

HS2 minister starts roundtables on integrated rail plan

- minister kicks off series of virtual meetings with key leaders from across the north and Midlands
- representatives to discuss HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and Midlands Engine Rail
- roundtables to focus on ensuring priorities of the whole country are central to the integrated rail plan, set to be published at the end of the year

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson is hosting a series of virtual meetings with leaders from across the north and Midlands, ensuring regional representatives can voice their priorities for the integrated rail plan (IRP) and the current plans for HS2, Northern Powerhouse rail (NPR) and Midlands Engine Rail.

As part of the [decision to proceed with HS2 announced in February \(2020\)](#), the government has committed to drawing up an integrated rail plan, informed by an assessment from the [National Infrastructure Commission](#), in order to look at how to deliver transformational rail improvements to the north and Midlands as quickly as possible, whilst driving down unnecessary costs and over-specification.

The roundtables, which form one part of the engagement process, will seek the views of local authorities, metro mayors, local enterprise partnerships and chambers of commerce.

Over the next 2 weeks, the minister, along with HS2 Ltd and Network Rail officials, will meet with 70 representatives from The North West, North East, Yorkshire, East and West Midlands, with further roundtable events set to take place later in the year.

HS2 minister Andrew Stephenson said:

Our plan for a better connected country and for stronger regional economies is best realised with the voices of all of our towns and cities at the table.

Even as we work to tackle COVID-19, these meetings will ensure we do not lose momentum on developing the vital infrastructure needed for the future as quickly as possible.

I am determined to ensure each region's voice is heard as we develop our integrated rail plan, to help deliver a coordinated, pragmatic strategy best suited to the needs of communities across the north and Midlands.

The integrated rail plan will set out how to efficiently deliver rail investments to best suit the needs of those in the Midlands and north in an integrated way, and will be published at the end of the year. It will also have a focus on ensuring that lessons are learned from phase 1 of HS2 to drive down costs.

[Somalia international partners statement on fostering consensus and reconciliation](#)

World news story

The UK and partners welcome efforts by President Abdullahi “Farmajo” on dialogue, reconciliation and compromise between the national government and member states.



The below statement was signed by United Kingdom, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Egypt, Ethiopia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, United States, United Nations and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

We, Somalia’s international partners, welcome the proposal by President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed ‘Farmajo’ on 14 June to convene a meeting between the Federal Government of Somalia and all five Federal Member State Presidents and the Governor of Benadir Region (Mogadishu), to be preceded by an initial virtual meeting. We commend this initiative to strengthen cooperation and foster consensus.

We call upon Somalia's leaders to seize this opportunity to agree a way forward on pressing national priorities, including elections, for the benefit of all Somali people. We acknowledge other recent efforts by the FGS and FMS representatives that helped lay the foundations for this dialogue.

We urge the rapid organisation, without delay, of the virtual and in-person meetings announced today. We welcome continued efforts at dialogue, reconciliation and compromise among political leaders. We further welcome the pursuit of solutions to political differences without violence and in a spirit of pragmatism and inclusivity, including in Jubaland.

We look forward to witnessing accelerated progress on Somalia's national priorities through the renewed cooperation of its leaders, and stand ready to support efforts that promote inclusive politics and preserve the unity of the country.

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[MHRA suspends recruitment to COVID-19 hydroxychloroquine trials](#)

Press release

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has instructed UK clinical trialists using hydroxychloroquine to treat or prevent coronavirus (COVID-19) to suspend recruitment of further participants.



This means that no new participants will be recruited to these trials until further data which justifies their continuation have been provided, and any additional safety measures have been implemented.

This decision follows advice from the Commission on Human Medicines, which met on 1 and 5 June 2020 and reviewed the data that had been submitted for each trial in response to MHRA requests.

We followed the emerging concerns about use of hydroxychloroquine in COVID-19, and took into consideration the results from two different trials, including the UK's RECOVERY trial which has provided convincing evidence of no meaningful mortality benefit in hospitalised patients with COVID-19.

Dr June Raine, MHRA's CEO, said:

We have told those conducting clinical trials using hydroxychloroquine to treat or prevent COVID-19 to suspend recruitment into their trials.

Neither hydroxychloroquine nor chloroquine are licensed to treat COVID-19 related symptoms or to prevent infection.

It is important to note that patients taking hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine to treat other health conditions can continue to do so, as advised by their healthcare professional, as the balance of benefits and risks remains favourable in the licensed uses.

Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine licensed in the UK

Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine are licensed in the UK to treat different health conditions such as malaria, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, amoebic hepatitis and abscess and certain dermatological conditions. These products should only be taken if prescribed by a healthcare professional and supplied by or under the supervision of a pharmacist on registered pharmacy premises.

Patients or healthcare professionals can report any suspected side effects from hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine taken by patients with COVID-19 via our [Yellow Card COVID-19 reporting site](#).

