

Foreign Office charity marathon spans the globe in 24 hours

British Diplomats are completing a unique 24 hour global marathon relay that will help the NHS and charities right across the globe.

On Saturday 9 May, diplomats and their families from 155 British Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates – from Vancouver in the west to Samoa in the east; from Wellington in the south to Reykjavik in the north – will take part to raise money for NHS Charities Together and UNICEF.

Ambassadors to Moscow, Riyadh, Tel Aviv and Nairobi are all taking part, as well as the Foreign Office's most senior diplomat, Permanent Under Secretary Sir Simon McDonald, who will join the effort at his home in Hampshire.

Runners at each post will each run a mile, before video-conferencing with the next mission to pass the virtual baton on – sending it through the 24 time-zones.

The global marathon is the brainchild of Dr Ian Collard, acting Ambassador to Afghanistan, and his wife Tamara. With global flight restrictions, Ian's 3,500-mile separation from Tamara and their children has forced them to find creative ways to stay united as a family during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pair knew their situation was not unique in the department and decided the marathon would be a good way to unite the department, and its families, and improve mental and physical wellbeing. It would also allow staff to virtually connect with their colleagues while social distancing measures were in place.

Dr Collard was inspired by the soaring use of video conferencing by diplomats forced to work from home as they contribute to the largest repatriation exercise in Foreign Office history.

Acting Ambassador to Kabul Dr Ian Collard said:

The Covid-19 outbreak has meant an almost overnight change in the way diplomats are operating. As a keen sports fan it became obvious to me that we could use that same technology to bring staff and families together, to boost their wellbeing, and to raise money to support those struggling in the pandemic.

Embassies across the world are raising funds for local charities, and Ian and Tamara have set up a Virgin Money Giving page that will share donations between NHS charities and UNICEF's contribution to the global fight against Covid-19.

Ian added: "Diplomacy is about serving your country through the relationships

you build abroad, and working with allies towards shared goals. So diplomacy has a big part to play in overcoming Covid-19. Rarely have countries been so united by a single cause.”

Further information

Transport Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 9 May 2020

Good afternoon, and welcome to today's Downing Street press conference.

I'm pleased to be joined today by Professor Jonathan Van-Tam.

Latest data

Let me start by updating you on the latest information from the COBR data file.

I can report that through the government's monitoring and testing programme, as of today....

- 1, 728,443 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 96, 878 tests yesterday
- 215,260 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 3,896 cases since yesterday
- 11,809 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus in the UK, down from 12,284 yesterday

And tragically, of those hospitalised with the virus, 31,587 have now died. That's an increase of 346 fatalities since yesterday.

These deaths are devastating for the families and friends of victims, who are in our thoughts and prayers are with all of them every day.

But they also strengthen our resolve to fight this pandemic with all the resources we can muster in the weeks ahead...

Planning for restart/opportunity for lasting change

Tomorrow, the Prime Minister will set out a roadmap for the next phase in our strategy to tackle coronavirus.

In support of this, I am setting out today an ambitious programme to help prepare our transport network for the critical role it will play as we emerge from this crisis.

Importantly, it is true to say that moving beyond COVID will be a gradual process... not a single-leap to freedom.

When we do emerge, the world will seem quite different, at least for a while.

The need to maintain social distancing means that our public transport system cannot go back to where it left off.

Here is a very stark fact...

Even with public transport reverting to full service – once you take into account the 2 metre social distancing rule – there would only be effective capacity for one in ten passengers on many parts of the network.

Just a tenth of the old capacity.

So, getting Britain moving again, while not overcrowding our transport network, is going to require many of us to think carefully about how and when we travel.

Everyone involved

We have accomplished so much over the past 7 weeks of lockdown.

The whole country has been responsible for reducing the COVID reproduction or 'R' rate...

Millions of households across the UK have changed their behaviour for the greater good.

