

£200,000 boost for better mobile connections on rail network

- Transport Secretary announces £200,000 towards research into developing an innovative antenna prototype for rail gantries, helping to make internet blackouts on the commute a thing of the past
- government-backed research has found that updating existing infrastructure is an affordable solution to improving mobile connectivity for passengers
- telecoms service providers urged to work with Network Rail to come up with innovative designs for trial phase of project

The Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has today (24 July 2020) announced that a £200,000 government investment will launch research into developing an innovative prototype that will improve mobile connectivity for thousands of rail passengers. It could signal the end of internet blackouts leading to more productive rail journeys thanks to better wifi.

With over a third of the 11,000 miles of Great Britain's railways electrified using overhead line equipment (OLE), research funded by the Department for Transport has found that it is possible to attach communications antennas to them, improving connectivity for passengers as well as reducing the need to build additional track-side masts, therefore cutting costs.

Published today, the [Mott MacDonald report](#) has found there is significant potential to utilise these existing structures to mount equipment, a technique that is increasingly being used in countries such as Austria to address railway mobile connectivity challenges.

Telecom operators are now being urged to come forward and develop suitable equipment for the next phase of the trial which will test how antennas can be safely fixed onto OLE in a live railway environment with findings expected to be published by March 2021.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

It is just not good enough that passenger's mobile connectivity experience is still poor, blighting our efforts to work, shop and communicate on everyday journeys.

By harnessing innovation and updating existing infrastructure, we can build the railway of tomorrow and find affordable solutions to improve travel for passengers. I urge telecom operators to match our ambition and we can commit to working closely together to design equipment and move forward in the next stage of this exciting trial.

Charlene Wallace, Network Rail's director of passenger and customer experience, said:

We are keen to work with government and train and telecom operators to deliver more consistent and reliable mobile coverage that improves passengers' journeys in an efficient and affordable way.

Today's report highlights how the railway can share its electrical infrastructure assets to deliver a better service, and we are delighted that funding has been made available to test solutions at our Rail Innovation and Development Centres.

This project, together with other steps we have taken – increased seating at stations, improved facilities such as free toilets and new water fountains, and greater accessibility – will help to improve passengers' journeys on the rail network, particularly as we welcome more people back to the railway in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today's news comes as Ofcom is set to publish on Monday (27 July 2020) updated advice on suitable bands for trackside wifi connectivity, supporting government efforts to improve connectivity on the railway.

It also coincides with further research commissioned by the department, published today by Transport Focus, which shows that rail passenger's mobile connectivity experience is still poor. The Transport User Panel Survey found the level of satisfaction with connectivity on trains is generally low while the expectation of being connected is high.

Anthony Smith, chief executive of the independent watchdog Transport Focus, said:

From helping plan journeys to working on the go, passengers value being able to access the internet on the move so they can do something useful during travel time. However, wifi speed and connectivity can be patchy.

We know from our research that passengers now expect a reliable connection and access to free wifi on trains, but only 3 in 10 are satisfied with the connection they experience so they will welcome news of this trial.

The department is now working with [Network Rail's Rail Innovation and Development Centres](#) to identify a suitable OLE to conduct the trial by March 2021 and welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with telecom providers and participate in testing different prototype antennas.

Most comprehensive flu programme in UK history will be rolled out this winter

- Expanded flu vaccination programme to protect vulnerable people and support the NHS
- Free vaccine to be made available for people aged 50 to 64 later in the year
- Households of those on the shielded patient list eligible for free flu vaccination and school programme expanded to the first year of secondary schools for the first time

The most comprehensive flu vaccination programme in the UK's history has been announced by the government today (Friday 24 July).

A significant new group will be eligible for the free flu vaccine as people aged 50 to 64 will be invited later in the season for a vaccination.

As part of an unprecedented drive, a free flu vaccine will also be available to:

- people who are on the shielded patient list and members of their household
- all school year groups up to year 7
- people aged over 65, pregnant women, those with pre-existing conditions including at-risk under 2s

Once vaccination of the most 'at-risk' groups is well underway, the department will work with clinicians to decide when to open the programme to invite people aged 50 to 64, with further details to be announced. The NHS will contact people directly, including information about where to go to get the vaccine.

The expanded flu vaccination programme is part of plans to ready the NHS – both for the risk of a second peak of coronavirus cases, and to relieve winter pressures on A&E and emergency care.

Increased vaccinations will help to reduce pressure on the NHS this winter by preventing flu-sickness which can cause hospitalisation and even death.

This announcement comes alongside the £3 billion for the NHS announced by the Prime Minister earlier this month to relieve winter pressures on A&E and emergency care in case of a second spike in infections.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

It's mission critical that we pull out all the stops to get ready for winter, and the Prime Minister has already announced £3 billion

to protect the NHS.

