

Government accelerating pothole mapping project to support motorists and cyclists ahead of school return

- crackdown on potholes launched through a new data-driven review following acceleration of road repair during lockdown
- review will be supported by pothole mapping data from businesses including Deliveroo, Uber, Tesco and Ocado to help identify hotspots for repairs
- quieter roads during lockdown have led to 319 miles of resurfacing works, including potholes
- ahead of schools going back next week, review will drive forward work to make roads safer for cyclists and motorists

A first-of-its-kind audit into the mapping of potholes in England has been launched today (28 August 2020) by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, aided by data from on-road businesses such as Uber and Deliveroo, to better target improvements so that roads are in top condition as people return to work and school.

The Department for Transport will work with Gaist, a highway data and mapping company, businesses such as Deliveroo, Uber, Tesco and Ocado, alongside local highway authorities to identify 'pothole hot-spots'.

Combining collated data on current potholes held by nation-wide businesses and the most up-to-date bank of roads imagery in the country from Gaist, the department will be able to paint the most comprehensive picture ever of where funding is most needed to make sure roads are not plagued by potholes. It will make roads as safe as possible as more commuters and students undertake journeys in the coming months. The plan will help cyclists and motorists get back to school and work.

The government has already committed £2.5 billion in funding for pothole repairs in the biggest nationwide programme ever announced. The launch of the review comes as new data reveals that highway maintenance works undertaken in the past months when roads were quieter during lockdown has led to 319 miles of resurfacing, making sure that roads are in better condition so that people can get back to work and school safely.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

I want our roads to be as safe as possible, so during the lockdown we've resurfaced hundreds of miles of road. But now I want to go further by identifying critical potholes and ensuring these are fixed as quickly as possible.

We're teaming up with delivery companies, who know the roads well,

in order to map out where remaining potholes exist and then relentlessly target them with our record £2.5 billion to pothole repair fund.

Better road surfaces benefit motorists and cyclists alike ensuring the back to school and work environment is safer for everyone.

Charlie Wren, Director of Operations at Deliveroo, said:

Deliveroo riders go above and beyond to bring people the food they love and this is a great way to make sure they and other road users are safe on the road. We're looking forward to working with the government on this important scheme to help make the roads safer for Deliveroo riders and others.

Since 2010, the government has provided over £1.2 billion solely to help repair potholes on the local highway network, including £500 million from the £2.5 billion announced in the Budget earlier this year. Safe roads have never been more important, with the government urging commuters, parents and school children to choose to cycle or walk for part or all of their commutes to help ease demand on public transport and travel safely as the country recovers from the pandemic.

Better quality roads will also make it easier, safer and more convenient than ever for people to cycle. The government has previously announced plans to deliver a cycling and walking revolution by investing £2 billion over the next 5 years to support more people to choose active travel and through the launch of our most ambition [Cycling and Walking plan](#) ever.

With potholes posing a problem to all road users' safety, the pothole mapping review will allow for the government to ably target the worst-affected areas, levelling up road quality across the country.

[Providing rapid humanitarian relief to the people of Syria](#)

Thank you, Mr President, and we're grateful as ever to Mr Rajasingham and for his briefing today.

The humanitarian situation in Syria clearly remains bleak. And it's clear from the briefing that the decision by some members of this Council to veto on the 7th and the 10th of July resolutions that would have authorised sufficient humanitarian border crossings, crossings that the UN told us were desperately needed, that that decision has had the impact that we all feared.

As OCHA has made clear, access has been reduced and this has resulted in more costly, higher risk, less timely and ultimately less effective humanitarian aid. And the people of Syria are suffering as a result.

It's also clear that the increasingly fragile north-west ceasefire and the worrying rise in Covid cases has left Syria once again on the brink of humanitarian disaster. The reports from inside Syria of increasing numbers of Covid deaths and that hospitals in Aleppo are running out of body bags are shocking.

The temporary postponement of the Constitutional Committee talks within Geneva due to members of all three delegations testing positive for Covid illustrates just how widespread the disease is and shows both the human cost and the impact on work to create a future Syria.

Yet we should not be surprised that this disaster is unfolding and that healthcare capacity within Syria is so greatly overstretched. The Syrian regime's brutal pursuit of the conflict has left the whole of Syria ill prepared for a pandemic.

