

# Innovative team scoops prestigious Royal Society of Chemistry Award

News story

A team of university researchers from across the UK – funded by the NDA, National Nuclear Laboratory, Sellafield Ltd and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council – has scooped a prestigious award.



The award-winning Distinctive team

Image credit: Image provided by Michael Fairweather

Led by Leeds University and including a number of other UK universities, the partnership known as The DISTINCTIVE (Decommissioning, Immobilisation and Storage Solutions for Nuclear Waste Inventories) Consortium are winners of the Royal Society of Chemistry's Industry-Academia Collaboration Award.

The team won the accolade for delivery of research that addressed challenges associated with the continuing safe storage and disposal of radioactive legacy nuclear waste.

Members are part of a programme which links nuclear industry experts with UK academics and PhD students to roll-out of innovative solutions and train the next generation of scientists and engineers – helping the NDA to develop and maintain key skills we need to undertake our mission over the coming decades.

NDA Research Manager Dr Rick Short said:

This is a huge achievement for the team which has worked hard, bringing together a wide variety of expertise to collaborate and tackle challenges surrounding decommissioning by developing fundamental understanding of our materials and finding innovative solutions.

As well as providing funding, the NDA, Sellafield Ltd and National Nuclear Laboratory were industry partners for this programme, which was set up to support UK government strategy on nuclear decommissioning and waste management.

Receiving the award, Partnership leader Professor Michael Fairweather said:

The success of the consortium is testament to the close collaboration between academics and industry partners, not only in jointly formulating the overall work programme and the individual projects within it, but also in jointly supervising the researchers and delivering planned impacts.

We would like to thank the EPSRC, National Nuclear Laboratory, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Sellafield Ltd for the funding that enabled us to carry out our work.

Published 29 June 2020

---

## [New Future Skills Hub for North Ayrshire](#)

News story

Magnox funding helps boost further and higher education opportunities in North Ayrshire.



North Ayrshire College has received funding from Magnox

Magnox is pleased to announce £499,999 has been committed to Ayrshire College for the new Future Skills Hub on the Kilwinning Campus, due to open in late 2021.

The college has been given a major boost with the allocation of [Nuclear Decommissioning Authority](#) (NDA) funding – allocated through the Magnox socio-economic scheme. The aim of the scheme is to mitigate the impact of decommissioning and support sustainable communities in which Magnox operates.

The Hub will deliver a curriculum in Engineering, Construction and SMART Technologies for employers, primary schools, secondary schools and college students. The new facility will provide first-class training for people in Ayrshire for generations.

David Wallace, NDA Stakeholder Relations and Socio Economics Manager, said:

Support for this project has leveraged much-needed match-funding, which will help build a sustainable future long after the Hunterston A site has closed. These new training facilities will prepare current and future generations for the employment opportunities generated by the Ayrshire Growth Deal.

Ayrshire College Principal, Carol Turnbull said:

The news that Magnox has announced this outstanding funding package towards the creation of the Future Skills Hub in North Ayrshire is marvellous news for the College and all our partners and stakeholders in education and business. Magnox's commitment to the project has been invaluable in support of us bringing the funding package together and we are grateful for this funding. The Future Skills Hub will impact positively on key skills and employability opportunities for so many people across the community".

Published 29 June 2020

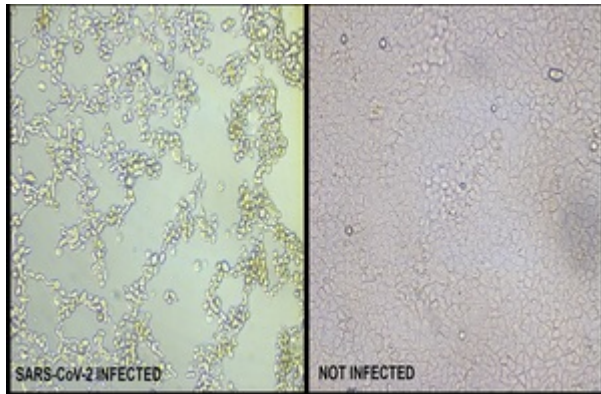
---

## [Dstl release research on stability of COVID-19 in the air](#)

Press release

Dstl research on the stability of the COVID-19 virus in the air also supports

the scientific advice provided to the Government on COVID-19 control measures



Comparison of cells with and without infection of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (compressed image)

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) has published a research paper on the stability of the COVID-19 virus in the air through the *Emerging Microbes and Infections* journal.

The paper “Experimental aerosol survival of SARS-CoV-2 in artificial saliva and tissue culture media at medium and high humidity”, written by a team of Dstl scientists, outlines the research completed on the stability of the COVID-19 virus in the air. It also supports the scientific advice provided to the Government on COVID-19 control measures.