We are now taking another important step to help protect the wider public by giving the flu vaccination to more people than ever before. This will be the biggest flu vaccination programme in history, and will help protect our NHS as we head into winter.

If you are eligible for a free vaccine, whether it's for the first time or because you usually receive one, then I would urge you to get it, not just to protect yourself, but to protect the NHS and your loved ones, from flu.

The flu can be a serious disease, especially for vulnerable people or those with underlying health conditions.

Eligible groups are urged to get their free vaccine every year. However with COVID-19 still in circulation, this year's campaign will be particularly vital to protect the most vulnerable and reduce the number of people needing flu treatment from the NHS.

Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty said:

Flu can have serious consequences and vulnerable people can die of it. Having the vaccine protects you, and helps reduce transmission to others.

This winter more than ever, with COVID-19 still circulating, we need to help reduce all avoidable risks. Vaccinating more people will help reduce flu transmission and stop people becoming ill.

Seasonal flu is an illness that can be spread by children among themselves and to adults. Last year, the flu programme was expanded to include all primary school aged children for the first time, and this year teams will be visiting secondary schools to vaccinate children in year 7. This will help to contain the spread of this year's seasonal flu and not only protect children but also vulnerable adults they may be in contact with.

Dr Vanessa Saliba, Head of Flu at PHE said:

The flu vaccine is the best defence we have against what can be a serious and even deadly illness.

This winter, more people than ever will be offered a free flu vaccine. We are urging anyone who is eligible to take up the offer of vaccination. By getting the jab, you can help protect yourself, your family and the NHS – it will help save lives.

Dr Nikki Kanani, GP and NHS medical director for primary care, said:

Getting a free NHS flu vaccination is a quick and simple way that people can help to save lives and reduce pressure on our hardworking frontline staff this winter.

GPs, nurses, community pharmacists and others will be going to great lengths this year to give this vital protection to millions more people in a safe and convenient way, so when the time comes I would urge everyone invited for a flu vaccination to get it as soon as possible.

All frontline health and social care workers will also be urged to get their free vaccine to protect themselves and their patients or residents from the flu.

The announcement of the flu vaccination programme expansion is part of the government's plan to support the NHS and protect the public this winter.

The funding, which is available immediately, will allow the NHS to continue using additional private hospital capacity and maintain the Nightingale hospitals until the end of March.

This will provide additional capacity for COVID-19 patients should it be needed, and allow the NHS to carry out routine treatments and procedures.

PHE's annual flu report quotes the total number vaccinated in 2019 to 2020 was 15,344,033. This covers over 65, those in clinical at risk groups, pregnant women, children aged 2 to 3, all primary school aged children, and healthcare workers.

[Calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Syria](#)

Thank you, Mr President, and to Special Envoy Pedersen for his briefing, and Ms Wafa Mustafa for her briefing on the vital work done by Families for Freedom.

We remain deeply concerned by the situation in northwest Syria. Although Russian and Turkish patrols have now managed under constant threat over the full distance of the M4 highway, reports of recent Russian airstrikes on Al-Bab, as well as increased shelling and terrorist attacks, are a real potential for a slide back to the levels of conflict that we saw at the start of this year.

We know what the humanitarian impact of the breakdown of the ceasefire in the northwest would be. Indeed, as we have yet more evidence through the recent

Commission of Inquiry report released on the 7th July or, as OHCHR puts it, unfathomable suffering endured by Syrian children, women and men during the military campaign launched on Idlib in 2019 and the start of this year. This includes indiscriminate attacks by pro-regime forces, backed by Russia, on civilians, hospitals and schools; the killing and injuring as thousands; arrests and torture; probable war crimes by extremist forces; and dire displacement conditions at the border. This is made clear in the Commission of Inquiry report, which found that 47 attacks that were investigated in Idlib were conducted by regime ground and air forces and were assisted by Russian air forces. The Commission also found reasonable grounds to believe that war crimes committed by the regime and Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham. It is the task of the UN and its Member States – and in particular, all members of the Council – to ensure this does not reoccur.

If the ceasefire does break down, two additional factors are likely to exacerbate suffering. Firstly, cases of COVID-19, have now been confirmed in the northwest, and the numbers are beginning to increase. Tackling a widespread outbreak in the northwest would be, in any case, a challenge, but further conflict would likely render this task impossible. Secondly, Russian and Chinese politicization of humanitarian access means that it is much more difficult for the 1.3 million people who had previously received aid through the Bab al-Salam crossing to receive that aid.

The consequences of a further outbreak and violence would be catastrophic. The UK therefore once again calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities in support of the requests of the UN Special Envoy and UN Secretary-General. This call is as urgent now as ever. We call on all parties to work with a Special Envoy towards a nationwide ceasefire.

