

# Environment Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 19 May 2020

Good afternoon and welcome to today's briefing where I'm joined by Angela McLean, the deputy chief scientific advisor.

I want to begin by updating you on the latest data relating to the coronavirus outbreak.

\*2,772,552 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 89,784 tests carried out yesterday; \*248,818 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 2,412 cases since yesterday; \*10,025 people are currently in hospital with the coronavirus in the UK, that's down 17% from the 11,716 this time last week; \*And sadly, of those who have tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, 35,341 have now died. That's an increase of 545 fatalities since yesterday.

And of course our thoughts are with the families of all of those who have lost their lives to this virus.

Before I turn to some of the work that Defra is doing to ensure that we are able to harvest this year's farm harvest I want to remind people of the details of the next phase of our fight against the coronavirus.

Firstly on slide one, as you can see, in order to monitor our progress we are establishing a new COVID Alert Level System, with five levels, each relating to the level of threat posed by the virus.

The alert level will be based primarily on the R value and the number of coronavirus cases.

And in turn that alert level will determine the level of social distancing measures in place.

The lower the level the fewer the measures; the higher the level the stricter the measures.

Throughout the period of lockdown, which started on March 23rd, we were at Level 4.

Thanks to the hard work and sacrifices of the British people in this lockdown, we have helped to bring the R level down and we are now in a position to begin moving to Level 3, in careful steps.

Turning now to slide two, We have set out the first of three steps we will take to carefully modify the measures, gradually ease the lockdown, and begin to allow people to return to their way of life – but crucially do this while avoiding what would be a second peak that overwhelms the NHS.

After each step we will closely monitor the impact of that step on the R

value and the number of infections, and all the available data, and we will only take the next step when we are satisfied that it is safe to do so.

So in step one, as the Prime Minister announced last week:

\*Those who cannot work from home should now speak to their employer about going to work. \*People can now spend time outdoors and exercise as often as they like.

Finally, turning to slide three, having taken the first step in carefully adjusting some of the measures and our advice to people on what to do, our clear advice is to stay alert, control the virus, and save lives.

And staying alert means:

\*Staying at home as much as possible and working from home if this is possible. \*Limiting contact with other people and where contact is made with other people, keeping your distance. \*Washing your hands regularly and also staying at home and self-isolating if you or a household member show symptoms of the virus.

My final point today relates to the availability of labour this year for the farming harvest. Every year large numbers of people come from countries such as Romania and Bulgaria to take part in the harvest, harvesting crops such as strawberries, and salads and vegetables.

We estimate that probably only about a third of the people that would normally come are already here and small numbers may continue to travel. But one thing is clear and that is that this year we will need to rely on British workers to lend a hand to help bring that harvest home.

Over the last couple of months we have been working with industry on a plan to support and help people taking second jobs, particularly those who are furloughed, and we have launched a new 'Pick for Britain' website that enables people to go online, check (what job issues there are) what job availability there is and to marry up job opportunities from growers and employers with those people seeking a second job, particularly those that are furloughed.

We believe that those who are furloughed may be getting to the point that they want to lend a hand and play their part. They may be wanting to get out and they may be wanting to supplement their income with an additional job and if they do feel that way I would urge them to visit that website and to look at the opportunities that are there.

I will now turn to Angela McLean who will give you further updates on the coronavirus.

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# Wales to receive additional £64.5m as a result of transport funding in England

Press release

The UK Government has now provided over £2.2 billion in direct funding to Wales in order to manage the impact of coronavirus



Wales will receive an additional £64.5 million as a result of UK Government funding allocated to Transport for London earlier this week.

The UK Government is committed to a four nations response to COVID-19 and has so far announced over £7 billion of additional funding to the devolved administrations to support people, business and public services in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

The total amount of funding provided by the UK Government to support the effort to tackle the coronavirus in Wales currently stands at over £2.2 billion.

This funding is in addition to the UK-wide measures that the people and businesses in Wales can access, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

## **Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:**

Many transport organisations across the UK are facing hardship as a result of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and those in Wales are no exception.

While we are urging people to work from home where possible and only to travel when absolutely necessary, there are still those who need to travel to work and people need to be able to travel safely while respecting social distancing once restrictions are gradually

lifted.