It is disturbing that there are now only 57 fully functioning public hospitals in the whole of the country. To address the threat of Covid across Syria, it is essential that the World Health Organization has unfettered access and is able to deliver a coordinated response.

Amongst all of this, health care workers continue to put their lives at risk to help those who need it most in the face of bombs and violence. And the deadly virus, where official figures suggest they account for 5% of the confirmed number of Covid cases, these brave individuals continue to do all they can to save those most in need. The UN commends them and the UK commends them for the incredible work that they've done.

Now, as I said earlier, there can be no doubt that the impact of the decisions this Council has made to restrict cross-border aid has hampered the efforts of health and relief workers in the north-west. As the Secretary-General mentions in his report, this has resulted in the more costly, higher risk, less timely and ultimately less effective humanitarian response I referred to earlier.

In the north-east, we were shocked to hear of the eight children who died within just one week at Al Hol, largely due to the issues faced by the health facilities within the camp not being sufficient to help them. We understand that a significant part of the problem is a direct result to the failure of this Council, or rather those Council members who vetoed access, to approve that continued cross-border access through Yaroubiya.

The statistics are clear and stark: the UN submitted 251 requests to the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct missions in June and July, of which only 138 were approved. 138 out of 251. Of these, UN agencies were only able to conduct 93 missions due to Covid-19 considerations. That's 37 percent of the UN's original ask. With Covid complicating the UN's ability to conduct missions, it is all the more vital that Damascus provides timely approvals.

For cross-line access to truly work, the UN must be given unfettered access and be allowed to deliver aid to those who need it, when they need it, without obstruction. This includes those in Rukhban Camp. The regime and Russia must allow UN convoys to enter and give medical aid to the 12,000 residents there.

Lastly, on rising food insecurity, 9.3 Million people are currently food insecure. And there has been a 261 percent increase in food prices from July 2019 as a result mainly of exchange rate volatility and the regional banking crisis and, of course, the knock-on effects of Covid-19. We are deeply concerned that the World Food Programme was only able to reach 4.4 million of those 9.3 million who needed help in July. This problem will be further exacerbated if we fail to respond to the threat of Covid properly. These people cannot just be left to starve.

In line with the Secretary-General's call, the UK urges parties to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law. Rapid aid relief is desperately needed to prepare for and respond to the Covid crisis across Syria. If Damascus continues to prevent the UN from delivering adequate cross-line aid in a safe and timely manner, then the Council will undoubtedly need to revisit the issue as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr President.

[UK-Egypt partnership at heart of global efforts to tackle climate crisis](#)

World news story

COP26 President and Egyptian Environment Minister held a call today to discuss collective ambitions for the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP26).



COP26 President Alok Sharma and Egyptian Environment Minister Yasmine Fouad held a call today to discuss collective ambitions for the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26).

In their first call together, the two ministers discussed the critical importance of maintaining shared efforts on climate change during this unprecedented time. While the world rightly focuses on fighting coronavirus, the challenge of climate change has not gone away, and the ministers

expressed their shared desire to see increased activity in this area over the coming 18 months.

COP26 President Sharma particularly welcomed the positive collaboration between the UK and Egypt on Adaptation and Resilience (A&R), including the recent creation of the UN 'Group of Friends on Climate Adaptation and Resilience', launched jointly by the UK and Egypt in June. This platform will be key to building on A&R outcomes from the UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019 – where the UK and Egypt co-led a coalition of countries to commit to raising ambition on A&R – and in the lead up to COP26 itself, which will be hosted by the UK, in partnership with Italy, in Glasgow from 1 to 12 November 2021.

The two ministers also discussed Egypt's key role as a thought-leader and early-adopter of renewable energy in the region. Projects such as Benban solar park, Africa's largest, will be central to a green and resilient recovery from COVID-19, and both ministers saw the significant potential for economic recovery packages to focus on investing in clean energy technologies.

COP26 President Alok Sharma said:

I was delighted to speak again to my good friend Egyptian Environment Minister Dr Yasmine Fouad. My thanks to her and the Egyptian Government for the work they have been doing on tackling climate change and particularly on their excellent cooperation on our joint Call for Action on Adaptation and Resilience. I look forward to the UK and Egypt continuing to work together to provide strong international leadership on climate change, both as we prepare for COP26 and looking ahead to an African COP27. I hope to see Egypt come forward with ambitious national plans which set out a pathway to net zero.

