

Government gives businesses much-needed breathing space with extension of insolvency measures

Published 24 September 2020

Last updated 16 February 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 16 February 2021

Government intends to extend the power to make temporary amendments or modify the effects of corporate insolvency and governance legislation for an additional year.

2. 9 December 2020

Government will reinstate the temporary suspension of the use of statutory demands and winding-up petitions until 31 March 2021.

3. 7 December 2020

Updated with 25 November announcement that government will reinstate the temporary removal of the threat of personal liability for wrongful trading from directors until 30 April 2021, and that companies obliged to hold AGMs will still have flexibility to hold them virtually until 31 March 2020.

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5. 24 September 2020

First published.

Automated cone laying vehicle spotted

on roads in new trial

After successfully completing extensive off-road testing, the automated cone laying vehicle has now taken to the road network for the first time. It has been putting out traffic management on both the A5 and M54 in Shropshire. Further testing is set to take place on the M4 in Berkshire.

Developed by Highways England and a group of industry experts, the vehicle avoids the need for two people to manually lift and drop the cones in almost all weathers.

With traffic rushing past, the bulk of this work is undertaken at night with the workers lifting as much as 10 tonnes of equipment per shift.

The automated cone laying vehicles, which could be in use by the end of the year, will be operated solely by the driver therefore improving safety and freeing up two workers to carry out other tasks.

Watch a video of [the automated cone laying vehicle in action](#).

Two vehicles have been developed. The first, created by Highway Care, is being trialled on the Highways England road network. The second, developed by competitor King Highway Products, is currently undergoing testing in Holland and will shortly be trialled off-road in the UK.

Highways England Head of Lean and Continuous Improvement Martin Bolt, who oversees the project, said:

The implications of these vehicles in protecting the safety of workers are immense and we are delighted that testing is progressing so well. By taking the human element out of laying cones we are eliminating one of the greatest risks for road workers.

We have received a lot of support from the industry as a whole for the automated vehicle and we are now getting some very positive feedback from those workers who have been trialling the Highways Care prototype on the live roads network.

If this testing proves as successful as we anticipate it will, motorists could be spotting more of these automated cone laying vehicles on the roads by the end of the year.

Kier General Foreman Stuart Pegg, who used the vehicle to put out traffic management on the A5, said:

It was great to be invited to participate in this ground-breaking advancement in traffic management. We have ironed out a few initial

teething problems and I found the automated cone laying vehicle easy to use. It performed above my personal expectations.

Experts from Highways England, Kier, HW Martin Traffic Management and competitors Highway Care and King Highway Products are working together in a collaborative effort to resolve this potential safety risk.

Highways England are funding the development and establishing a minimum standard while the companies themselves are developing the vehicles.

To date, ergonomics experts have struggled to identify a suitable method of placing and removing cones that doesn't have an impact on workers due to the twisting of the body required or a vehicle that does not require any workers on the back.

It is hoped the automated cone laying vehicles will tackle this issue. Highways England criteria stipulates that not only must the machines offer a safer method for highways workers, they must be safe for all road users and pose no further risk to traffic.

The new cone laying vehicles must be able to lay/collect at least 400 cones at a rate of one every 10 seconds. If the tests prove successful the two companies will be able to take their vehicles to the marketplace.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

14,199 more NHS nurses and nursing student acceptances rise by 23%

The number of nurses in the NHS in England increased by 14,199 compared to last year, and the number of doctors has risen by 9,283, [figures published today up until the end of June show](#).

All professionally qualified clinical staff, paramedics and support to clinical staff are now at record levels.

Alongside this, the latest UCAS figures out today show there are record

numbers of people accepting a place to study nursing in England, with a 23% increase on the same time last year, or 5,000 more student nurses.

Responding to today's NHS workforce statistics, Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The NHS is there for us all in our hour of need, and the safety of our health and social care staff that support us day in, day out is my top priority. It is fantastic to see over 14,100 more nurses and over 9,200 more doctors working in the NHS, putting it in the best possible position to continue tackling this global health emergency.

With the latest UCAS figures out today showing a record 23% rise in people accepting places on nursing courses in England, we are also well on our way to delivering 50,000 more nurses by the end of this Parliament.

In July the NHS People Plan set out how the NHS will put staff wellbeing at its heart with a new recruitment, retention and support package. It sets out practical support for wellbeing such as safe spaces to rest and recuperate, wellbeing guardians and support to keep staff physically safe and healthy.

The figures for June include some former healthcare professionals who bravely volunteered to return to the frontline during the pandemic. June figures also show that 649 returners were identified, of which, there are 102 doctors and 165 nurses and health visitors. Not all returners are reflected in the monthly workforce stats as they could have been employed on Fixed Term, Honorary or Bank contracts, or via NHS Professionals.

Background information

Today NHS Digital has published their monthly [NHS workforce data for June 2020](#)

Over the last year (June 2019 to 2020) the number of nurses has gone up by 14,199, from 281,619 to 295,818.

Over the last year (June 2019 to 2020) the number of doctors has gone up by 9,283, from 111,860 to 121,142.

Student nurses do not have full registration with the NMC, and so are counted as 'support to clinical staff'. They are not included in the 'nurses' count. Medical students are on the same standing as Foundation 1 doctors, and so are counted as 'doctors' in the statistics.

NHS Professionals is an organisation in the United Kingdom that supplies temporary staff to the National Health Service.

