

BBC gets emergency funding to fight Russian disinformation

The government is giving the BBC World Service emergency funding to help it continue bringing independent, impartial and accurate news to people in Ukraine and Russia in the face of increased propaganda from the Russian state.

BBC World Service will receive an additional £4.1 million in emergency funding to support its Ukrainian and Russian language services in the region, and to help it increase trusted and independent content to counter disinformation about the war in Ukraine.

BBC World Service channels – including TV, radio and digital – play an increasingly valuable role in challenging the Kremlin's disinformation, but it is facing additional costs from operating within a military conflict and due to a crackdown on independent reporting in Russia.

Following a BBC request, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will provide the extra funding to cover urgent and unexpected costs that have arisen as a result of the conflict.

This will help the BBC to relocate staff and operations to safe locations to ensure the resilience of their services and that they continue to reach people in Russia and Ukraine.

The BBC will also use the funding to continue expanding new and more widely accessible content, delivered through a range of channels, to tackle disinformation and to help local audiences circumvent the Kremlin's media restrictions and continue to access the BBC's journalism.

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

The Government is providing the BBC with an additional £4.1 million in emergency funding to help the World Service broadcast directly into Ukraine and Russia.

In scenes reminiscent of 80 years ago, the BBC will ensure that audiences in the region can continue to access independent news reporting in the face of systemic propaganda from a dictator waging war on European soil. It's vital we lift the veil on and expose the barbaric actions of Putin's forces.

Minister for Europe and North America, James Cleverly said:

Britain is calling out Putin's lies and exposing his propaganda and

fake news.

This new funding will help strengthen the BBC's impartial voice in Russia and Ukraine, which is critical to counter Russian disinformation and will help ensure we win the battle for the airwaves.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The World Service receives funding from the BBC's licence fee income, in addition to grant funding directly from the FCDO. The World Service's Spending Review settlement for the period 2022 to 2025 from the FCDO will be confirmed shortly.

The Culture Secretary made it clear to the BBC in her letter confirming the final licence fee settlement that the BBC should continue to make a substantive investment from the licence fee into the World Service to ensure that it continues to effectively reflect the United Kingdom, its culture and values to the world – in English and through its language services.

[One week left to pay your Self Assessment tax bill](#)

Self Assessment customers have just one week left to pay their tax bill or set up a payment plan to avoid incurring a penalty, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has urged.

Customers have until 1 April to pay all tax due from their 2020 to 2021 tax return and not receive a late payment penalty. If they are unable to pay in full, there is still time to set up an online payment plan to spread the cost of their bill into manageable monthly instalments.

[The online Time to Pay service](#) is available for businesses and individuals who have filed their Self Assessment tax return and owe up to £30,000. They can set up a payment plan online at GOV.UK without speaking to HMRC.

If customers owe more than £30,000, or need longer to pay, they can call the Self Assessment payment helpline on 0300 200 3822.

Myrtle Lloyd, HMRC's Director General for Customer Services, said:

We understand some customers might be worrying about paying their Self Assessment bill this year, and we want to support them. There

is still time to set up a payment plan – to see if you're eligible go to GOV.UK and search 'pay my Self Assessment'.

The Self Assessment deadline was 31 January but, this year, HMRC gave customers extra time to file and pay their 2020 to 2021 tax return and not face penalties.

More than 11.3 million customers filed by 28 February, with one million of those taking advantage of the extra time by filing their tax return in February.

Customers can make secure Self Assessment payments through the [HMRC app](#) by either connecting to their bank to make their payments or paying by Direct Debit, personal debit card or corporate/commercial credit/debit card.

A full list of the payment methods customers can use to [pay their Self Assessment tax bill](#) is available on GOV.UK.

HMRC urges everyone to be alert if they are contacted out of the blue by someone asking for money or personal information. Customers should always type in the full online address www.gov.uk/hmrc to get the correct link for filing their Self Assessment return online securely and free of charge. HMRC sees high numbers of fraudsters emailing, calling or texting people claiming to be from the department. If customers are in doubt, do not reply directly to anything suspicious, but contact HMRC straight away and [search GOV.UK for 'HMRC scams'](#).

Interest has been applied to all outstanding balances since 1 February.

A 5% late payment penalty will be charged if tax remains outstanding, and a payment plan has not been set up, by midnight on 1 April 2022. Further late payment penalties will be charged at the usual 6 and 12 month points (August 2022 and February 2023 respectively) on tax outstanding where a payment plan has not been set up.

The [free HMRC app](#) is available on either the App Store for iOS or the Google Play Store for Android. Customers will need their Government Gateway user ID and password to sign into their account for the first time.

[National Highways delivers A38 bridge boost for all in Plymouth](#)

Since 2015, National Highways has invested more than £85 million towards the creation of 160 new and upgraded cycle ways across England, providing safe, attractive and more accessible and inclusive facilities for people to travel

for work, shopping and leisure.

