

Government expands expert team to rapidly roll out coronavirus test and trace programme

- The government has today appointed 2 new members to the team of experts working on the coronavirus test and trace programme
- Tom Riordan and Sarah-Jane Marsh will join the programme which is being chaired by Baroness Dido Harding
- The team will work to rapidly expand test and trace nationwide, backed by the successful scaling up of testing capacity across the country

The government has today announced the expansion of the expert team leading on the rapid nationwide roll out of the coronavirus test and trace programme.

The test and trace programme has been designed to minimise the spread of coronavirus, by identifying people who may have been in contact with the virus.

The programme is backed by increased testing capacity and a contact tracing app developed by NHSX, launched on the Isle of Wight earlier this month.

Today, further experts have been added to the team working on the programme's nationwide roll out for later this month.

Tom Riordan, Chief Executive of Leeds City Council, will be leading on tracing alongside his existing role, and Sarah-Jane Marsh, Chief Executive of Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital, will be the lead on testing.

The experts will join the test and trace programme chair and Head of NHS Improvement, Baroness Dido Harding.

Both experts have been confirmed by Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock to further draw upon the best British expertise from across the country in the fight against the spread of coronavirus.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I am delighted to welcome Tom Riordan and Sarah-Jane Marsh to our team of experts working to rapidly expand the test and trace programme across the country.

As we respond to an evolving pandemic, their expert leadership will support us to follow each case of the virus within the UK, curbing its spread and saving lives.

Chair of the Test and Trace Programme Baroness Harding said:

Test and trace is a vital element in the next phase of the government's plan to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Expanding the test and trace team to bring in more experts will ensure we can use the very best of our tech, research and people power to help keep coronavirus at bay across the country.

I am very grateful to Leeds City Council and Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital for their support as Tom Riordan and Sarah-Jane Marsh join the national effort to stop the spread of the virus.

The test and trace team will work closely with National Testing Co-ordinator Professor John Newton. Professor Newton will continue to provide clinical guidance and will support the science of the programme alongside the deputy chief medical officers. His role has been expanded to allow him to ensure coordination between the testing and test and trace programmes, supporting Baroness Harding.

[Vikoma exports pollution control equipment with UKEF support](#)

About the transaction: Vikoma

Region	Isle of Wight
Sector	Manufacturing – pollution control
Project location	Multiple destinations
UKEF support	Bond Support Scheme

Vikoma, headquartered on the Isle of Wight, has been exporting throughout its 50-year history – the majority of their customer base is located overseas.

The business has won 25 global tenders to manufacture and supply pollution control equipment to businesses in Europe, Canada, India, the Middle East and China using UKEF guarantees.

Vikoma recently supplied oil skimming equipment to a base in India. The equipment will be used in the event of an oil spill to protect the country's coastlines and wildlife.

Our [Bond Support Scheme](#) freed up funds that Vikoma would previously have used on a bank guarantee deposit, enabling Vikoma's working capital to be spent fulfilling a range of export deals worth millions of pounds in revenue.

Karen Lucas, Managing Director of Vikoma, said:

One of the challenges we have with exporting is that we might want

to get an advance payment from a customer and stage payments through the duration of the contract to fund the work in progress. But the customer doesn't necessarily want to part with the cash without some form of guarantee, which is where we need to use bank guarantees.

UKEF involvement is critical because there's no point getting advance funding for contracts if we then have to allocate that money to one side to secure the bank performance bond.

Stuart Stoter, Export Finance Manager for Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, said:

By helping Vikoma and their bank with the issuance of bonds and guarantees, we have been able to support export contracts to a wide range of countries. Vikoma is a great example of a successful exporter and UK Export Finance stands ready to support other UK businesses trying to expand their exports.

Putting the right finance and insurance in place can give you the exporting edge, helping you to win contracts, fulfil orders and get paid.

[Tell us about your business](#)

[Power Jacks enters new markets with UKEF support](#)

About the transaction: Power Jacks

Region	Aberdeenshire
Sector	Manufacturing
Project location	Multiple destinations
UKEF support	Bond Support Scheme

Power Jacks is a leading design and manufacturing company, providing electro-mechanical lifting solutions for use in a range of sectors, including civil engineering, energy and transport.