While it is up to the Welsh Government to decide how to allocate this additional funding, key transport services require protection so they can support Wales' economic recovery from COVID-19.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

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## [An inclusive political solution in Libya is still greatly needed](#)

Thank you very much, Mr President. Thank you to Stephanie, as acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for your briefing. And we hope that we'll be able to agree on a permanent successor for you before too long. And now I thank, through you, your staff and all that are working so hard to try to end the conflict in Libya, in what are not always the most promising circumstances and context.

Let me start by sharing the deep concern that you expressed, Stephanie, at the significant escalation in hostilities in Libya. I think you describe an unprecedented increase in direct fire in civilian areas, which is extremely concerning. The cost in civilian lives and the damage to civilian infrastructure is totally unacceptable. And attacks in civilian areas, particularly on healthcare facilities, show a complete disregard for international law and must cease. At a time when countries around the world are coming together in the face of a shared threat from COVID-19, it is unconscionable that health care facilities are among the civilian infrastructure targeted. I also want to reiterate our continuing concern, the deteriorating human rights humanitarian situation in Libya. Again, Stephanie highlighted a million people now in need of humanitarian assistance. And the Secretary-General in his report made clear the situation – including the death, injury and displacement of significant numbers of civilians – is not acceptable, that civilians, including migrants and refugees, remain at risk. The intentional cutting of electricity, fuel, water or food supplies is a potential violation of international humanitarian law.

We remain particularly concerned by further reports that external parties continue to provide material, equipment, mercenaries. All member states must abide by their international obligations, including UN Security Council resolutions. And we note in this regard further reports of activity by the

Wagner Group in Libya. Wagner Group activities continue to exacerbate the conflict and prolong the suffering of the Libyan people. And I want to urge all Security Council members to abide by the resolutions of this Council, which they themselves have voted for.

We condemn the blockade of oil facilities, only harming the Libyan people, and today has led to a loss of over \$4 billion. Efforts to illicitly import aviation fuel into Libya are also unacceptable, and all parties must uphold the integrity and unity of the National Oil Corporation.

But there will not be a military victory, not least because the foreign actors involved in this war won't permit. So an inclusive political solution, as set out in the Berlin Conference, offers the best hope for the stability and future prosperity that the Libyan people need and deserve. And we call on the LNA to engage substantively with the UN drafted ceasefire document of 23rd February, as the GNA have recently done. The United Kingdom reaffirms its support for Libya's internationally recognised and legitimate institutions as agreed in the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement and as recognised by this Council.

Mr President, the United Kingdom is consistent in its belief that if the warring parties and their backers have the interests of the Libyan people at heart, they would cease fighting, cease the attacks on civilians, cease private or unilateral initiatives, and instead get behind the United Nations and the inclusive political solution. It is the only hope and it is what the Libyan people need and deserve after these years of conflict.

Let me just ask a question, if I may, Stephanie. I wondered if you could say whether there has been any change in the public mood and in public support for, or public attitudes towards the conflict since the COVID-19 outbreak, and whether there are any signs, the calculations of any of the parties to the conflict are being affected by that public view.

Thank you very much.

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## [jHub support NHSX to securely share COVID-19 symptom data](#)

During the UK's response to COVID-19, a number of third-party apps and websites have been collecting COVID-19 symptom data in order to track the spread of the virus.

The apps or websites encourage users to submit their symptoms and basic demographic data.

# What is Project OASIS

[jHub](#) has been brought in to provide assistance, coordination and coherence of the COVID-19 symptom tracker apps; including facilitating the secure transfer of relevant symptom and epidemiology data from the third party COVID-19 apps to NHSX.

## How does it work?

jHub will receive and review the data, removing any information which may inadvertently identify users, ensuring that only symptom and demographic data is included. The data will then be checked for any security issues, with any incorrect or duplicate data also being erased.

jHub will then securely share the data with NHSX, (NHS England) which will then be used to inform their COVID-19 response by giving a clearer understanding as to which areas in the UK the virus is spreading and how quickly.

With the personal nature of the data being collected, Project OASIS will adhere to strict controls to ensure the data sharing meets data protection legislation.