We welcome the attendance and briefing of Wafa Mustafa today and commend her vital work and that of Families for Freedom, her bravery and fighting for young girls, women and families who were impacted by the detentions. We call on the Syrian regime to engage with the UN Special Envoy to discuss this critically important issue. There needs to be widespread releases of political prisoners and vulnerable people in line with what we all agreed in UNSCR 2254. Medical care must be available to those in detention. We were moved by Ms Mustafa's own story about her father. Indeed, there remain an estimated 120,000 persons missing as a result of this conflict. These include persons missing as a consequence of summary executions, arbitrary and incommunicado detention, kidnapping and abduction, enslavement, sarin gas attacks and other human rights abuses, as well as combatants and civilians missing as a direct result of fighting in the day to day ravages of war. We recognise the psychological trauma of those left behind.

The UK is proud to provide financial support, \$1.6 million in 2019 to next year, for the International Commission for Missing Persons's efforts towards the immense task of accounting for missing persons in Syria. We wholly support ICMP's role as the holder of an impartial missing persons' database, and we stress the need for a missing persons' process that accounts for all missing persons, regardless of their role in the conflict or origin, in accordance with international human rights and the rule of law. This work is vital for the rights of families of the missing to justice, truth and

reparations.

Any credible peace process has to address the issue of missing persons and detainees. In order for this to happen, the Syrian regime must properly and genuinely engage with the Special Envoy and other the parties on the peace process.

We take note of the parliamentary elections held in Syria on Sunday. UNSCR 2254, which we adopted unanimously, holds unequivocal regarding expectations for elections in Syria. They needed to be free and fair, administered under the supervision of the United Nations and meet the high standards of transparency and accountability with all Syrians, including members of the diaspora, are eligible to participate.

Sunday's parliamentary elections clearly did not meet these requirements. There were no independent observers, and nearly half of Syria's population, including six million refugees, could not even vote. The way in which these elections were conducted sends a clear message that the Syrian regime has not been really interested in inclusion or fairness or a political process that is owned and led by all Syrians, or that allows all Syrians a role in deciding their own future.

Finally, I would just like to address the comment made by Russian representative about the White Helmets. The UK is proud of its support for the White Helmets and its life-saving search and rescue operations and activities in Syria alongside other donors. The organisation is estimated to have saved over 115,000 lives and provided essential services to more than four million Syrians.

Thank you, Mr President.

[Homes England backs a new “healthy housing” toolkit by Design for Homes](#)

- New design toolkit commissioned by NHS England replace Building for Life 12 with a focus on healthier communities
- Homes England will specify the new Building for a Healthy Life guidance in land sale tenders
- Guidance encourages focus on active travel, carbon reduction and mixed tenure in communities

Homes England is backing new design guidance called Building for a Healthy Life, which encourages healthier lifestyles to be planned into new housing developments. The new guidelines are published by Design for Homes and Urban Design Doctor and were officially launched this week (21 July 2020).

The design toolkit covers the priorities for creating healthier communities, including improved walking, cycling and public transport links, with reduced carbon emissions and better air quality. Master plans should be based on an assessment of local health and care needs, with the creation of integrated neighbourhoods based on 'tenure neutral' housing and well-defined public spaces.

The new guidance was commissioned by NHS England and NHS Improvement to update the widely used Building for Life 12 (B4L12), which Homes England requires developers to commit to using as part of the tender process for purchasing land. Reserved matter planning applications must subsequently reflect the tender proposals.

The agency has committed to using the new guidance in a similar way and is currently carrying out a review of the impact on design quality of schemes that were procured under B4L12.

The new guidelines use the same 12-point structure as its predecessor, with examples of good practice that would add up to a green light and bad practice that would earn a red light. However the authors make clear the guidance is intended to prompt discussion rather than as a tick-box scoring system.

Many local authorities include reference to the B4L12 in their Local Plans, and the new guidance is designed to enable them to easily update their plans to link to the new guidance. The new guidelines are also consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Sadie Morgan, Director of architecture firm, dRMM, and a board member of Homes England, said:

"The new design guidance is a big step forward in supporting placemaking for healthier, more integrated communities where people want to live and spend time together. We know that the existing guidance has focused developers' attention on high-quality design and these new guidelines will build on that success.

"People's homes and neighbourhoods have a huge impact on their wellbeing and Homes England is committing to using these new guidelines to ensure that new developments encourage and enable better health."

David Birkbeck of Design for Homes said:

"Building for a Healthy Life works best as the starting point for getting developers, local authorities, communities and other stakeholders to agree on key aspects of a design, such as how new development will connect to existing communities and how people will be able move between the two.

