than 11% of people living in England have been tested at least once. This includes regular retesting of care home staff and residents, as the service sends out over 100,000 tests a day to care homes.

The number of people testing positive this week has increased, with NHS Test and Trace continuing to reach the vast majority of positive cases and their contacts. This week the service successfully reached 77.7% of people who tested positive and 84.7% of the contacts where communication details were provided.

Work continues to expand testing capacity across the UK, to reach a target of 500,000 tests a day by the end of October. More labs across the country are joining the network, with automation driving increases in tests processed each day at the country's Lighthouse Labs. In a drive to reach 500, 28 new test sites will be opening this week, reducing the distance people need to travel to get a test.

The statistics show that the median distance travelled currently stands at 5.2 miles. Since 16 September, daily testing capacity has already increased

by nearly 16,000 tests a day, from 242,911 to 258,877 on 23 September. The median time taken to receive a result from a test taken in person was 30 to 34 hours, with 52.9% of results received the day after they were taken.

Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection Baroness Dido Harding said:

NHS Test and Trace has reached a milestone moment this week, successfully reaching almost half a million people and advising them to self-isolate. We are supporting those testing positive and their contacts to stay at home to stop transmission.

The new COVID-19 app launched today will help us go even further, alerting users if they have been in close contact with someone with the virus, even if they do not know each other. I hope everyone across England and Wales downloads it today to help protect those around them from the spread of the virus.

While millions of people in England have now successfully been tested, we continue to see unprecedented demand. We continue to work tirelessly to build our testing capacity to meet this and our target of 500,000 tests a day, building our lab network and testing sites across the country.

The [guidance for testing](#) remains in place, with only those experiencing symptoms eligible for tests. Symptoms of coronavirus are a new continuous cough, high temperature and/or a loss or change in taste or smell. People requiring tests are advised to make appointments at test sites, with new slots available throughout the day.

In response to unprecedented demand, a [list of priority groups has been published](#) outlining how the government is managing capacity to protect the most vulnerable, protect the economy and manage outbreaks. Priorities include NHS patients and workers, care home residents and staff, teachers and areas of high prevalence. Essential workers can [book a test](#) across the country by declaring their occupations.

The [new NHS COVID-19 app has also launched today](#), with people across England and Wales encouraged to download it to help control transmission alongside national and local contact tracing. The app uses low-energy Bluetooth to log the amount of time you spend near other app users, and the distance between you, so it can alert you if someone you have been close to later tests positive for COVID-19 – even if you do not know each other. The app has been designed with user privacy in mind, so it tracks the virus, not people, and uses the latest in data security technology to protect privacy.

The [weekly statistics from the 16th week of NHS Test and Trace](#) show in the most recent week of operations (10 to 16 September):

- testing capacity increased by 3% from the previous week to 1,663,155 (pillars 1 and 2) across the UK

- 77.7% of people who tested positive and were transferred to the contact-tracing system were reached and asked to provide information about their contacts
- 84.7% of contacts where communication details were given have been reached and told to self-isolate
- pillar 1 testing capacity was at 575,155, similar to the previous week (swab testing in PHE labs and NHS hospitals for those with a clinical need, for health and care workers, and to help manage outbreaks – including in care homes)
- pillar 2 testing capacity was at 1,089,000, an increase of 5% since the previous week (swab testing for the wider population administered by commercial partners across the UK)
- pillar 3 testing capacity was at 840,000, the same as the previous week (antibody testing administered by PHE – these are serology tests to show if people have antibodies from having had COVID-19)
- pillar 4 testing capacity was at 28,800 a decrease of 60% since the previous week (swab testing for large-scale surveillance studies on the spread of COVID-19)

Statistics from the 16th week of operation of NHS Test and Trace show that since the service launched:

- 497,367 people have been reached by the service. This includes both those testing positive and their contacts
- 86.4% of all contacts where communication details were given have been reached and told to self-isolate