Getting Britain moving again, whilst not overcrowding our transport network, represents another enormous logistical challenge.

Yet this is a problem which presents a health opportunity too... an opportunity to make lasting changes that could not only make us fitter, but also better-off – both mentally and physically – in the long run.

Active travel

During the crisis, millions of people have discovered the benefits of active travel.

By cycling or walking, we've been able to enjoy this remarkably warm spring whilst sticking to the guidelines.

In some places, there's been a 70% rise in the number of people on bikes whether it's for exercise, or necessary journeys, such as stocking up on food.

So, while it's still crucial that we stay at home, when the country does get back to work, we need those people to carry on cycling and walking, and to be joined by many more.

Otherwise, with public transport capacity severely restricted, more cars could be drawn to the road and our towns and cities could become gridlocked.

We also know that in this new world, pedestrians will need more space.

So today (9 May 2020) I am [announcing a £2 billion package to put cycling and walking at the heart of our transport policy](#).

To set out how we will deliver this, I will bring forward a national cycling plan for publication in early June, in line with the statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy to help double cycling and increase walking by 2025.

The first stage, worth £250 million, is a series of swift, emergency interventions to make cycling and walking safer.

Pop-up bike lanes. Wider pavements. Cycle and bus-only streets. All examples of what people will start to see more of.

Accompanying the new money, we are today publishing fast-tracked statutory guidance, effective immediately, requiring councils in England to cater for significantly-increased numbers of cyclists and pedestrians, and making it easier for them to create safer streets.

For employees who want to start cycling to their place of work, but who don't have a bike right now, the popular [Cycle to Work Scheme](#) already allows employees to save between 25% and 39% on the cost of a new bike or an electric bike.

There has been a huge increase in people using the scheme, and we will work with employers to increase uptake further.

And for those who may have an old bike in the shed, and want to get it back into a roadworthy condition, there will be a voucher scheme for bike repairs and maintenance.

Plans are also being developed to boost bike fixing facilities.

What's more, over the next few months, we will set out further measures to make a 'once in a generation' change to the way people travel in Britain.

These will include tough new standards for cycling infrastructure;

- a new national cycling champion to inspire us
- much closer links with the NHS, with GPs prescribing cycling to help us get fitter
- legal changes to protect vulnerable road users
- at least one "zero-emission city," with its centre restricted to bikes and electric vehicles
- and the creation of a long-term cycling programme and budget, just like we have for our roads

There's clear evidence, including from the Prime Minister's time as mayor of

London, that making streets safe for walking and cycling is good for retailers, business and the economy.

Green travel / E-scooters / E-vehicles

And in making these changes, our national recovery can also become a green recovery.

One of the few positive benefits about the crisis is drastically better air quality and the health benefits that that brings.

More than 20,000 extra deaths a year in the UK are attributed to nitrogen dioxide emissions, which are highest in areas with most road traffic.

We want to try to preserve this as much as possible.

So today I'm also fast-tracking trials of e-scooters, bringing this programme, already underway, forward from next year, to next month...

And extending those trials from four local authorities to every region in the country that wants them...

... in a bid to get e-scooter rental schemes up-and-running in our cities as fast as possible...

Helping reduce car use on shorter journeys, and taking some pressure off buses, at this vital time.

These trials will help us assess their safety and benefits, together with their impact on public spaces.

The car industry has of course been very badly hit during this crisis, but April's new sales figures showed – for the first time – that the two biggest selling models were both electric vehicles.

So, to help keep this quiet, clean car revolution going, I can also announce today, £10 million of additional support for car-charging points on our streets.

The car will remain the mainstay for many families and, as well as backing electric infrastructure, we're going to accelerate the filling of pot-holes that plague so many road users.

Data

And just as new technology is changing the vehicles we use, so new digital technologies will help us make more informed transport choices in our battle against Covid.

At a time when transport demand could quickly overwhelm capacity if users have no access to real-time travel information...

