

[Guidance: Hedgerows standard of the Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot](#)

Find out about the Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot standard for hedgerows, who's eligible and how much you can get paid.

[Chief of the Air Staff speech on Sky Guardian](#)

Thank you for your confirmation of the near £100 million investment in RAF Waddington's state of the art operating and training facilities for Protector.

It's a clear demonstration of the UK government's commitment to this exciting programme and our ambition to be the International Training Centre for some of the 30 allied Air Forces who have already expressed interest in Protector and the Sky Guardian.

The Sky Guardian aircraft that you're about to see get airborne is representative of the 16 Protectors that we've ordered and there'll be based and operating from RAF Waddington as you've just heard from 2023.

Protector is a giant leap forward in technology and aircraft performance over its predecessor Reaper; it can fly further for longer, for many more places around the world with a much wider range of potential missions from flood monitoring to maritime patrol, to strikes on violent extremists who would do us harm.

Equipped with cutting edge sensors, automatic take-off landing and flight modes and UK weapons, this aircraft will enable our government to act on a world stage within hours at range and precisely.

Over the next few weeks we'll be working with the Civil Aviation Authority, civilian authorities, and allies to confirm our ability to operate this aircraft freely in UK and international airspace.

We will also confirm its enormous operational utility from assisting local authorities to supporting maritime operations in the North Atlantic. This aircraft offers significant opportunities, it offers opportunities for collaboration with our international allies with widespread interest in this aircraft in NATO and around the world, the opportunities for future collaboration are vast.

The International Training Centre will help us train alongside our partner air forces, starting with the Belgian Air Force, and provides us with this valuable opportunity to share our years of combat experience operating these remotely piloted air systems.

I'm also delighted that the Protector programme is investing substantially in UK industry. The collaboration between the Royal Air Force, General Atomics and 12 UK industry partners will see £400 million reinvested into the UK economy, with the potential to rise to £1 billion over the course of the programme.

UK industry has contributed to every part of the aircraft system, from computer modules to the V tails, to engine development, weapons and logistical support.

As a military leader, and as you've just heard from Secretary of State, I need to be ready to provide our decision makers with operational choice and ultimately, the ability to fight and win when deterrence and political discourse has run its course.

That requires a Royal Air Force able and willing to pioneer advances in technology like Protector and integrate it swiftly and seamlessly into our force.

UK and Switzerland strike deal to secure healthcare access and other benefits for citizens living and travelling abroad

Press release

The UK and Switzerland have signed a landmark agreement which will benefit citizens who live and work abroad in either country



- UK and Switzerland deal will ensure citizens living or working in either country can receive healthcare and an uprated state pension
- UK and Swiss citizens will have access to necessary healthcare when visiting either country

The UK and Switzerland signed a landmark agreement today which will benefit citizens who live and work abroad in either country by ensuring they are able to receive healthcare cover and uprated state pensions, amongst other social security entitlements. It will also allow eligible individuals travelling to either country to access necessary healthcare when abroad using a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) or its UK successor, the Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC).

The Convention on Social Security Coordination, which benefits citizens of both countries also supports business and trade by ensuring that cross-border workers and their employers are only liable to pay social security contributions in one state at a time.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Minister, Nigel Adams who signed the agreement today said:

I am pleased to be able to sign the UK-Switzerland Convention on Social Security Coordination. This will help give people certainty over their future incomes, ensure our citizens can continue to receive reciprocal healthcare and support business and trade links between our two countries.

The agreement covers a wide range of social security benefits for eligible individuals. Those living abroad in either country will be able to receive healthcare, uprated pensions and other benefits. This includes healthcare cover for UK state pensioners, those exporting maternity allowance, and certain categories of cross-border workers.

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Change to maximum Plan 2 and the Postgraduate student loan interest rates

News story

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced a change to maximum Plan 2 and Postgraduate student loan interest rates



From 1 October 2021 until 31 December 2021, the maximum interest rate applied to Plan 2 Income Contingent Repayment (ICR) student loans and the interest rate applied to Postgraduate loans will be capped in line with the prevailing market rate for comparable unsecured personal loans, which have recently reduced. From 1 January 2022, the maximum Plan 2 and the Postgraduate loan interest rates are expected to revert to RPI +3%.

The Government regularly monitors the interest rates set on student loans against the interest rates prevailing on the market for comparable loans. Following a decline in the prevailing market rate, the Government will temporarily reduce the maximum Plan 2 and the Postgraduate loan interest rate in line with the prevailing market rate. The reduction will be 0.4 percentage point on the maximum student loan interest rate to reflect the average market rates during the preceding monitoring period.

- The maximum Plan 2 ICR student loan interest rate and the Postgraduate loan interest rate will be 4.1% between 1 October and 31 December.
- The maximum Plan 2 ICR student loan interest rate and the Postgraduate loan interest rate is expected to revert to 4.5% (RPI +3%) from 1 January.

Interest rates on Plan 2 ICR student loans vary by income. Where the applied interest rate is already below the level of the cap, the interest rates will be unaffected.

- The SoS is required by section 22(4) of the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 (THEA) to ensure that student loan interest rates are

either below the prevailing market rate, or no higher than the prevailing market rate if the loan offers better terms and conditions.

- The Department for Education and the Welsh Government have confirmed the change following a decrease in the prevailing market rate.
- Plan 2 borrowers will continue to repay 9% of their earnings over the repayment threshold. The repayment threshold for Plan 2 ICR loans remains at £27,295.
- Plan 2 ICR loans are those loans taken out for a course starting after 1 September 2012 (England and Wales).
- Postgraduate loan borrowers will continue to repay 6% of their earnings over the repayment threshold. The repayment threshold for Postgraduate loans remains at £21,000.
- Postgraduate loans are those loans taken out for Postgraduate level study.
- Plan 1 ICR loans, those loans taken out for a course starting before 1 September 2012 are not affected.
- By "RPI" we mean the percentage increase between the retail prices all items index published by the Office for National Statistics for the two Marches immediately before the commencement of the academic year.

Published 9 September 2021

[Civil news: increases to emergency cost limit for legal aid work](#)

News story

Cost limit increases for emergency civil legal aid certificates take effect 13 September 2021 but certificates for investigative representations are excluded.



We are making increases to the cost limit on emergency civil legal aid certificates from 13 September 2021.

What sort of work is affected?

- full representation
- family help, higher

What is the increase?

Emergency civil legal aid certificates will be issued with a revised cost limit of £2,250.

We have deliberately set a figure which does not exceed substantive cost limits across different categories of law.

Certificates for investigative representations will continue to include a costs limit of £1,350.

How do emergency certificates work?

Delegated functions to grant emergency certificates are used when there is no time to apply to the LAA and wait for a funding decision.

Why is this happening now?

The new cost limit was suggested by providers in our process efficiency team (PET). This a small partnership group, which also includes LAA subject matter experts and representative bodies.

The increased limit should better reflect the work completed in emergency cases. It should also reduce the administrative burden on providers.

We are introducing this change manually while a permanent digital solution is worked on.

What if I need more than £2,250?

A higher cost limit can be agreed in exceptional circumstances.

You would need to include details of the cost limit requested alongside written justification within the 'statement of case' or 'merits report'.

Authority for a cost limit to be reduced is provided for in CLA regulations. But this will only be done if the justification provided is not appropriate.

Challenges to cost limits

You can email our 'civil application fixer service' if you believe:

Further information

[Regulation 39\(2\) CLA \(Procedure\) Regulations 2012](#) – to view authority for

cost limits

applicationfixer@justice.gov.uk – to challenge cost limits

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