

First Flagship UK Government hub in Scotland completed

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's unwavering commitment to strengthen and sustain the United Kingdom took a crucial step forward today with the completion of Queen Elizabeth House, the new UK Government flagship hub in Edinburgh.

The hub will house nearly 3,000 civil servants from 11 departments, to deliver a bigger, better and more coordinated service to people and businesses.

The seven-storey, 190,000 square feet, ultra-modern office space, located near Waverley Station in the heart of Edinburgh, is now officially complete and ready for occupation.

This follows on from the official key handover ceremony on 13th June 2019 when the building contractor, Artisan, completed the physical building works, prior to the internal fitting out work commencing.

HMRC has delivered the project and construction was completed last year, the internal fitting out has now been finished.

The completion was marked by a visit from the Scottish Secretary, Alister Jack. He was joined on a tour of the facility, which includes Scotland's first dedicated UK Government Cabinet meeting room, by UK Government Ministers for Scotland David Duguid and Iain Stewart as well the Advocate General for Scotland, Lord Keen.

Mr Jack said:

Less than three weeks ago the Prime Minister came to Scotland to reaffirm his unwavering commitment to strengthening the United Kingdom and the completion of Queen Elizabeth House is a further visible and tangible sign of the UK Government delivering on this.

As we look forward to ensuring our economy can bounce back after coronavirus, and making the most of new global opportunities outside the EU, the case for the Union has never been stronger. It was exciting to tour the completed building and I very much look forward to seeing the UK Government's expanded and more co-ordinated presence in Scotland deliver even better services for people and businesses.

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland (OSSS) and the Office of the Advocate General, will be joined in the hub by other UK Government departments and bodies including HMRC, HM Treasury, Cabinet Office, the Office for Statistics Regulation, the Information Commissioner's Office, and

the Government Actuary's Department. Additional UK government departments are expected to confirm occupancy in the coming months.

The OSSS continues to work with partners to ensure the building is fully occupied as quickly as possible once COVID-19 conditions allow.

Work is also underway on a Glasgow Hub. The Edinburgh and Glasgow Hubs are a key part of the UK Government's commitment to delivering excellent public services for people in Scotland, building a strong civil service outside London and leading the way in regional regeneration.

UK Statement: Belarusian Presidential Elections 2020

Press release

The UK calls on the Government of Belarus to refrain from further violence and to respect the fundamental human rights of the Belarusian people.



Following the conclusion of the Presidential elections in Belarus and the Belarusian authorities' attempts to suppress protests, FCO Minister James Duddridge said:

The UK calls on the Government of Belarus to refrain from further acts of violence following the seriously flawed Presidential elections. The violence and the attempts by Belarusian authorities to suppress protests are completely unacceptable.

There has been a lack of transparency throughout the electoral process in addition to the imprisonment of opposition candidates, journalists and peaceful protestors. We are deeply concerned that Belarus' failure to issue a timely invitation prevented the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the

Council of Europe from observing the electoral process. It is also unacceptable that British Embassy staff and other members of the diplomatic community were obstructed from carrying out their duties as fully accredited independent election observers.

Throughout this election campaign we have witnessed the demands of the Belarusian people for democracy, for fundamental freedoms and for the right to determine their futures in an independent, sovereign Belarus. The UK, along with our international partners, calls on the Government of Belarus to fulfil its international commitments and the aspirations of its people.

Further information

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[Pet owners reminded to seek advice on travel plans ahead of 1 January 2021](#)

Press release

Government reminds pet owners to check the latest advice on travelling with pets ahead of the formal end to the EU exit transition period.



Check latest pet travel advice ahead of 1 January 2021

Pet owners are being encouraged to check the [latest government advice](#) about travelling from Great Britain to the European Union with their pets at the end of the EU exit transition period.

During the transition period, pet owners have been able to continue to travel with their pets using a Pet Passport. The UK government is working with the

European Commission to ensure a similar arrangement for pet travel between Great Britain and the EU from 1 January 2021.

However, if an agreement is not reached there could be new requirements in place for those travelling with a pet from Great Britain to the EU from 1 January 2021.

If pet owners are planning to travel from January 2021 onwards then they should contact their vet at least four months in advance of their travel date to discuss the latest requirements, including the documentation and vaccinations needed. For example, those wishing to travel with their pet from Great Britain to the EU on 1 January 2021 should discuss the relevant documentation their vet by 1 September at the latest.

Christine Middlemiss, UK Chief Veterinary Officer, said:

Those pet owners who wish to be certain of being able to take their pets abroad from 1 January 2021 onwards should consult their vet at least four months before travelling. Your vet will be able to advise what you need to do in order to obtain the correct documentation to travel.

We continue to be in contact with vets to highlight this issue and they are expecting pet owners to consult with them and plan ahead. Pet owners can also stay up to date with the latest advice on gov.uk or by searching 'pet travel'.

Updated guidance on pet travel has been available since November 2018, so many pet owners will already be familiar with that they need to do and some may have already taken action. There will be no change to the current health preparations for pets entering Great Britain from the EU from 1 January 2021.

The latest advice for pet owners seeking to travel to the EU after 1 January 2021 can be found [here](#).

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[HMRC announces three new Director General appointments](#)

News story

Senior staff appointments announced in light of changes at the department



Three new Director General appointments have been confirmed today, Monday 10 August, by HMRC's Chief Executive and Permanent Secretary, Jim Harra.

The changes follow the temporary departure of Melissa Tatton from her role as Chief Executive of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), and more recently Director General for the COVID-19 Response Unit (CRU), and the appointment of Angela MacDonald to Second Permanent Secretary.

Karl Khan will become Director General of Customer Services on a temporary basis, while the process for a permanent appointment begins. He moves from his current role as the Customer Service Group's Director of Finance, Planning and Performance.

Jo Rowland will take up the CRU Director General role on a temporary basis for six months, moving from her role as Director of HMRC's COVID-19 Response Unit – a role she took up in March.

Jonathan Russell will continue as interim Chief Executive of the VOA for the next 13 months. He takes up the post after moving from being Chief People Officer of the VOA to interim Chief Executive in March when Melissa Tatton took on the CRU role within HMRC.

Jim Harra, Chief Executive and First Permanent Secretary said:

I'm very pleased that we can now announce these appointments – all of which are critical for delivering the support and service our customers deserve in this exceptionally busy and challenging time.

Karl brings his existing knowledge and customer service expertise to the role in CSG, and I know will provide the strong leadership needed over the coming months.

Jo has done a fantastic job leading the delivery of the CV19 schemes, and is a natural fit for the Director General role.

Jonathan has provided excellent leadership of VOA over the last few months, and will I know continue to do so for the coming year.

All roles will begin with immediate effect.

Civil news: Disbursements billing revised

News story

Update to the immigration and mental health specifications of the 2018 Civil Legal Aid Contract.



The immigration and mental health specifications of the 2018 Civil Contract were updated today (10 August), following a short consultation.

This change will allow for faster payments to law firms and providers of legal aid services.

This is in addition to recent changes made to [fees payable for mental health tribunal remote hearings](#).

What are the new rules?

The amendments to these specifications will allow law firms and providers of legal aid services to stage bill for disbursements every 3 months for controlled matters in the immigration and mental health categories.

Providers will be able to stage bill on matters that were opened before the contract amendment came into force.

Previously, it was possible to stage bill for disbursements in these categories every 6 months.

When will the new rules apply?

These changes apply from 10 August 2020.

Further information

[Standard civil contract 2018](#) – to download the new versions of the immigration and mental health specifications (August 2020).

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