... It is crucial that we take advantage of the UK's digital tech expertise.

With the right mobile apps, people can find out which parts of the transport network are overcrowded. And avoid them!

They can choose alternative travel options, to help maintain safe social distancing...

... or they can get information to help stagger their journeys – and lift the burden on public transport at peak times.

This week I chaired a roundtable with key players like Google, Microsoft, and British firm, Citymapper, to develop both data and apps to help the public view crowding across the transport network, in real-time.

Overall package

This £2 billion announcement represents the most significant package of cycling, walking and green travel by any British government.

Clearly, it will never be possible to cycle, walk or e-scooter everywhere. Cars will remain an absolutely vital form of transport for many...

And so in the coming days...

as we look to the future...

... there will be further announcements about the huge investment we're making in road and rail networks – taking advantage of their low usership during this COVID crisis.

Finally, as we begin the process of preparing public transport to get Britain moving again, no-one should underestimate the sheer scale of the challenge ahead.

Even with every train, bus and tram fully restored to service – this will not be enough.

Social distancing measures mean that everyone who travels will need to contribute to meeting this capacity challenge.

Changing our behaviour is the single biggest thing that's beaten back this virus.

The welcome fall we've seen in deaths is not only the achievement of our doctors and nurses and careworkers – but of everyone in the country for following the stay at home guidance.

To re-iterate, nothing I have said today changes these basic rules.

But as we contemplate the future, we will have to carry on making changes, particularly after we leave our homes.

Preventing overcrowding – which could lead to a second spike and more deaths – will be the responsibility of each and every one of us.

So please, only travel when you need to.

Be considerate to others, and help us prioritise essential workers.

And let's all play our part in Britain moving safely again when that time comes.

[£2 billion package to create new era for cycling and walking](#)

- largest ever boost for cyclists and pedestrians
- emergency bike lanes and streets will help support transport network
- trials of rental e-scooters to be brought forward to increase green transport options
- government working with leading tech developers to reduce crowding on public transport

Far more people will be cycling and walking thanks to plans to boost greener, active transport, launched today (9 May 2020) by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps .

Pop-up bike lanes with protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle and bus-only corridors will be created in England within weeks as part of a £250 million emergency active travel fund – the first stage of a £2 billion investment, as part of the [£5 billion in new funding announced for cycling and buses in February](#).

Following unprecedented levels of walking and cycling across the UK during the pandemic, the plans will help encourage more people to choose alternatives to public transport when they need to travel, making healthier habits easier and helping make sure the road, bus and rail networks are ready to respond to future increases in demand.

The government will fund and work with local authorities across the country to help make it easier for people to use bikes to get around – including Greater Manchester, which wants to create 150 miles of protected cycle track, and Transport for London, which plans a “bike Tube” network above Underground lines.

Fast-tracked statutory guidance, published today and effective immediately, will tell councils to reallocate roadspace for significantly-increased numbers of cyclists and pedestrians. In towns and cities, some streets could become bike and bus-only while others remain available for motorists. More side streets could be closed to through traffic, to create low-traffic neighbourhoods and reduce rat-running while maintaining access for vehicles.

Vouchers will be issued for cycle repairs, to encourage people to get their old bikes out of the shed, and plans are being developed for greater provision of bike fixing facilities. Many more will take up the [Cycle to Work scheme](#), which gives employees a discount on a new bike.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

During this crisis, millions of people have discovered cycling – whether for exercise or as a means of safe, socially-distanced transport. While there is no change to the ‘stay at home’ message today, when the country does get back to work we need those people to stay on their bikes and be joined by many more.

Otherwise, with public transport’s capacity severely restricted at this time, our trains and buses could become overcrowded and our roads gridlocked – holding up emergency services, critical workers and vital supplies.

We know cars will continue to remain vital for many, but as we look to the future we must build a better country with greener travel habits, cleaner air and healthier communities.