And this week the company marked the completion of a significant £2.89 million scheme to upgrade the Mowhay footbridge, effectively joining up with a local cycle route around the city and also making it easier for wheelchair users and people with pushchairs to cross the A38.

The original bridge was not wide enough to safely accommodate both cyclists and walkers, and work started in June last year to modify both the bridge and ramps to enable it to link up with a recently completed footway/cycleway.

As well as the wider deck, the upgrade includes a more manageable gradient, new ramps, steps, fencing and guard rails, new lighting and a new surface water drainage system.

By improving the connection between Honicknowle, Weston Mill and St Budeaux further recreational opportunities will be unlocked in Plymouth and commuters will be provided with a new facility enabling them to actively choose an alternative sustainable method of transport.

National Highways Route Manager Ed Halford said:

We're committed to significantly improving safety across our road network, and the new and improved bridge will make it much easier and safer for a variety of users, including cyclists, travelling to and from the centre of Plymouth.

At National Highways, our work goes beyond operating, maintaining and improving roads. We're investing in the environment and communities surrounding our network, as well as the people travelling and working on it. We aim to address social and environmental issues and add real value to society.

We've worked closely with Plymouth City Council to realise this project – a glowing example of how this funding can make life better for communities living and working near our roads.

The original Mowhay bridge over the A38 (above) was too narrow to accommodate cyclists and walkers safely, and (below) the widened bridge

The scheme follows the completion of Sustrans' National Highways-funded cycle path scheme at the A38 Marsh Mills Interchange near Plymouth.

Councillor Jonathan Drean, Plymouth City Council's Cabinet Member for Transport, said:

We're delighted to see the newly improved Mowhay Road bridge open following this substantial investment by National Highways.

It provides a key walking and cycling link between communities either side of the A38 and will complement improvements we're looking to deliver through our Transforming Cities Fund, between the dockyard and city centre, and our Major Roads Network programme.

Plymouth's growing walking and cycling network will help more and more people to choose active travel and supports our Climate Emergency Action Plan commitments.

Iain Stewart, Sustrans Network Development Manager for the South West, added:

I'm delighted to see this project come to a successful conclusion. This bridge is an important active travel connection for the communities living north and south of the busy A38.

These improvements make it easier for people to choose walking, wheeling and cycling in the area, and are very much welcomed by Sustrans.

National Highways manages four designated funds, allocated by the Government, to deliver benefits above and beyond building, maintaining and operating England's strategic roads.

From protecting the environment and enhancing the landscape around roads, to improving safety, reducing congestion, and supporting communities, the aim is to make a positive difference to people's lives.

Elsewhere in the South West, designated funding has already provided safer journeys for cyclists around M5 Junction 16 near Bristol, on the A35 in Bridport, and Cycle Route 45 around the A303 Solstice Park near Amesbury.

Last year also saw the completion of South Gloucestershire Council's initiative to upgrade close to seven miles of walking and cycling paths around the Severnside Enterprise Area at Avonmouth, near Bristol, and a new cycleway on the A36 in Salisbury – both realised with National Highways' designated funding – while other ongoing schemes include:

- funding Wiltshire Council to deliver a new, safer toucan crossing on the A345 in Amesbury
- funding provided to Gloucestershire County Council towards the design of the A40/B4063 cycleway, currently under consultation.
- funding provided to North Somerset Council to create a cycle path between Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon and complete the final part of the cycle route between Brean and Portishead
- funding invested to enable Cornwall Council to deliver cycle routes alongside the busy A30 in mid-Cornwall.

Going forward, cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders will see more benefits

over the next five years from the £169 million set aside for various community-focussed projects in National Highways' Users and communities fund.

The company is using the fund to improve services for users and neighbours of England's motorways and major A-roads, including increasing the options people have for sustainable travel.

Learn more about [National Highways' designated funds plan](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

UKHSA calls for a renewed effort to tackle TB

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is calling on the public and healthcare professionals to help reverse an upward trend in tuberculosis (TB) cases.

The incidence of TB in England had been falling significantly since 2011, when it was among the highest in western Europe with a total of 8,280 cases recorded. However, in 2019 the rate of decline reversed, with cases increasing by 2.4% (from 4,615 in 2018 to 4,725 in 2019).

While TB incidence appeared to fall in 2020 (to 4,125), this most likely reflected healthcare access and provisions during the pandemic and provisional data indicates that cases of the infection rose by 7.4% in 2021 compared to 2020.

Anyone with a cough, particularly those in groups that are at high risk for TB, are being urged not to dismiss their persistent cough and fever as COVID-19 as it could be caused by a range of other issues, including TB.