Environment Minister Fouad said:

Our cooperation with the UK on adaptation & resilience is successful, and we continue to support the UK in preparing for COP26 and taking material steps to support vulnerable countries to address climate change. Egypt is growing and transforming, and green finance with a focus on sustainability measures and climate change is at the heart of our attention. The environment portfolio is supported by President AbdelFattah El-Sisi, and packaged with investment.

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Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Jamaica to be removed from travel corridors list

- Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Jamaica removed from list of travel corridors for England following data showing a significant increase in confirmed cases
- Cuba added to list of travel corridors for England having been assessed by the Joint Biosecurity Centre as posing a lower infection risk
- travellers urged to check the latest advice from the FCO before travelling and all travellers, including those from exempted destinations, will be required to fill in a passenger locator form before returning home

People arriving into England from Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Jamaica from 4am Saturday 29 August will need to [self-isolate for 2 weeks](#) as the countries are removed from the travel exemptions 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 these countries, leading to ministers removing them from the current [list of travel corridors](#).

There has been a consistent increase in the weekly incidence (case) rate of COVID-19 in Switzerland over the past 4 weeks, with a 19% increase in weekly incidence (cases) per 100,000 between the 20 and 27 August 2020, from 18.5 on the 20 August to 22.0 on the 27 August.

Data shows that there has been a consistent increase in newly reported cases in the Czech Republic over the past 3 weeks, with a 25% increase from 1,723 between the 14 and 20 August 2020 to 2,153 between the 21 and 27 August. Data from Jamaica shows that the weekly incidence (cases) per 100,000 has increased from 4.3 on 20 August 2020 to 20.8 on 27 August. This equates to a 382% increase.

Cuba has been added to the government's travel corridor list following a decrease in confirmed cases of coronavirus. From 4am Saturday 29 August, passengers arriving to England from Cuba will no longer need to self-isolate so long as they haven't been in or transited through any other non-exempt countries in the 14 days preceding their arrival.

Infections from COVID-19 are on the rise across Europe. The government has made consistently clear it will take decisive action if necessary to contain the virus, which includes 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. This means holidaymakers may find they need to [self isolate on return to the UK](#) and are advised to consider the implications of self-isolation on them and their families before making travel plans.

People currently in [Switzerland](#), the [Czech Republic](#) and [Jamaica](#) are encouraged to follow the local rules and check the FCO 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 FCO](#), 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 destinations on the travel corridors list, will still be required to show a completed [passenger locator form](#) on arrival into the UK unless they fall into a small group of exemptions.

[Minister Davies visits Pembroke Dock Marine project set to tackle climate change and boost Swansea Bay Region economy](#)

News story

The project will receive UK Government funding and generate more than 1,800 jobs for the region



Minister Davies visits Pembroke Dock Marine project

UK Government Minister for Wales David TC Davies visited the Pembroke Dock Marine project, where he heard about the £60 million marine energy development that will help tackle climate change and expand the region's low-carbon economy.

During his visit on Thursday (27 August) Minister Davies heard how the Pembroke Dock Marine project, which is set to receive funding from the UK Government and Welsh Government, could generate £73.5 million a year for the Swansea Bay City Region's economy and create more than 1,800 jobs in the next 15 years.

The UK Government and Welsh Government recently approved the business case for the development as part of the Swansea Bay City Deal, enabling the advancement of the clean energy project.

While at the port, Mr Davies heard how the developers will expand on the region's established facilities and skills base to maximise efficiency and innovation to drive down the cost of marine energy.

UK Government Minister for Wales David TC Davies said:

Working hand in hand with local government and businesses, we are helping to create new and exciting economic opportunities in south west Wales.

The Pembroke Dock Marine project will not only provide a significant economic boost to the region but will also help to put Wales at the forefront of marine energy technology.

The UK Government is committed to supporting a green and resilient economic recovery and I look forward to seeing how the developers use the UK Government funding to accelerate this project.

The Pembroke Dock Marine project includes four principle elements: Marine Energy and Engineering Centre of Excellence, Pembroke Dock Infrastructure, Pembrokeshire Demonstration Zone and Marine Energy Test Area.

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