An updated [Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy](#) will be launched by the Prime Minister in the summer, with further measures to transform cycling and walking to deliver the government’s aims to double cycling and increase walking by 2025 – including:

- the creation of a national cycling and walking commissioner and inspectorate
- higher standards for permanent infrastructure across England
- getting GPs to prescribe cycling and exercise
- creating a long-term budget for cycling and walking similar to what happens for roads

The government will also be launching a campaign to encourage more people to look at alternative ways to travel, to walk or get on a bike for their commute instead of public transport. Today, riders from Team Ineos, including Chris Froome and Geraint Thomas, will be telling people to #GetPedalling.

Sir Dave Brailsford, Team Principal of Team INEOS, said:

If ever there was a good time to get on your bike, it’s now. You will be helping take pressure off public transport. You will be looking after your health. You will be looking after the health of others and you will be helping the environment. Let’s all get pedalling and help Britain on the road to recovery.

E-scooter trials will also be brought forward from next year to next month to

help encourage more people off public transport and onto greener alternatives. Originally set to take place in [4 Future Transport Zones, the trials of rental e-scooters](#) – which will now be offered to all local areas across the country – will allow government to assess the benefits of e-scooters as well as their impact on public space, with the potential to see rental vehicles on UK roads as early as June.

Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands said:

The West Midlands is proud to be leading the way on future transport development, and I am pleased the government has put its faith in us again with this new and innovative trial of e-scooters.

This trial will help bring more flexibility, choice, and greener travel solutions for the region, at a time when we are facing a climate emergency and urging people to leave the car at home.

We will also use the trial to look at the current transport challenges the coronavirus pandemic has presented us with and explore how e-scooters could be used to help tackle them.

No region is better equipped than the West Midlands to test, review, and implement trials such as these at pace and scale, and that is testament to the hard work and innovation of those working in our future transport sector.

As the government aims to encourage people to choose greener forms of travel when the coronavirus restrictions are lifted, a further push is being made to encourage drivers to purchase an electric vehicle. An extra £10 million – double the current funding amount – is being committed to the on street residential chargepoint scheme which will allow local authorities to install up to 7,200 devices, making it more convenient to charge and own an electric vehicle.

Further efforts to encourage drivers to make the switch include the upcoming launch of a consultation which hopes to make charging electric vehicles just as easy as filling up a traditional petrol or diesel car. It will explore measures such as requiring rapid charging points – which are fundamental for longer journeys – to offer contactless payment, improving transparency on pricing and giving drivers better access to information about the chargepoints available on their journey.

The government is also working alongside the tech sector to see how technology could be used to help commuters stagger their journeys and advise on alternative modes of travel. Leading transport tech experts including Google, Zipabout and Trainline met this week at a roundtable chaired by the Transport Secretary, to explore how technology could help ease overcrowding and reduce the risk of a second spike in coronavirus cases.

Potential solutions could include mobile phone apps warning when public transport is particularly busy or advising on a quieter time to travel, allowing people to flex their hours and prevent the transport network from being overburdened.

Millions more items of PPE for frontline staff from new business partnerships

- Companies including Amazon, the Royal Mint and Jaguar Land Rover have stepped up to get more PPE to healthcare workers
- Support follows the government's call-to-arms for businesses to use their manufacturing or procurement power to aid the coronavirus response
- More than a billion items of PPE already delivered to frontline, with millions more expected over coming months thanks to businesses ramping up production

NHS and social care staff in the UK are set to receive millions of items of personal protective equipment (PPE) over the coming months thanks to new, innovative collaborations with a number of organisations, the government has announced.

Companies including Amazon, the Royal Mint, Jaguar Land Rover and eBay are supporting the government's ongoing efforts to get PPE to the hardworking frontline staff, at no additional cost to the taxpayer.

This follows a call-to-action from the government for UK businesses to use their existing manufacturing power and expertise to meet the growing demand for protective equipment.