The findings indicate that the COVID-19 virus may remain viable in the dark for at least 90 minutes under certain conditions, if produced within small-particle aerosols. These findings provide direct, corroborating evidence that will help inform how the virus behaves within healthcare environments.

Coughing and sneezing generally produce large particles of saliva, but smaller particles will also be produced. Small particles are also produced during routine activities such as talking and breathing. Smaller aerosol particles may be of concern because they may stay buoyant in the air for longer, travel further and be able to penetrate further into the respiratory tract when inhaled.

Dstl, the science inside UK national security, has used its capability to investigate the generation of virus-containing particles to study the survival of the virus under different conditions. The research paper has also been shared with the Science Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and can be [viewed here](#).

Tim Atkins, OBE and Senior Scientist at Dstl said:

“These scientific findings will contribute to international scientific understanding of the virus, and therefore help to resolve this global crisis. The more scientific research undertaken across the world the more enriched the understanding of how Coronavirus behaves. This will be critical moving forward to ensuring we give the best advice to people on how to stay safe.”

## [Major changes to insolvency law come into force](#)

### News story

The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act has received Royal Assent and came into force on 26 June 2020.



The Act is the largest change to the UK's corporate insolvency regime in more than 20 years. It introduces new corporate restructuring tools and temporary easements to give distressed businesses the breathing space they need to get advice and seek a rescue.

One of its key provisions is the introduction of the new role of a Monitor to oversee the corporate moratorium it introduces – an extendable 20 working day period giving businesses protection from creditor action while they seek professional restructuring advice. A monitor must be a licenced insolvency practitioner and the Insolvency Service has provided [guidance on their role and responsibilities](#). The Act also extends the suspension of termination clauses when a company enters into an insolvency procedure and introduces a new restructuring plan that has the ability to bind creditors to it.

The Act also provides temporary relief until 30 September 2020 from being subject to a winding up petition and from wrongful trading provisions where a business can demonstrate its difficulties arise from trading conditions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. These easements are [explained in more detail in a series of factsheets](#).

[Changes to company filing and meeting requirements](#) have also been introduced to relieve the burden on businesses during the pandemic and allow them to focus all their efforts on continuing to operate.

## Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 23 June 2020

[The Prime Minister leading the coronavirus press conference on 23 June 2020](#)

Good evening,

Could I have the first slide please?

On 16 April, we set out our five tests for adjusting the lockdown, and since then they have guided our path out of lockdown.

At every stage, we have diligently assessed our progress against these five tests before making changes.

It has meant that we have, so far, avoided the catastrophe of a second peak of infection that could have overwhelmed the NHS and meant so many more lives lost.

Next slide please.

Our first test is to protect the NHS's ability to cope, so that we are confident that we are able to provide sufficient critical care and specialist treatment right across the UK.

Well, the NHS has coped fantastically under the extraordinary pressure of this extraordinary pandemic.

On 20 June, 283 people were admitted to hospital with coronavirus in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – down from 438 two weeks earlier, and down from a peak of 3,432 on 1 April.

And on 22 June, 340 patients with coronavirus were in mechanical ventilation beds in the UK, down from 513 two weeks earlier, and down from a peak of 3,301 on 12 April.

These numbers provide confidence that we are still meeting the first test.

Next slide please.

Our second test is to see a sustained and consistent fall in the daily death rates from COVID-19 so that we are confident that we have moved beyond the peak.

Of those who have tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, it

saddens me to report that 42,927 have now died. 171 fatalities were reported in the 24 hours to 5pm yesterday. A further 109 deaths which occurred in April, May and June have been identified and added to the total.

As measured by a 7-day rolling average, the UK daily death rate now stands at 121, down from 216 two weeks ago, and down from a peak of 943 on 14 April.

The second test is, therefore, still being met.

Next slide please.

Our third test is to receive reliable data from SAGE showing that the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels across the board.

In total, 306,210 people have now tested positive for coronavirus, which is an increase of 874 cases since yesterday.

The seven day rolling average of new positive cases is now 1,147, down from 1,543 two weeks ago, and down from a peak of 5,195 on 14 April.

Approximately one in 1,700 people in the community in England are now estimated to have the virus, down from 1 in 400 four weeks ago. SAGE believes infections across the UK are shrinking at a steady rate of between 4 and 2 per cent every day.

Based on all the various data available, the government is confident the third test is being met.

Next slide please.

Our fourth test is that we must be confident that the range of operational challenges, including on testing capacity and Personal Protective Equipment, are in hand, with supply able to meet future demand.

Yesterday 237,142 tests were carried out or posted out across the UK, compared to around 12,000 at the start of April.

The new NHS Test and Trace service has already advised over 87,000 people to self-isolate who might otherwise have unwittingly transmitted the virus.

We have contracted with over 175 new suppliers able to deliver PPE at the scale and pace the UK requires.

And this progress means we are satisfied that the fourth test is being met.