If you would like to report any suspected side effects from hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine taken to treat other health conditions, please use our main [Yellow Card site](#)

Notes to editor

- There is currently no medicine specifically licensed for the treatment of Covid-19. [See our guidance on chloroquine/hydroxychloroquine and COVID-19.](#)

- The MHRA took into consideration the results released from the RECOVERY trial, showing no beneficial effect of hydroxychloroquine in patients hospitalised with COVID-19, and a New England Journal of Medicine publication using hydroxychloroquine as postexposure prophylaxis of COVID-19, concluding that hydroxychloroquine did not prevent illness compatible with Covid-19 or confirmed infection.
- [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency](#) is responsible for protecting and improving the health of millions of people every day through the effective regulation of all medicines and medical devices in the UK by ensuring they work and are acceptably safe. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks.
- The [MHRA](#) is a centre of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency which also includes the [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control \(NIBSC\)](#) and the [Clinical Practice Research Datalink \(CPRD\)](#). MHRA is an executive agency of the [Department of Health and Social Care](#)
- [The Commission on Human Medicines \(CHM\)](#) is a committee of the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency. The CHM advises ministers on the safety, efficacy and quality of medicinal products.
- [The Yellow Card COVID-19 reporting site](#). is a separate platform dedicated to COVID-19 related reports and linked to the main [Yellow Card scheme](#) reporting site. Information provided by patients and healthcare professionals through their COVID-19 Yellow Card reports will be used alongside other scientific safety information such as clinical trials, scientific literature, other safety databases and studies to help MHRA to take action, if necessary, to make changes to the warnings given to people taking a medicine or review the way a medicine or a device is used to maximise benefit and minimise the risk to the patient.
- [The Yellow Card scheme](#) is MHRA's system of monitoring the safety of medicines and medical devices in the UK and it acts as an early warning system to identify new, and strengthen existing, safety information about medicines, medical devices, falsified or defective healthcare products, and e-cigarettes.
- There currently are no vaccine and no medicines authorised to treat COVID-19 in the UK by the MHRA. However, several treatments authorised for other diseases are being used in patients with COVID-19.

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[Joint statement on Djibouti talks](#)

between Somalia and Somaliland leaders

World news story

Somalia international partners welcome the commitment of the two leaders to continue the dialogue.



The below statement was signed by United Kingdom, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, United States, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Ethiopia, United Nations, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Somalia's international partners welcome the dialogue between President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo' and President Muse Bihi Abdi, hosted by President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, and attended by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali. We commend the regional support, and engagement that led to the talks.

We welcome the meeting as an important step in strengthening communication and fostering understanding, and encourage the technical committee named by the principals to deliver tangible benefits for their people.

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Geospatial Data Strategy to unlock the

power of location data across the UK's Blue Economy

Geospatial, or location data, is having a significant impact on our lives. It is transforming the way we complete everyday tasks, supports key decisions on where to develop vital infrastructure and helps us to use resources efficiently.

This data is also critical to the way we interact with and protect our oceans. Whether renewables or shipping, much of our maritime sector depends on data depicting the marine environment to operate and work safely. This same data is also essential to the protection of our oceans, helping us to monitor delicate marine environments and use them responsibly.

The UK Geospatial Strategy, released this week by the [Geospatial Commission](#), sets out key steps that will help to unlock the power of location data across land and sea – building economic, social and environmental value for the UK. This includes 4 key missions that the Commission will use to increase access to data, build skills and support innovation over the next 5 years. These include:

- Promote and safeguard the use of location data to provide an evidenced view of the market value of location data, set clear guidelines on data access, privacy, ethics and security, and promote better use of location data.
- Improve access to better location data to streamline, test and scale the development of new and existing location data ensuring it is findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable and of high quality.
- Enhance capabilities, skills and awareness to develop more people with the right skills and tools to work with location data – across organisations and sectors – to meet the UK's future needs and support global development.
- Enable innovation to maximise commercial opportunities and promote market-wide adoption of high value emerging location technologies.

Together, these missions will help drive innovation and boost the economy across the UK over the coming years. This includes our maritime sector, which provides an estimated £47 billion to the economy each year.

As one of 6 partner bodies, the UK Hydrographic Office is proudly supporting this strategy and its aims. We will work with other members of the Geo6 to improve the way geospatial data is used and shared in the UK.

You can view and [download the full strategy here](#).

Commenting on the strategy Tim Lowe, Chief Executive of the UK Hydrographic Office, said:

The launch of this strategy is an exciting milestone for the UK and will enable a transformation in the way we understand and utilise our geospatial data.

For many of our marine industries, this geospatial data is an everyday essential. So, by improving access to this data, building skills and supporting innovation, we can help these industries to thrive whilst tackling environmental and social concerns.

As a partner body, we're proud of the part we've played. But I would also like to thank the UK's marine geospatial community, whose input has helped to build this strategy. Working together, we can unlock the power of location data and enable better use of our seas and oceans.

Cathrine Armour, Chief Customer Officer at the UK Hydrographic Office commented:

There is a growing recognition of the importance of our marine environment and the need to use ocean resources in a sustainable way. Marine geospatial data is essential to help us unlock economic value, whilst ensuring the protection of our oceans for years to come.

The exciting steps outlined in this strategy will help to improve access to this data and build geospatial skills across the UK, enabling the UKHO and our partners to develop safe, secure and thriving oceans into the future.