Why we are backing our leading space scientists to clean up the cosmos

On 2 July 2018, a £100 million satellite called CryoSat-2 was completing its daily rounds of monitoring ice caps back on Earth from an orbital vantage point 700 kilometres above us, when mission controllers spotted a chunk of space debris hurtling towards it at 17,000 miles per hour.

To avert a potentially catastrophic collision, engineers fired up CryoSat's thrusters and moved it out of harm's way. This near miss was not the first, and it will not be the last.

An estimated 20,000 pieces of space debris, better known as 'space junk'; are whizzing around the Earth as you read this. This includes zombie satellites and whole junkyards' worth of whirling fragments left over from space missions.

Without the right protection, a four-inch piece of space junk could breach the walls of a satellite and smash it into thousands of parts, and in doing so, set off a chain reaction that could see a cascade of collisions that expands many years.

This chain reaction is known as the Kessler Syndrome, after the space debris expert Don Kessler, who predicted in 1976 that the space around Earth could become so riddled with junk that launches become impossible and vehicles that entered space would quickly be destroyed.

And this risk of a catastrophic collision is only going up, with the amount of junk in low orbit increasing by 50% in the last five years. Put simply, the plot to the sci-fi thriller Gravity could become our reality in space.

Satellites are critical to our everyday lives – they keep us connected to families and loved ones during a pandemic, they track and give us insights on climate change, and they tell us if we will need to take an umbrella on our lunch break.

While satellite operators can dodge large pieces of debris and armour satellites to withstand the impact of smaller fragments, with the need for a growing number of satellites in orbit we need to be able to monitor the space highways and to gradually clear it of obstructions.

But if we do not take action now, low-Earth orbit could become impossible for satellites to navigate and perhaps it might become too perilous for astronauts to live on the International Space Station.

If we want to continue to reach for the stars in the years to come and realise our ambitions to use satellite technology to improve lives on Earth,

we need to clean up our act.

That is why I am delighted to announce over £1 million in government funding for seven of the UK's most pioneering space projects that will help monitor hazardous space debris and protect the vital services we rely on every day – from mobile communications to weather forecasting.

And although at present we do not own a celestial broom or a tractor beam that can wipe out each bit of detritus, the companies we are backing are developing technologies like artificial intelligence and sensor technology, that will help up our game in spotting these risks and taking evasive action.

We are championing new ideas in the form of London-based Lift Me Off which is developing, and testing machine-learning algorithms designed to distinguish between satellites and space debris using thermal infrared and optical cameras.

Artwork: D-Orbit UK, one of the companies receiving funding

Meanwhile Andor, based in Northern Ireland, will use a scientific detector camera to help the astronomy community track debris which can interrupt ground-based astronomy.

Another project will draw on the expertise of Fujitsu and Amazon, as well as Astroscale, to improve the commercial viability of missions that seek to remove debris – clearing the space highway.

Each project represents a first step to developing new UK capabilities to help protect the space environment.

And they all demonstrate the very best of UK science and innovation – bringing together the country's brightest minds, taking us beyond the reaches of our own home planet to tackle some of our greatest challenges now and into the future.

At the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, world leaders defined sustainable development as 'meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'.

In space, this test has yet to be met. Only by tapping in to the UK space sector's growing expertise we will ensure we make this a reality.

[Fishing industry in 2019 statistics](#)

published

Press release

Fishing industry in 2019 statistics published



The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has published its annual UK Sea Fisheries Statistics 2019. The publication is a summary of:

- The UK fishing fleet
- Trade
- Its activity at sea: Landings – how much fish they catch and land, Effort – how long they spend at sea

Fleet

- In 2019, there were 5,911 UK registered fishing vessels. There are around 12,000 fishers working on UK registered vessels. This has been stable for the past decade.
- Almost 80 per cent of the UK fleet is made up of vessels of 10 metres and under in length. Vessels over 24 metres in length account for just 4 per cent of the total number but for three fifths of total capacity and a third of total power.

Landings

- In 2019, UK vessels landed 622 thousand tonnes of sea fish with a value of £987 million. Compared to 2018, this is a reduction of 11 per cent and 2 per cent in quantity and value respectively.
- This is mainly driven by a reduction in the quota for key pelagic species e.g. mackerel between 2018 and 2019.

- In 2019, 34 per cent of all landings by UK vessels into UK ports were into Peterhead. Peterhead is consistently the UK port with the largest quantity and value of landings.

Effort

- Fishing effort by the over 10m fleet decreased by only 3 per cent between 2018 and 2019, following the levelling off seen since 2011. Since 2003, fishing effort by the over 10m fleet has decreased by 35 per cent.
- Most of the reduction in effort is driven by a 36 per cent decline in effort (2004-2019) in the demersal trawl and seine segment.

Trade

- The UK is a net importer of fish, with imports exceeding exports. The UK's trade gap in 2019 for sea fish is 270 thousand tonnes.
- In 2019, the UK imported 721 thousand tonnes of sea fish, with a value of £3,457 million. It exported 452 thousand tonnes with a value of £2,004 million.

View the [full report, tables and underlying datasets](#)

Notes to editors:

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) regulates the seas around England, including the management of fisheries.

The MMO has the difficult balancing task of ensuring that stocks are managed throughout the year to maximise fishing opportunities for the UK industry, while ensuring that stocks are not overfished and the UK government and taxpayer does not have to pay steep penalties.

We are continually working with the fishing industry to improve day-to-day management with accurate catch limits and forecasts that secure longer fisheries, while safeguarding the welfare of fish stocks.

Further information is available from our [website](#)

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