Our fifth and final test is that we must be confident that any adjustments to the current measures will not risk a second peak of infections that overwhelms the NHS.

I am once again grateful for the Chief Scientific Adviser and the Chief Medical Officer for their advice on the measures I am about to set out.

I can confirm the government judges we have met the fifth test and we are therefore satisfied that all five tests are still being met.

On 11 May, we set out our plan to recover.

That plan as you may remember set out three steps for adjusting the lockdown.

Step 1 was implemented, as planned, on 13 May, enabling people to spend more time outdoors.

Step 2 was implemented, as planned, in phases on 1 and 15 June. Shops have opened, children have started to return to school and people have been able to see more of their loved ones.

Now Step 3 can be implemented, as planned, on 4 July.

All the measures I am about to set out apply to England – the devolved administrations are responsible for adjusting lockdown in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, moving at the pace they believe is right for them.

After a long period of asking you, the British public, to follow very strict and complex rules to bring coronavirus under control, we can now make life easier for people to see more of their friends and family, and to help businesses get back on their feet and people back into jobs.

Critically, we can make a change to the guidance on two metres, which kept us safe while transmission of the virus was high but which can now be modified.

Having considered all the evidence, while staying at two metres is preferable, we can now move to “1 metre plus” where it is not possible for us to stay two metres apart. This means staying one metre apart, plus mitigations which reduce the risk of transmission.

These precautions could include installing screens, making sure people face away from each other, providing handwashing facilities, minimising the amount of time you spend with people outside your household, and of course being outdoors.

On public transport, it means one metre plus wearing a face covering for mitigation, as everybody I think now understands.

We are setting out COVID-Secure guidance to help businesses take the measures that are right for them.

We can also allow more sectors to reopen on 4 July, as planned for Step 3.

So, from 4 July, the following premises will be allowed to reopen provided they are COVID-Secure:

- hotels, bed and breakfasts and self-contained holiday accommodation
- caravan parks and campsites
- places of worship and libraries
- restaurants and cafes
- bars, pubs and social clubs
- cinemas and bingo halls
- museums and galleries



- hair salons and barbers
- outdoor playgrounds and outdoor gyms

This has been an incredibly tough time for these establishments. But I hope that everyone working in them can take confidence in knowing they will be able to open their doors once again in just a couple of weeks' time.

And of course they should do so in a way that is COVID-Secure, keeping customers and staff safe.

But I am afraid to say that some premises, such as nightclubs, swimming pools and indoor gyms, must remain closed for now given the particular risks of transmission in those settings. However, we are establishing taskforces for those sectors to establish how they too can open, in a COVID-Secure way, as fast as possible.

At the same time, we can give people more freedom to see their friends and family.

From 4 July, your household will be able to meet with one other household at a time, including staying over.

This can be indoors or outside, at your home, in a restaurant or pub, or in paid accommodation.

I want to stress you should remain socially distant from anyone outside your household.

For meeting outdoors, you can continue to meet in a park or a garden in a group of up to six people, drawn from six different households.

Again, at all times you should maintain social distancing from anyone outside your household.

As we give people back more control over their lives, we will be asking them to follow guidance on limiting their social contact, rather than forcing them to do so through legislation.

And this obviously requires everyone to act responsibly, which I have no doubt they will do. It will still be possible for the police to break up large and irresponsible gatherings. But neither the police themselves, or the public that they serve, want virtually every aspect of our behaviour to be subject to the criminal law.

Yesterday the Deputy Chief Medical Officer and the Health Secretary set out updated advice for those who are shielding in England, so that they can soon start to return to leading more normal lives.

Opening up more of Britain in this COVID-Secure way is only possible if everyone continues to stay alert to the risks of coronavirus.

That means you should:

- stay 2 metres apart and if you can't do that then keep 1 metre apart with mitigations
- wash your hands regularly
- wear face coverings on public transport, or where you are indoors in a crowded environment where distancing is not possible
- follow the rules when visiting businesses
- crucially, get a test done immediately if you develop symptoms
- and self-isolate if you are asked to by NHS Test and Trace

We are only able to make these changes because we have persevered together and stuck to our path.

We had five tests – and we met them.

We had a plan – and we stuck to it.

The government has asked a huge amount of all of you, and the people of this country have met that challenge with good humour and common sense.

Of course, the fight is far from over. This is a nasty virus still that wants to take advantage of our carelessness. I'm afraid there will be local outbreaks. And I must tell you that if the virus were to begin to run out of control, I will not hesitate to put on the handbrake on and reverse some of these changes, at a local or indeed national level as required.

But we can avoid that if we all continue to stay alert and do our bit to control the virus. The British public have proved again and again, not that it was ever in doubt it, that they can be trusted to do the right thing and to do it with common sense.

There is no doubt we are beating back this virus and, with your continued cooperation and good judgment we will beat it once and for all.

I'll now hand over to Patrick.