"Its general focus has not changed significantly, other than to promote the idea of walking and cycling more short journeys. But the use of images helps explain the desired for outcomes and help everybody identify shared objectives."

Dr Stefan Kruczkowski of Urban Design Doctor said:

“Building for a Healthy Life is full of photographs. Everyone can see what good looks like and also what type of things we need to avoid when designing new places”.

Good design case study

Inholm is a sustainable mixed-tenure neighbourhood of 406 homes by Urban Splash that sets pioneering townscape design principles for the wider new town of Northstowe near Cambridge. □ The new neighbourhood, which won a Housing Design Award in 2020, was master-planned by Proctor and Matthews and is one of the first schemes from Homes England to integrate the principles of Building for Life 12 into the tender. Initiated by Homes England, Northstowe is England’s most ambitious new town project since Milton Keynes and will eventually grow to a community of 10,000 homes.

Embassy receives certification as a good place to work for LGBTI+ talent in Chile

The British Embassy in Santiago is among the 20 organisations in Chile to have received today, 23 July, the [“Equidad CL Certification”](#), an initiative that recognises the British Embassy as a good place to work for LGBTI+ talent. The award is given by the local organisations Fundación Iguales and Pride Connection, and Human Rights Campaign, one of the largest NGOs that promotes sexual diversity globally and the creator of the Corporate Equality Index.

A total of 63 companies and organisations participated in the process to receive this certification, of which main pillars are, inter alia, to have a diversity and inclusion policy in place including the non-discrimination of LGBTI+ staff; to promote the creation of employee resource groups, and to express public commitment with the local LGBTI+ community. The Embassy is both the only foreign diplomatic mission in Chile and the only British Embassy in the Latin American region to receive this recognition. It is also the first public organisation to receive the Certification.

Values and strategic actions

The Embassy has had an active and distinctive role reflecting the UK’s commitment with the local LGBTI community.

The Embassy’s efforts towards the LGBTI+ community fall within the wider commitment of the UK Government to have an active role in the international

community to eradicate discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and to promote diversity and tolerance. In this regard, the Embassy has carried out a series of activities during recent times to reflect its commitment, including:

- Diversity and Inclusion Policy: Recognising and promote an environment that welcomes and values diverse backgrounds, thinking, skills and experience.
- Diversity and Inclusion Council (including LGBTI staff and Allies): Ensuring that, as a workplace, the British Embassy in Santiago completes all legal requirements and best practice established in relevant UK and Chilean law and FCO internal policies.
- FCO Flagg Network: Participating in the FCO Global LGBTI Staff Network, which, among other actions, provides support to all staff regarding LGBTI topics and promotes LGBTI inclusion within Embassy work.
- Learning and Development: Organising different L&D actions, including workshops and teleconferences with internal and external organisations, touching on LGBTI topics such as unconscious bias and gender issues.
- Activities involving the local community: Having an active and distinctive role reflecting the UK's commitment with the local LGBTI community, e.g. the relationship with the main Chilean organisations Iguales and Movilh and involvement in diverse activities aimed to promote the values of diversity and inclusion. This includes the Embassy's participation in Santiago's Pride Parade, the LGBTI+ Film Festival, the Iguales Annual Fundraiser, and the in-house organisation of Pride Month online activities due to the Covid-19 complete lockdown enforced in most Chilean regions.

To mark Pride Month in 2020, the Embassy organised online activities, such as a Queen tribute show – due to the Covid-19 complete lockdown enforced in most Chilean regions.

A diverse place to work

The British Embassy was awarded the highest rating in the Equidad CL certification not only for its tireless effort to create a diverse and inclusive labour environment for the LGBTI+ staff working in Chile, but also for its permanent commitment to the LGBTI+ local community. This has been the case since the first time the Embassy flew the rainbow flag in our building in 2012, becoming the first foreign mission to do so in Chile. Today the British Embassy is in close contact with the main Chilean organisations to protect and promote LGBTI+ rights and values at a local level.

Regarding the Equidad CL Certification, John Derrick, Chargé d'Affaires, has said:

This 'Equidad CL certification' is a way-point in our journey toward inclusivity. We will not take our foot off the pedal. I will continue to drive forward our diversity and inclusion agenda until our Embassy is a genuine reflection of the society in which it

serves. We also hope to showcase to other organisations and businesses in Santiago what can be achieved with a truly inclusive workplace that celebrates diversity.

Each year, the Embassy participates in the Pride Parade organised by the Chilean NGOs Iguales and Movilh.

Further information

If you want to know more about this recognition, contact [Pamela Gallardo](#), GREAT Campaign Manager, British Embassy, Santiago.

For more information about the activities of the British Embassy in Santiago, follow us on: