

International COVID Response Oral Statement

With permission Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the UK's support for the global effort to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

The world is now having to address the biggest threat that it has faced in decades: an invisible killer on a global scale.

Here in the UK, communities across the country are united in their determination to beat it – making their own personal sacrifices by staying at home, protecting our NHS and saving lives.

There is a daunting outlook for countries in the developing world: simultaneously facing a health crisis, a humanitarian crisis and the risk of a protracted economic crisis leading to much greater hardship for years to come.

The threat of famines, exacerbated by the worst locust plague for 70 years, fragile healthcare systems that enable the spread of the disease and economic disruptions risk a much longer and harder road back to recovery than for wealthy countries.

However, through the altruism of the British people and the expertise of our scientists and engineers, the UK is proudly playing a leading role in the global response.

On Monday, together with other world leaders, my Right Honourable Friend, the Prime Minister, co-hosted a virtual Global Coronavirus Response Pledging Conference.

He called on countries around the world to step up their efforts and work together on this, the “most urgent shared endeavour of our lifetimes”.

World leaders responded and some £6.5 billion was pledged for the Covid-19 response, including the UK's own £388 million commitment for vaccines, tests and treatments.

The UK is proud to stand with our international partners – this is a truly global effort and the only way to fight this pandemic is together.

Scientific Response

Mr Speaker, so the UK is an international development superpower, and we are also a scientific and medical world leader. This enables our response to this global pandemic to be greater than the sum of its parts.

From Gloucestershire's Dr Jenner, who laid the foundations for immunology, to our researchers who developed vaccines for measles and Ebola, the UK has led

the scientific response to many global health challenges in the past.

And I am so proud to say that UK-based scientists, such as those at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine are playing key roles in the global response to this deadly new virus.

Scientists in Bedfordshire who developed rapid diagnostic devices to manage the recent Ebola outbreak funded with taxpayers' money through UK AID, are using that expertise to develop new rapid diagnostic tests.

Researchers at Oxford University, funded through CEPI, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, are now progressing to clinical trials with funding from the UK government's Vaccines Taskforce – which is also funding a vaccine trial starting soon at Imperial College.

In partnership with a British success story, AstraZeneca – one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies – our Oxford researchers are working towards their vaccine being manufactured at scale.

But we know that any vaccine might prove to be the solution, so through our DFID aid budget, the UK is the largest single contributor by any country to CEPI's international efforts to find a vaccine. Through this fund, we are working to improve our understanding of the virus and to support scientists around the globe – CEPI is already backing nine potential vaccines.

Mr Speaker, the Foreign Secretary outlined at the launch of the WHO "Access to Covid-19 Tools" Accelerator, that the UK is proud to work with our international partners to ensure new vaccines are accessible to everyone and quickly as possible.

No one will be safe until we are all safe, Mr Speaker. So we will need vaccines against this deadly disease, at home and abroad.

Once a vaccine is found, delivering it globally will be the next big challenge. To help that, we have invested the equivalent of £330 million a year for the next five years in Gavi, the global vaccine alliance that delivers vaccines in 68 of the poorest countries around the world.

And on 4 June the UK will be hosting the Global Vaccines Summit to co-ordinate international investment efforts for Gavi.

Together with the announcement made by the Prime Minister on Monday, that is a combined additional investment in global health security that comes to more than £2 billion – helping combat the spread of this disease.

In investing globally, we are helping to protect our citizens, our families from future waves of infection, and therefore protecting our NHS.

DFID response

The global pandemic is one part of the challenge facing the world. DFID's immediate Coronavirus response to date amounts to £744 million. But this is

on top of our work to pivot much of our existing activity to provide health, humanitarian and economic support where it is needed most – as part of our response to these crises.

A health response that builds on the UK's longstanding record of supporting countries to prepare for and respond to large disease outbreaks, including as the third largest donor to the World Health Organisation.

Investing on the frontier of research into new rapid diagnostics and therapeutics that can detect and treat coronavirus.

Working in partnership with Unilever, we've launched an innovative handwashing campaign that will reach a billion people around the world. A major contribution to global sanitation and hygiene.

With the support of British and international NGOs, and advice from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, we will reach 1 in 7 people around the world with information on the most effective ways to stop the virus spreading and therefore to save lives.

Economic response

We are also working to reduce the global economic impact of the virus by preventing its spread, protecting both the UK public and the stability of our economy.

Last month, the UK together with other G20 countries announced a commitment to suspend debt service payments to the poorest countries until the end of 2020. This will create up to \$12 billion of additional fiscal space.

DFID has also made available up to £150 million to the International Monetary Fund for debt relief.

These measures will enable developing countries to direct greater domestic resources to their own healthcare efforts, helping prevent the virus from spreading around the world.

So, we are supporting developing country governments to make proportionate, evidence-based trade-offs between containing the virus and maintaining open trade. So that essential goods and services, including critical medical and food supplies, can continue to move around the world.

That supports developing countries, but it also means that British consumers get the vital goods they need.

Mr Speaker...

COVID-19 is a global pandemic. It does not respect national borders. Individual efforts will only succeed as part of a global response.

The UK has been playing – and will continue to play – a leading role in galvanising the most effective co-ordinated international action.

In 2017, the scientific community in the UK proudly played a key role in the international response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. I am proud to update the House that we are doing so again.

We are using British expertise and funding to demonstrate leadership internationally. Recognising the needs will be great, we are doing whatever it takes to make sure vaccines, treatments, and technologies are available, to save lives and support economies in the most vulnerable countries to help end the pandemic.

This will help reduce the risk of the world being attacked by a second wave of infection.

So, as the Prime Minister said on Monday, it's humanity against the virus. We are in this together and only together we will prevail.

I commend this statement to the House.

Tech “brings the site home”

When it comes to decommissioning our legacy facilities, having the right information is vital. We have drawings and data sheets, but often these are out of date and could be misleading.

Site walk-arounds and up-to-date measurements are vital, but what if you can't access the site you're working on?

That was the problem facing the team working on our iconic “golf ball” facility, the Windscale Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor.

They were due to have just such a walk-around at the end of March, but had to cancel it when the nationwide lockdown hit. With the team needing accurate information to work from home, they hit on a novel solution to getting it.

A full scanning team couldn't gain access to the site, but there were people going in for routine maintenance. The question was – could they do the work and get the detail needed?

And the answer was – yes, with partners from our Decommissioning Delivery Partnership (DDP) coming together to develop a solution.

Darren Grears from Atkins Global explained:

We decided to capture data using 2 devices – a handheld laser scanner and a 360-degree camera.

The scanner can get information up to about 10mm accuracy and is

capable of scanning a 3 storey car park in less than 30 minutes.
The camera can capture images to simulate a walk-around.

Working with specially-developed user guides, a maintenance team completed the scans and video during an inspection in March, taking 116 images and performing 2 laser scans of the entire building in under 2 hours.

The scans and footage gathered will now be used to guide the removal, cleaning and painting of cladding from the building, which will extend its life and ensure it is safe.

Darren added:

This is about 'bringing the site home'. Before we can do any work, we need to identify the location of services and assets, look at potential areas for the temporary work enclosure, determine distances between adjacent buildings, scope out space for crane access and generally make sure the access is sufficient.

This will all feed into the concept design for the project and the type of temporary works enclosure required.

DDP Programme Manager Simon Martin said:

This has been a great example of people coming together to find a solution in a time of change and uncertainty. By engaging with our partners in the supply chain we were able to find a solution which has put the project back on track.

[Local leaders pledge to continue vital building safety work](#)

- Twenty-five more local leaders have pledged to ensure vital building safety improvements continue during the pandemic
- This will ensure the safety of those living in high-rise buildings with unsafe cladding is prioritised
- The announcement follows regional mayors agreeing the Pledge

The leaders from 25 councils have joined the ranks of those [pledging their commitment](#) to ensuring vital building safety work continues where this can be done safely and in line with public health guidance, Building Safety Minister Lord Greenhalgh has announced today (6 May 2020).