Natasha Gedge, the Chief Operating Officer at jHub, has been working on this project and had this to say:

At jHub, we are always working to deliver for UK Defence and we are proud to be able to take our approach, and apply it in support of the NHS and the people of the UK

Andrew Buckley, an innovation scout working at the medical section of jHub, jHubMed, also added his thoughts:

Symptom tracking really is a forecasting super power, tightly binding decisions at the highest level to the day-to-day experience of our valuable contributors. It's fantastic and humbling to be at jHub, working closely with NHSX, to yolk the innovation and energy of our extraordinary app community and help beat Covid!

Lauren Harkins, Project OASIS, NHSX added:

OASIS is industry, academia, jHub and the NHS working together to understand the spreads and help control the COVID-19 virus. The App providers demonstrated their ingenuity from the outset of the pandemic, capturing vital information which the NHS will be using to make lifesaving decisions. We are thankful to everyone involved with this important project.

# Symptom tracking apps working with the NHS and jHub

NHSX and jHub are only working with apps that have been assessed to the [NHS Digital Health Technology Standard](#) or against the [Digital Assessment Questionnaire \(DAQ\)](#).

At the time of writing NHSX and jHub have been working with the following App Providers, with more to be announced shortly:

1. [Agitate Ink C-19](#)
2. [Connected Cognition – connectedcognition.org](#)
3. [Corona-Help UK](#)
4. [Evergreen Life](#)
5. [LetsBeatCovid-19](#)
6. [TrackTogether](#)
7. [Your.MD](#)
8. [ZOE](#)

## Related articles:

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## [US exports leads to £1m exports boom for Levity Crop Science](#)

- Exports boom for Levity Crop Science after firm expands into US and other new markets
- In 2020, sales of the firm's innovative fertilizer already surpass the whole of 2019 following help from the Department for International Trade
- The bioactive fertilizer enables farmers to increase crop yields and reduce waste

Levity Crop Science is experiencing record global demand for its crop enhancement products, with over 70% of its revenue a result of exports into new markets and expansion in the United States.

The company, which has developed products to help farmers close the gap between potential and average yields, has seen sales exceed £1 million in the first quarter of 2020, outstripping total sales for 2019.

The pioneering bioactive crop enhancements work with the plants' natural systems to increase production without causing environmental damage. Farmers using Levity Crop Science's products see huge benefits to their crops in terms of yield, quality, shelf-life, and ability to withstand stress from bad growing conditions.

The Department for International Trade has been advising Levity Crop Science on its export strategy since 2017. Last year the business grew its presence

in the US from 2 to 8 states, a development that accounts for more than 60% of this year's sales to date.

**Managing Director David Marks says his company's innovation is making a valuable contribution to farmers around the world:**

It's a real adventure and a great privilege to be able to help the farmers that grow the world's food, delivering more, higher quality crops, and helping the environment at the same time.

We'll potentially have an additional 2 billion mouths to feed globally by 2050, and with the economic strain caused by the Coronavirus, it's essential that we find new ways to increase crop yields and make the agricultural sector as efficient as possible.

Exporting has been a pillar of our success since we started trading, and we're ambitious about what we can achieve this year. With the Government now negotiating a UK-US free trade agreement, I am optimistic that our transatlantic sales will continue to grow in importance.

Levity Crop Sciences' sustainable fertilizers have remained in demand throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. All over the world they are aiding growing conditions on a diverse range of farms, from those affected by drought in Egypt and Jordan, to establishing new fruit orchards in Malaysia.

Having helped the business break into the South African and Romanian markets in 2019, the Department for International Trade is continuing to support its growth with upcoming deals anticipated across North America, South America and Africa.

**International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:**

At this testing time, it's more important than ever that we keep global trade flowing and supply chains open.

By exporting sprays and fertilizers, Levity Crop Science is one of the many UK companies helping farmers across the world ensure that food reaches our tables.

This is a great example of the US's strong appetite for the high quality goods being produced here and striking a free trade agreement will further benefit businesses across the UK.

Last week International Trade Secretary Liz Truss and the US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer concluded the first round of negotiations for a UK-US Free Trade Agreement.

The talks cover all areas set out in the UK's negotiation objectives,



including goods and services trade, digital trade, investment and supporting SMEs.