Tuberculosis is a serious infectious disease and symptoms include a persistent cough (longer than 3 weeks) and fever. While it can be life threatening without appropriate treatment, in the vast majority of cases it can be successfully treated with antibiotics.

The risk factors for TB include close contact with a person with infectious TB disease, migration from countries with high rates of TB, homelessness,

substance misuse, a weakened immune system and imprisonment.

Dr Jenny Harries, the CEO of UKHSA, said:

TB is curable and preventable and now is the time to get our elimination efforts back on track. Despite significant progress towards elimination in recent years, tuberculosis remains a serious public health issue in the UK.

With treatment, most people will make a full recovery, but delayed diagnosis and treatment, particularly during the pandemic, will have increased the number of undetected TB cases in the country.

It is important to remember that not every persistent cough, along with a fever, is COVID-19. A cough that usually has mucus and lasts longer than 3 weeks can be caused by a range of other issues, including TB.

Tuberculosis develops slowly, and it may take several weeks, months or even years after you were infected before you notice you're unwell. Contact your GP if you think you could be at risk so you can get tested and treated.

Numbers and rates of cases with drug resistance increased in both 2019 and 2020. There were more cases of drug-resistant TB in 2020 than any year since enhanced surveillance began. 11.6% of cases were resistant to any drug and 2.4% were multidrug resistant (compared to 1.8% in 2019).

TB disproportionately impacts under-served populations such as those who have been homeless, spent time in prison or misused drugs and other substances. Ensuring that everyone has access to a timely diagnosis and effective treatment is critical.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Despite significant progress made in the last decade towards eliminating tuberculosis in England, it is very concerning to see an upward trend in cases. TB is a serious infectious disease, and without treatment it can be life-threatening.

TB disproportionately affects people in deprived and underserved groups, so it is vital everyone has access to effective treatment so we can continue to level up health across the nation.

If you have a persistent cough that lasts more than 3 weeks along with a fever, please contact your GP as soon as possible to get tested.

Symptoms of TB include:

- a persistent cough that lasts more than 3 weeks and usually brings up phlegm, which may be bloody
 - breathlessness that gradually gets worse
 - lack of appetite and weight loss
 - a high temperature
 - night sweats
 - extreme tiredness or fatigue
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[UK and Fiji seal new deal on Maritime Security](#)

Fiji's commitment towards securing and policing its maritime borders is recognised through the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Fijian Government.

The MOU was officially signed by the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Office of the Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yogesh Karan and the British High Commissioner to Fiji, His Excellency Dr. Brian Jones, on Saturday 19 March, 2022 on board the Royal Navy's Ship HMS Spey. His Excellency The President of Fiji was also at the signing.

In welcoming the new partnership, PS Karan on behalf of the Honourable Prime Minister, Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, thanked the Government of the United Kingdom of the Great Britain for the exemplary partnership in further advancing our shared commitment on oceans conservation, climate change and tackling maritime security challenges.

He acknowledged the British High Commissioner Dr. Brian Jones for his unwavering support towards the new initiative, which further strengthens the diplomatic ties between Fiji-UK.

This collaboration, he said illustrates Fiji and UK's strong historical ties and solidarity in areas of climate change, oceans, trade, defence and security. PS Karan said the partnership aligns with Fiji-UK's commitment on oceans and implementation of the SDG Agenda 2030 vision of a sustainable ocean or SDG 14.

It also complements Fiji's existing capabilities in maritime management and further elevates the bilateral relations between Fiji and UK, which has continued to deepen in mutual interests and priorities.

PS Karan conveyed the Fijian Government's appreciation to HMS Spey's Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander Macnae and her crew for their remarkable commitment and service that reaches Fiji, Pacific and beyond.

The British High Commissioner to Fiji, Dr. Brian Jones, said:

The signing of this agreement means Fijian sailors will be able to board Royal Navy vessels and vice versa. This will allow us to work more closely together to combat illegal maritime activity in the Pacific. HMS Spey, currently here with us in Suva, is expected to be in the Pacific for five years or more. Learning from partners like Fiji on the challenges faced and working together on solutions is key for us.

Rear Admiral Simon Asquith OBE, Commander of Operations for the Royal Navy, said:

This MOU enables the Royal Navy and several Fijian civil and military maritime authorities to exchange personnel between them for the purpose of "shipriding". Such activity provides invaluable training and experience to the embarked "shiprider", improving co-operation, co-ordination and interoperability.

The Royal Navy's greenest ship HMS Spey is currently in Fiji to engage with the local communities and the Republic of Fiji Navy to work together on security and climate change challenges. Earlier this year, HMS Spey visited Tonga following the Hunga-Tonga volcanic eruption and tsunami, delivering humanitarian supplies and supporting repair work to communications infrastructure. HMS Spey is expected to depart Fiji later this month.