The company exports to 80 countries from its base in Aberdeenshire. Over the last 20 years, exporting has become increasingly important for Power Jacks, with Asia becoming one of its biggest markets – 60% of the company's business is now destined to go to overseas clients.

Exporting to the Middle East can present challenges for credit and cash flow, with an increasing demand for advance payment guarantees, performance bonds and warranty bonds to secure contracts.

The facilities offered by banks on these advance payments and bonds are often unfavourable. At the same time, cash conversion cycles in the Middle East and Asia can be 150 days long. The resulting strain on cash flows can deter many companies like Power Jacks from exporting.

Our [Bond Support Scheme](#) has proven an ideal solution for Power Jacks. Through the scheme, we have underwritten up to 80% of commercially issued bond guarantees.

Since 2017, our support has helped Power Jacks to win £9.5 million worth of export contracts.

Bruce Bultitude, Managing Director of Power Jacks, said:

We could have potentially lost out on valuable export business without the support of UKEF. We will also be looking into UKEF's Exporting Working Capital Scheme in the future, for upcoming export contracts.

Alistair McMillan, Export Finance Manager for Aberdeenshire, Tayside, Highlands and Islands said:

These recent contracts represented significant wins for Power Jacks during what has been a difficult period for the sector as a whole. While the bank was supportive of the business and the management team, UKEF's guarantees reduced their risk, enabling them to issue these bonds while allowing Power Jacks to retain the cash needed to fulfil the contracts.

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[Tell us about your business](#)

[Propeller manufacturer secures order to Bangladesh with UKEF support](#)

About the transaction: Teignbridge Propellers International

Region	Newton Abbot, Devon
Sector	Manufacturing – propellers and stern gear
Project location	Bangladesh
UKEF support	Export Insurance Policy

Teignbridge Propellers International is a manufacturer based in Devon. It produces propellers and sterngear for small to medium sized boats. The company, which has been operating for 45 years, exports around 80% of its products to customers across the world.

As a major exporter, it has a commercial insurance policy, which normally provides the necessary insurance for Teignbridge's export orders.

However, it was unable to obtain commercial credit insurance for an order from a new customer in Bangladesh that wanted to purchase propellers for its ferries. Teignbridge turned to UK Export Finance, which provided the cover that the company needed for the contract, allowing it to proceed with the order.

The cover we provided enabled Teignbridge to increase shipments by £300,000. This has had a dramatic impact on the company's growth, allowing it to secure jobs and target new markets.

Ian Mills, Finance Director, Teignbridge Propellers, said:

UKEF's support has secured jobs in our Devon facility and has given us the confidence to explore and target new markets in the Far East. This is now bearing fruit now with new orders of over £500,000.

Putting the right finance and insurance in place can give you the exporting edge, helping you to win contracts, fulfil orders and get paid.

[Tell us about your business](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): new transport guidance for passengers and operators](#)

With permission Mr Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the new [transport guidance for passengers](#) and [operators](#) that has been published by my

department.

Coronavirus has cast its shadow over the lives of everyone in this country.

As we all know too well, for some it has caused unimaginable heartache. And for many millions of our fellow citizens, this crisis has meant enormous sacrifice in the national effort to beat the disease.

The government is immensely grateful to the British people for the profound changes they have made over the past weeks.

I would also like to extend my thanks to transport workers and the wider sector for their immense efforts to keep Britain on the move during this crisis.

We will always remember the way the industry has served this country during this most challenging of periods. Public transport operators have ensured that all those on the frontline of the fight against the virus can get to work. While freight firms have delivered vital goods and kept supermarket shelves stacked.

However, it is now time to consider how together we will emerge from this crisis.

On Sunday, the Prime Minister set out the first careful steps for reopening society and a [roadmap for the weeks and months ahead](#).

Undoubtedly transport is going to play a central role in that recovery. It will be key to restarting our economy, and in time enable us to renew and strengthen those precious social ties that are so deeply valued by us all.

But as I said last week, our nation's emergence from this crisis will not be a single leap to freedom. It will be a gradual process.

We cannot jeopardise the progress achieved in the past few weeks by our shared sacrifices.

