[Small-scale pig keepers invited to take African swine fever survey](#)

A survey aimed at small-scale pig keepers, including smallholders, pet pig keepers and hobby keepers, has been launched today (Monday 20 July) by the UK government and devolved administrations.

The survey forms part of the UK's campaign to combat the introduction and spread of the pig disease African swine fever. It aims to find out more about what small-scale pig keepers already know about the disease, as well as asking about their feeding and biosecurity practices and what sources they refer to for guidance on keeping pigs.

The results of the survey will be used to improve information available to pig keepers to help protect the health of their pigs and the UK pig industry.

African swine fever poses no threat to human health but is fatal for pigs and can be financially devastating for pig keepers.

The disease is currently circulating in parts of Europe and Asia and in the last couple of years, has led to the deaths of millions of pigs worldwide.

There has never been an outbreak of African swine fever in the UK. The risk of exposure to the UK pig population is currently considered to be low, but is highly dependent on the level of biosecurity on individual pig premises.

UK Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss said:

> African swine fever has no cure and there are currently no effective vaccines. If it were to reach the UK, it would have a devastating impact on commercial pig keepers, small-scale pig keepers and pet pig keepers alike. Everyone who keeps pigs can take actions to contribute to keeping African swine fever out of the UK.
>
> If you are a small-scale pig keeper or keep pigs as pets, please complete the survey to help governments across the UK understand more about your knowledge of the disease and your pig keeping practices. This will help us to provide you with the information you need to protect the health of your pigs and all UK pigs.

The [survey can be found here](#) and closes on 31 August 2020. You can find out more about African swine fever and how to report suspect swine fever here.

This survey has been launched by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Scottish Government, Welsh Government, the Animal and Plant Health Agency and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland, who are working collaboratively to raise awareness of the risks of African swine fever to the UK.

[Update – Coronavirus (COVID-19): impact on our services](#)

Following our update of 21 April 2020, we are pleased to advise that we are continuing to operate a high level of service, with the vast majority of our staff working effectively from home. This includes our customer support team who are offering a service via email and telephone to support applicants. Our telephone lines are currently open Monday to Friday between 10am and 3pm.

We continue to recognise that our colleagues in the police and medical professions are busy and this may have an impact on their ability to provide us with the information we need to assess claims. If you are delayed in providing information to CICA due to the impact of coronavirus, please be assured that your application will not be disadvantaged by this.

If we have contacted you to request information and you cannot provide it by the date requested due to the impact of coronavirus, please email us at info@cica.gov.uk to advise.

You can find details about our service [here](#).

In order to ensure our customer support staff are free to help those who need our support most at this time, we ask where possible that you email us at info@cica.gov.uk instead of contacting us by phone. We will respond to your enquiry as soon as possible.

Thank you for your patience during this period.

We are continuously reviewing the level of service we can provide. We will provide regular updates here and on Twitter.

Published 20 July 2020

[Creating great online services: how we test services in our research lab](#)

To design online services which improve the experience for users when they transact with DVLA, it is important to understand what our customers need from us.
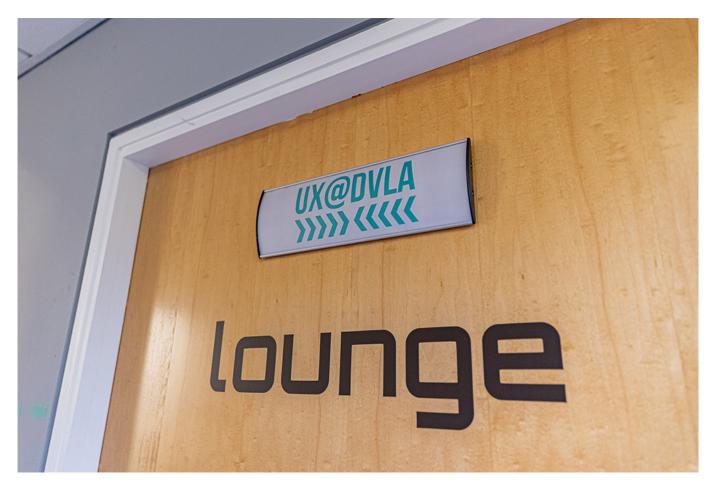
Our User Experience (UX) team use several different testing methods to get this insight. Dan Williamson, User Research Lead, explains more about user testing at DVLA.

