

Press release

Greater security delivered for the British people with record billion-pound investment in new national biosecurity centre

Huge investment in new National Biosecurity Centre to protect the British public and the economy from future pandemics.

From: **Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs** (</government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>), **Animal and Plant Health Agency** (</government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-agency>) and **The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP** (</government/people/steve-reed>)

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The country's ability to prevent a future pandemic has been significantly enhanced today (Tuesday 24th June) with the announcement of a £1 billion investment in a new National Biosecurity Centre.

This funding will deliver the next phase of a new National Biosecurity Centre - a cutting-edge scientific campus in Surrey that will serve as the UK's foremost animal biosecurity facility.

The investment is one part of the new National Security Strategy, to be published today, which marks a step change in this country's approach to securing British interests whilst also creating jobs, wages, and growth for the British people as part of the Government's Plan for Change.

Animal disease outbreaks represent a serious and increasing risk to public health, food security, and the UK economy. Approximately 60% of all known human infectious diseases are zoonotic, meaning they can be transmitted from animals to humans. Furthermore, about 75% of emerging infectious diseases originate in animals, making the fight against these diseases about human health and security too.

Without strong and modernised biosecurity infrastructure, disease incursions could severely impact our farmers, agricultural production, devastate rural communities and disrupt key supply chains. The export of livestock, meat and meat products, dairy and animal by-products is worth £16 billion per year alone to the UK economy.

The funding will now enhance the country's detection, surveillance and control capabilities for high-risk animal diseases such as avian influenza, foot and mouth disease and African swine fever, whilst enhancing our ability to manage concurrent disease outbreaks.

Environment Secretary Steve Reed said:

"The first role of any Government is national security.

"That is why we are making a record investment into the nation's biosecurity capabilities, and in turn our national security, after years of chronic underfunding.

"Farmers and food producers will now be better protected from diseases, our food security strengthened, and public health better safeguarded against future pandemics. This government is getting on with delivering on our Plan for Change."

The new National Biosecurity Centre will play an essential role in addressing the full range of biological threats we face, including from hostile nations, and will ensure that the UK retains the scientific capability, infrastructure and expertise needed to lead international efforts to identify, manage, and mitigate disease threats in the years ahead.

The high containment laboratories for animal health, run by the Animal & Plant Health Agency at Weybridge in Surrey, urgently need renewal to

handle escalating disease risks, which are growing in the face of our changing climate. The Government inherited laboratories in poor condition with their long-term future in doubt and the country facing increased risk without action.

The new facility will join a network of national centres set up by the Cabinet Office under the UK Biological Security Strategy and announced in the National Security Strategy. This new network of government laboratories provides a sovereign capability that keeps the public safe and is essential to responding to biological security risks.

The network will strengthen and formalise existing collaborations between the UK Health Security Agency, the Animal and Plant Health Agency and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory. It will ensure we are better prepared for a crisis, can respond more effectively when an incident does happen and deliver a more holistic approach to biological research.

Jenny Stewart, Senior Science Director at the Animal and Plant Health Agency, said:

“This funding is a vital milestone in the delivery of a world-leading facility that will protect the UK from animal disease threats for decades to come.

“Our scientists and specialists at Weybridge are at the heart of the UK’s disease surveillance and response capability and provide a global centre of expertise.

“Investment on this scale will enable them to continue their critical work in modern, fit-for-purpose facilities, supported by the very latest technologies.”

Preparatory work at the Weybridge site is already underway. Planning Consent has been secured, and a contractor has been appointed to build the main new facilities. The first interim labs to support critical science while we transform the site will be ready in 2027 and 2028. The main construction works start in 2027, with the full NBC live and operational in 2033/34.

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