Therefore, we remain clear that those who can work from home should continue to do so. However, as those who cannot start to return to their jobs, the safety of the public and of transport workers must be paramount.

That is why the Department for Transport has today (12 May 2020) published two new pieces of guidance for [passengers](#) and [operators](#).

These documents aim to give passengers the confidence to travel.

And they seek to give operators the information they need to provide safer services and workplaces for passengers and staff.

We encourage operators to consider the particular needs of their customers and workers as they translate these documents into action.

Mr Speaker, the first document is aimed at passengers. I'll summarise some of

the main points contained in this advice.

Firstly, as mentioned, we continue to ask that people only go to work if they cannot do their jobs from home.

That is because, even as transport begins to revert to a full service, the 2 metre social distancing rule will only leave effective capacity for 1 in 10 passengers overall. It is therefore crucial that we protect our network by minimising the pressures placed upon it and ensure it is ready to serve those who need it most.

As a result, we are also asking those who need to make journeys to their place of work or other essential trips to walk or cycle wherever possible.

In order to help more of us to do this, last week [I announced an unprecedented £2 billion investment to put walking and cycling at the heart of our transport policy](#).

The first stage, worth £250 million, will include a series of swift emergency measures, including pop-up bike lanes, wider pavements and cycle and bus only corridors.

This money should help protect our public transport network in the weeks and months ahead. It's my hope that it will eventually allow us to harness the vast health, social and environmental benefits that active forms of travel provide.

If people cannot walk or cycle but have access to a car, we urge them to use this before considering public transport, avoiding, where possible busy times of day.

I do, however, recognise that for some people using public transport is a necessity. In this case, you should follow the guidance we have set out today to stay safe when using the network.

This recommends that travellers maintain social distancing by staying 2 metres apart, wherever possible, to prevent the spread of the virus.

We also advise that, as a precautionary measure, people consider [wearing a face covering](#) when using public transport. This could help protect other travellers from coronavirus where you have unknowingly developed the illness and are not showing any symptoms.

And we urge passengers to avoid rush hours, to use contactless payment, and to wash their hands before and after their journey.

In addition, the guidance also reminds us that, at this most challenging of time, it is more vital than ever that we think of the needs of others.

Our transport operators and their staff are doing all they can to keep everyone safe.

Please follow advice from staff at stations, and at bus interchanges, be

patient and be considerate to fellow passengers and staff.

In particular, we should remember the needs of disabled passengers, those with hearing and sight impairments and older travellers.

Mr Speaker, as I mentioned, we're also publishing a second document, [guidance for transport operators](#). These organisations really are at the forefront of our national recovery efforts.

They know inside out the needs of their customers and their workers, and they understand like no one else, their industries' own specific challenges.

That is why I have no doubt that operators are best placed to implement the safety processes that work best for their businesses, employees and customers.

The guidance, we are publishing today, advises operators across all forms of private and public transport on the measures they can take to improve safety.

These steps include ensuring stations, services and equipment are regularly cleaned.

Making sure passenger flows are clearly communicated to avoid crowding and try to keep everyone on the network – passengers and staff – 2 metres apart.

This guidance will develop over time, in line with our increasing understanding of how coronavirus is spread and contained.

In addition, it is likely that there will be no one-size-fits-all approach to its implementation, it will need to be tailored into locally based plans that reflect specific needs. In preparation for that process yesterday I wrote to local authorities, to set out how we can work together to prepare the transport network at a local level for restart and ensure public safety.

Mr Speaker, the documents, I have published today, will help ready our transport system to support our country, as we seek to control the virus and restart the economy. We will inevitably encounter obstacles as we embark on this next stage of our national fightback against this disease.

And, there is no doubt that we will need to continue to work together as we overcome these challenges.

On that note, I would like to express my gratitude to our partners in the devolved administrations, local authorities, mayors, trade unions and transport operators for their work over the past weeks. I look forward to our continued collaboration in future.

Because, cooperation is going to be key to setting this country on the road to recovery.

If everyone plays their part, if we continue to stay alert, control the virus and save lives, and if we all follow this guidance when making essential journeys.

I believe we can together harness the power of transport to build a renewed and revitalised nation.

And I commend this statement to the House.