Why, when and where we test

Government services should be as simple, inclusive and accessible as possible so that everyone can use them. If we want our customers to complete a transaction using a certain channel, we need to make sure what we offer them is the best it can be.

Testing happens throughout a service development. We determine the frequency and the method of testing based on the features within the service that have changed.

Under normal circumstances, we do roughly 40% of our testing in [our UX Lab](#). It's a state of the art facility that uses connected devices, cameras and microphones so that we can test developing digital services with users. With participant consent to filming, we record what we find and this footage is used to inform changes to the services and provides evidence for why we make those changes.

The rest of our research is carried out across the country in meeting rooms, in context in a participant's home or place of work, or on the street.

Our testers

Some of our services are targeted at certain types of user (for example vocational drivers or [drivers with a medical condition](#)) and sometimes we will need to speak to specific segments within our customer base (such as [people who have received a fine](#), use certain technology or are of a certain age).

We have a contract in place with a participant recruitment company and we send these specifications to our recruiters together with details of when and where we want to carry out the research.

Before testing starts

Once we have agreed the objectives for the research with the service designer, we plan the session with the interaction designers who build the screens we test.

We may ask questions like:

- which features do we want to test/discuss with the user?
- where do we think we may identify pain points?
- which research technique do we think will work best?

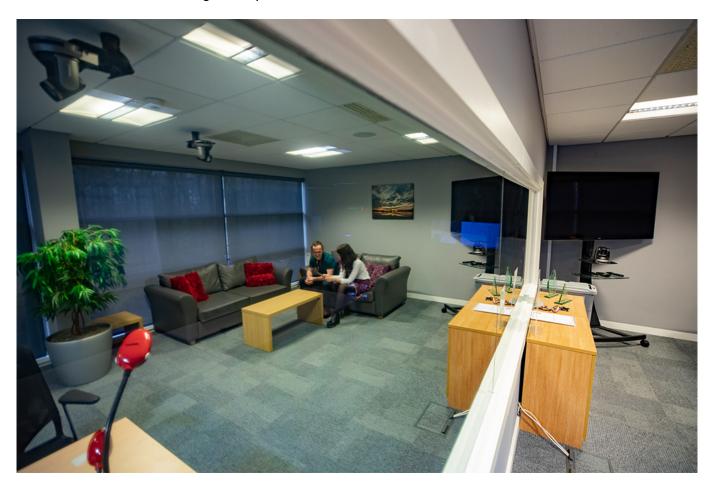Then we write a topic guide for the session. This contains the main points

and themes we want to cover during the session, as well as prompts for the researchers to remind them where to delve a bit deeper.

The day of testing

We always spend some time getting an understanding of the participants; how confident they are in using digital services, what devices or apps they use and a bit about their socio-economic background. This helps us to get to know them and puts the participant at ease too.

If we are testing screens for usability, we set the scene and give the participant tasks to complete. It is human nature to help people when they get stuck, but as researchers, the value comes from seeing where they fail.

Sometimes we conduct an in-depth interview with the participant. This is designed to understand their behaviour at a deeper level – why they do things in a certain way, how they feel about what we are talking about or what we could do to make things simpler for them.

Outcomes of testing

Every insight we get adds value – whether that is changing the flow of a service, moving things around on a screen or amending content. Every service we have been involved in has been changed based on our research.

It isn't often that we get a real 'Eureka!' moment and a lot of the insights we get are used to inform subtle, iterative changes to a service that make it

more useable, simpler and more inclusive. Equally these small changes could have a benefit to the organisation, such as increasing the ability for customers to self-serve or reducing casework and demand on the Contact Centre.

But sometimes user testing shows that a very small change can be beneficial. While testing the prototype for the [penalty payment online](#) with participants it was identified they did not understand that they needed to tax their vehicle or tell us they were keeping it off road, once they had paid the fine.