The Pledge, so far signed by 26 councils and 5 regional mayors, sets out a commitment to improving the safety of residential blocks while ensuring those working on site are given clear information and support to guarantee their own safety and limit the spread of COVID-19.

The new signatories to the Pledge include representatives of 18 London councils, as well as leaders in Manchester, Slough, Leeds, Sheffield, Salford and Liverpool.

This follows the Housing Secretary securing an agreement with regional mayors and other local leaders to sign the Pledge earlier this month. This included the mayors of Greater Manchester, Sheffield City Region, London, Liverpool City Region and the West Midlands.

Building Safety Minister Lord Greenhalgh said:

We are bringing about the biggest change in building safety in a generation backed by our unprecedented £1 billion fund for removing unsafe cladding from high-rise buildings, in addition to the £600 million already made available.

In order to ensure the safety of residents, building safety work must resume where it can be done safely and in line with public health guidance.

The agreement reached with local leaders from across the country is an important step that demonstrates a shared commitment to ensuring this vital work continues during the pandemic.

John Biggs, Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets, said:

As a borough with more high-rise buildings than almost anywhere else in the UK, we know how important the issue of fire safety is to our residents.

Almost 3 years on from the Grenfell Tower tragedy, delays and inaction on the part of private property owners means there are still too many people forced to go to sleep at night not knowing if they are safe in their homes.

It is right that we are focusing as many resources as possible on our coronavirus response, but where work can continue safely, it is also essential that we continue to make progress on vital fire safety work.

The government has provided sector specific guidance on how to apply social distancing in the workplace in England.

This was also reviewed by Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive and includes updated guidance for construction workers making clear that 'work on-site can continue if done in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible'.

Where work continues on-site, [detailed guidance is available from the Construction Leadership Council](#) on further reducing the risk, including measures for maintaining high standards of hygiene.

In order to support this vital work, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has appointed a firm of construction consultants, Faithful & Gould, to advise those planning and doing ACM cladding remediation work, including identifying and increasing awareness of safe practice under current COVID-19 restrictions.

The National Fire Chiefs Council has also published [revised guidance on waking watch interim measures](#), in the context of coronavirus, that reflects higher rates of occupancy and vulnerability due to people staying home for an extended period of time.

The Pledge has today been agreed by the following:

- Cllr Daniel Thomas (Leader, Barnet Council)
- Cllr Muhammed Butt (Leader, Brent Council)
- Cllr Colin Smith (Leader, Bromley Council)
- Cllr Georgia Gould (Leader, Camden Council)
- Cllr Tony Newman (Leader, Croydon Council)
- Cllr Julian Bell (Leader, Ealing Council)
- Cllr Danny Thorpe (Leader, Greenwich Council)
- Philip Glanville (Mayor of Hackney)
- Cllr Joseph Ejofor (Leader, Haringey Council)
- Cllr Damian White (Leader, Havering Council)
- Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE (Leader, Hillingdon Council)
- Cllr Richard Watts (Leader, Islington Council)
- Cllr Elizabeth Campbell (Leader, Kensington and Chelsea Council)
- Cllr Jack Hopkins (Leader, Lambeth Council)
- Cllr Debra Coupar (Deputy Leader, Leeds City Council)
- Joe Anderson (Mayor, Liverpool City Council)
- Sir Richard Leese (Leader, Manchester City Council)
- Rokhsana Fiaz (Mayor of Newham)
- Paul Dennett (Mayor, Salford City Council)
- Cllr Julie Dore (Leader, Sheffield City Council)
- Cllr James Swindlehurst (Leader, Slough Council)
- John Biggs (Mayor, Tower Hamlets)
- Cllr Andrew Western (Leader, Trafford Council)
- Cllr Ravi Govindia (Leader, Wandsworth Council)
- Cllr Rachael Robathan (Leader, Westminster Council)

The Pledge was initially agreed on 16 April by the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP

(Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government) and the following:

- Andy Burnham (Mayor of Greater Manchester)
- Kate Henderson (Chief Executive, National Housing Federation)
- Dan Jarvis (Mayor of the Sheffield City Region)
- Peter John (Chair of London Councils and Leader of Southwark Council)
- Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London)
- Steve Rotheram (Mayor of the Liverpool City Region)
- Andy Street (Mayor of the West Midlands)

[MOD awards places on specialist nuclear technical services framework](#)

ACA (Atkins Cavendish Alliance), KAD (KBR, Assystem, Doosan Babcock) and Nuvia have been chosen following a procurement process which included a measurement of collaboration and behaviours.