More than 200 potential manufacturers have been identified and many have been contracted to make over 25 million items of PPE and deliver 12 million square metres of PPE fabric to produce items like gowns, gloves and aprons.

Deliveries have already started, including contracts for 2.5 million aprons and 50,000 bottles of hand sanitiser a week. Firms will be supported through the regulatory, testing and procurement process in less than a month to get PPE to the frontline as quickly as possible.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“In continuing to tackle this global pandemic we outlined the need for a great national effort to ensure our frontline NHS and social care continue to have all the equipment they need.

“The support from businesses who accepted this challenge has been phenomenal.

“International demand for PPE has never been so high, and we are now working with over 1,000 businesses and establishing a British manufacturing base, which will see tens of millions of extra items of PPE delivered to the frontline in the coming weeks alone.

“I want to thank Lord Deighton for his work leading this national effort, and everyone who has stepped up to the plate.”

Lord Paul Deighton, adviser to the Secretary of State on PPE, said:

“It’s been fantastic to see so many companies come forward and offer their support for this vital undertaking. We are working tirelessly to look at all offers and are currently engaging with over a thousand different companies.

“However, there’s still more that can be done and I encourage any company with the capacity to step up and join the response. I look forward to seeing what future partnerships we can produce and what they can bring to the table to get healthcare workers the PPE they need.”

Examples of some of the support that has been accepted includes:

- the Royal Mint will be providing over 1.9 million face visors over the next 6 months, with 54,000 being delivered a week
- a partnership with Amazon allows us to harness their global sourcing expertise
- eBay has provided a new platform, jointly developed with Clipper Logistics, that will allow primary, social and community care providers to order from a range of PPE directly – the orders are then fulfilled by Clipper and shipped directly via Royal Mail
- Survitec, a life-saving product technology company, will begin producing gowns as soon as the beginning of June
- DTR Medical will be providing 1.3 million visors, with the first delivery expected next week
- Bollé Safety, who manufacture protective eyewear, will make 6.5 million visors over the course of the pandemic
- Jaguar Land Rover is now manufacturing 14,000 visors a week for healthcare staff
- Don & Low will be manufacturing 12 million metres squared of fabric for gowns over the next 6 months, with the first delivery expected later this month
- Burberry is manufacturing non-surgical gowns at its factory in Castleford and sourcing masks through its supply chain. To date, the company has donated over 100,000 pieces of PPE to the NHS and healthcare charities
- Ineos is delivering around 174,000 bottles of hand sanitiser a week to NHS hospitals

The partnerships will help to bolster existing measures the government has implemented to increase the supply of PPE to the NHS and social care sector, as set out in the government’s [national PPE plan](#) published in April. This

includes the creation of a PPE distribution network with the NHS, industry and armed forces, and a 24-hour NHS-run helpline to report any shortage of supplies.

These collaborations are only the latest in a growing list of successful partnerships with companies across the UK and the world since the beginning of this crisis.

PM call with Prime Minister of Poland

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke with Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day.



A Downing Street spokesperson said:

Prime Minister Boris Johnson today spoke with Prime Minister Morawiecki of Poland to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

The PM said Poland was a key ally in the Second World War, and our forces fought shoulder to shoulder on land, sea and air against the Nazis.

The PM expressed regret that Prime Minister Morawiecki and Polish Citizens had been unable to attend commemorations which had been planned prior to the coronavirus pandemic, and stressed the huge appreciation which the UK has for the sacrifices which Poland had made.

The PM and the Prime Minister Morawiecki agreed on the huge importance of the UK/Poland relationship, and said there is much for our two countries to work on together, from security to trade issues.

On the response to coronavirus, the PM said there are many Polish frontline workers serving in the UK, and thanked them for all of their incredible hard work. The PM urged a global fight against the pandemic and said he hoped that Poland can join the virtual Global Vaccine Summit which the UK is hosting on 4 June.

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