On the 'payment successful' page of the service, the participants were told in large bold print that they had to either tax, [register their vehicle as off the road](#) or dispose of their vehicle, however when asked what they thought they had to do next, the majority of users missed that instruction and thought they taken all necessary action to complete their task.

This was fed back and a new prototype was created so that the participant was taken to [pages where they could tax](#), make a Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN) or [dispose of their vehicle.](#)

We are committed to user-centred design. We have a great record for user research at every Government Digital Service (GDS) Service Assessment which take place at several stages before we can put our service on GOV.UK.

Our research has been the basis for so many changes, from small tweaks to wholescale change in a constant effort to get these things right for our users.

Now you've seen all the hard work that goes into making a great online service — why not check out the [wide range of services we provide on GOV.UK](#) and try them for yourself?

[ACT Blade](#)

A Scottish start-up has developed a wind turbine blade that could boost energy production by nearly 9%.

ACT Blade was set up in 2015 after a feasibility study funded by Innovate UK proved its longer 55m blade was technically viable and could offer significant savings. Early analysis suggests the blade could reduce the levelised cost of energy by nearly 7%, giving it the potential to make a significant impact in renewable energy.

Founder Dr Sabrina Malpede says Innovate UK funding has helped every step of the way, from resourcing the team and enabling staff retention to supporting the IP process and helping unlock further investment.

Currently wind energy provides up to 15% of Europe's electricity demand. To create more power, turbines need longer blades. However, most blades are made of fibreglass, which is too heavy to be lengthened and expensive to produce. The blades also erode over time and have to be replaced.

Sabrina was working in the yachting industry when she began to wonder if the same textile used in modern sails could be used to make wind turbines. The idea was so powerful she entered it into an Innovation Challenge run by the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult, one of Innovate UK's centres set up to support UK businesses.

The resulting collaboration led to the creation of the ACT Blade, the world's first textile blade that was 24% lighter than a traditional fibreglass blade. If a blade is lighter, it can be made longer. Not only that but when compared to a conventional blade the ACT Blade uses less material and so less waste is produced in production.

As the textile covers the entire surface of the blade, the ACT Blade does not need to be painted. A further benefit is that ACT Blades are component-based and therefore relatively easy to dismantle and separate out for recycling.

Sabrina said: "Innovate UK funding has helped the company massively and on several layers. Deployment of new technologies in the wind industry is too expensive and risky for private investors alone."

A prototype 13m-long blade was successfully tested at the Offshore Renewable

Energy Facility in Blyth in March 2020. Three blades will be tested on a working wind turbine at the Energy Technology Centre in East Kilbride and will be producing energy by the end of 2020.

Now a team of eight, ACT Blade is developing a commercial strategy, beginning with 50m replacements for blades on 2MW turbines that will be tested in 2022 on a commercial turbine then commercialised by 2023. The company was also chosen to visit San Francisco at the beginning of 2020 on an Innovate UK-supported Clean+Cool mission.

Transport for London extraordinary funding and financing update

I wrote to the House on 18 May 2020, to share details of the extraordinary funding and financing agreement reached with Transport for London (TfL). That package of support, which was agreed between government, the Mayor and TfL, included a number of conditions and I am today writing to update Parliament on 2 of those.

To help avoid such drastic action in the future work has been underway on the government-led review of TfL's future financial position and structure, and we have now published the Terms of Reference for that review.

I am pleased to also announce the appointment of the two government Special Representatives to attend the TfL Board; Andrew Gilligan and Clare Moriarty. They will also be able to attend TfL's Finance and Programme Investment Committees. These positions required a specific skillset and have therefore been made through direct Ministerial Appointment.

Clare Moriarty is a former civil servant and has been Permanent Secretary for the Department for Exiting the European Union and for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and she was previously Director General, Rail Executive and Director General for Corporate Services in the Department for Transport.

Andrew Gilligan advises the Prime Minister on transport matters and worked closely with TfL for 3 years, acquiring detailed knowledge of its operations, as former Cycling Commissioner for London.