The Nuclear Technical Support Provider (NTSP) framework lasts 7 years, with the option of a further 3 years. It will deliver specialist nuclear technical services valued between £250-million and £400-million to support DIO, Navy Command and other Ministry of Defence (MOD) organisations.

The framework will support the Clyde Infrastructure Programme (CIP) and wider Royal Navy and defence requirements. Its primary focus will be on delivering the refurbishment and upgrade of critical infrastructure at HMNB Clyde.

Charles Hoskins, DIO's Clyde Infrastructure Programme Director, said:

"The NTSP is vitally important to the delivery of our major infrastructure programme and wider operations at HMNB Clyde. We welcome all companies from our new NTSP delivery partners to our infrastructure family within the Clyde Community.

"We look forward to them joining our delivery team and the collaborative approach that we are embedding into all work we undertake at HMNB Clyde. This collaborative approach and the expertise from our new partners will be crucial to our success as we move forward into the exciting and challenging next chapter of our programme."

Andy Albutt, on behalf of the ACA, said:

"The Clyde Infrastructure Programme represents an incredible opportunity to help shape the UK's defence capability and further strengthen the industry's collective expertise in delivering highly specialised nuclear services.

"Atkins and Cavendish Nuclear are now focussed on working closely alongside

the DIO and our framework partners to hit the ground running as part of this select delivery team.”

Ian Hudson, Framework Director for KAD Nuclear, said:

We are absolutely delighted to have been selected as a supplier for the NTSP framework.

KAD Nuclear has a clear and unique philosophy; we have the right people; we are ready to go and we will work collaboratively inside KAD and with other framework suppliers to find the best solution.

At the heart of it all we are incredibly proud to have the chance to work on some of the most nationally significant projects of our time and create world-class infrastructure that will serve this country for decades to come.

David Field, Framework Director for Nuvia, said:

This is a unique opportunity, one that Nuvia is proud to be a part of and contribute to. We look forward to working collaboratively across the framework and becoming part of the Clyde family.

[Historic UK-Greece migration action plan signed](#)

News story

The UK and Greece have committed to deepen cooperation on irregular migration in the Eastern Mediterranean.



The [joint action plan](#) has been signed by Immigration Minister Chris Philp and Greece's Alternate Migration and Asylum Minister, Giorgos Koumoutsakos, today signalling a firm commitment from both governments to increase cooperation as illegal migration into Europe via Greece remains high.

Minister for Immigration Compliance, Chris Philp, said:

Illegal migration is facilitated by dangerous, malicious criminals, taking advantage of the desperate situations that many people find themselves in. They do not care about the safety of the people involved.

The joint action plan will deliver on our commitment to keep our borders secure and will discourage those considering making the dangerous and illegal journey into Greece, through Europe, and in many cases to the UK.

Greece is one of the first countries migrants will visit on their route through Europe, and is used by a significant proportion of migrants seeking to reach the UK illegally.

The action plan strengthens the UK's relationship with one of its key partners in tackling irregular migration and will improve cooperation across a range of issues.

It will ensure asylum and returns processes are as efficient as possible, enhance the already excellent cooperation between UK and Hellenic law enforcement authorities to dismantle migrant smuggling networks and tackle organised immigration crime, and renew cooperation on search and rescue in the Aegean through the UK's renewed deployment of a Border Force cutter.

The new plan will come into force immediately.

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1. 6 May 2020

Updated article to include a link to the joint action plan.

2. 22 April 2020

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