

[Air pollution to hit northern China during upcoming holiday](#)

A new round of air pollution is expected to hit the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region in north China during the upcoming Tomb-sweeping Day holiday, or Qingming, the environment ministry warned Friday.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) said the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and its neighboring areas will experience medium to heavy air pollution from Monday to Wednesday, as weather conditions will turn unfavorable for the dispersion of pollutants.

Pollution levels are likely to peak between Tuesday evening and Wednesday, with the cities of Beijing, Langfang and Baoding facing heavy pollution.

The ministry expects the pollution to ease from April 6.

Chen Jining, head of the MEP, urged timely air quality forecast and pollution warning, as well as strict supervision and inspection on enterprises and automobiles with excessive emission.

Beijing and Tianjin, together with another 26 smaller cities in north China, have drawn up detailed action plans to address air pollution, vowing to cut coal consumption, close down polluting businesses and scale down steel production in winter.

China is targeting cutting emissions of both sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide by 3 percent this year, and markedly reducing PM2.5 density in key areas, according to this year's government work report.

[News story: Defence Secretary welcomes US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis to the UK for the first time](#)

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon welcomed Secretary Jim Mattis to London today for his first visit to the UK as US Defense Secretary. They reviewed a number of defence and security issues, including the need for NATO modernisation and increased defence spending by all members, progress in the fight against extremism, including Daesh in Iraq and Syria, and joint equipment and defence trade programmes.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

We have no closer friend than the United States and across the globe our nations are standing side by side in defending our values. Together we're showing leadership on the world stage – tackling extremism, standing up to Russian aggression and modernising NATO, making it fitter, faster and more agile.

Sir Michael outlined at today's meeting how Britain is playing a leading role in European and global defence and security, and wants a deep and special economic and security partnership with the EU after the UK leaves. The Defence Secretary confirmed that as of next week, all 800 British troops would be deployed in Estonia as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), alongside over 300 British Army vehicles. And continuing UK and US forces' long history of joint operations, the UK is supporting the US-led eFP in Poland, contributing hundreds of troops and more than 50 vehicles. British armour transporters will be helping to move US tanks across Poland, underlining the depth of UK/US cooperation.

Sir Michael and Secretary Mattis also agreed steps for NATO modernisation, including simpler command structures, and reviewed the pressing need for NATO members to meet their 2% defence spending commitments. The Defence Secretary called on NATO members not meeting the 2% spending commitment to increase their defence budget annually in real terms, in order to demonstrate greater burden sharing.

Both the Defence Secretary and Secretary Mattis reviewed progress in the fight against Daesh and agreed to keep up the campaign momentum, with Iraqi forces liberating more territory from Daesh's tyranny in western Mosul and planning the campaign to isolate and then liberate Raqqa in Syria. Britain and the US are leading the Coalition effort to defeat Daesh in Iraq and Syria, striking extremist positions from the air and training the Iraqi security forces on the ground.

Visiting the UK for the first time in his new role, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said:

I thank Minister Fallon for the very warm welcome to the UK on my first visit as Secretary of Defense. The special relationship is a source of strength for our two nations, standing together in defense of our freedoms. It is demonstrated daily in our military-to-military interactions across a host of domains, and our relationship grows in strength with the mutual respect and friendship we share.

During a press conference at Lancaster House, Sir Michael announced a £90 million investment to support the UK's new F-35 Lightning aircraft. The F-35 programme is a joint undertaking with the US that will deliver cutting-edge aircraft to British and American Armed Forces. This multi-million pound contract, providing maintenance, training and logistic services at RAF Marham in Norfolk – the future home of the jets' squadrons – will sustain hundreds

of highly skilled British jobs.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Nothing demonstrates the strength of our relationship better than our joint work on the most advanced combat aircraft in the world – the F-35. The UK is proud to be the future repair hub for all the European jets. This additional investment at RAF Marham will ensure that we have a formidable fighting force that, at a time of growing danger, will help us work with our US partners to promote international peace and security.

In testament to the British skill base, the UK has been chosen by the US F-35 Program Office to be a global repair hub, providing maintenance, overhaul and upgrade services for European F-35s. The deal builds on the strong foundations of Britain's pre-eminent and enduring defence partnership with the US, and will help create hundreds of high-end jobs, safeguard thousands more and be a substantial boost to UK exports.

This new £90 million contract, placed through the F-35 Joint Program Office with Lockheed Martin, in partnership with BAE Systems, will support services being operated out of RAF Marham. The new support services contract comes as the UK gets ready to receive its ninth F-35 aircraft, which will be based at US Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, South Carolina. A further £167 million investment was announced last year for the construction of three new state-of-the-art buildings at the Norfolk base and construction of these facilities is well under way. In March the F-35 also successfully conducted first firing trials using MBDA's Advanced Short Range Air to Air Missile (ASRAAM), marking the first time a British-designed missile has been fired from the F-35.

[Diane Abbott responds to analysis suggesting that major police forces are failing to investigate more than 50 percent of burglaries](#)

Diane

Abbott MP, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, commenting on analysis suggesting that major police forces are failing to investigate more than 50 percent of burglaries, said:

"These figures are deeply troubling. The Tories are in denial about the effects of

their broken promises on police numbers, police effectiveness and the fight against crime.

“Not only is there more crime under this Government, but falling numbers of officers have meant that the police are becoming less effective at fighting crime.”

[New vehicle tax rules: how imported vehicles are affected](#)

[In our previous blog](#), we talked about the upcoming [vehicle tax changes](#) and how they'll affect motorhomes. We're now going to focus on imported vehicles.

As you may already know, the changes for cars and some motorhomes are:

- new standard tax rates for vehicles registered for the first time on or after 1 April 2017
- new first licence rates for new vehicles based on CO₂ emissions
- list price or notional price of the vehicle must be given to DVLA when the vehicle is first registered

Imported vehicles

For new cars and some motorhomes that are being imported into the UK (categories M1, M1SP and M1G on the [type approval certificate](#)), the changes will apply where there is a CO₂ emissions figure on the final build type approval certificate. Those vehicles without a CO₂ emissions figure on the final build type approval certificate will continue to be taxed as [private light goods \(PLG\) tax class](#), as they are now. When registering an imported vehicle, the list price or notional price of the vehicle must be provided.



New imported vehicles with a CO₂ emissions figure

For new vehicles imported with a CO₂ emissions figure, the first time the vehicle is taxed the rate will be based on the CO₂ emissions (as they are now). Take a look at [the current tax rates](#).

From the second time the vehicle is taxed, the vehicle will be charged at the standard rate or the standard rate plus an additional rate of £310, depending on the list price or notional price. To find out what the list price is for a vehicle, contact your dealer who will be able to help.

List price or notional price of £40,000 and under

When first registered, on or after 1 April 2017, these vehicles will be charged at the standard rate of £140 (£130 for alternative fuel vehicles, £0 for vehicles with zero emissions).

List price or notional price of over £40,000

These vehicles will be charged at the standard rate, plus the additional rate for five years, making a total of £450 (£440 for alternative fuel vehicles, £310 for vehicles with zero emissions). After five years, they will revert to the standard rate.

Used imported vehicles

If you're importing a used vehicle into the UK, the [new tax rate scheme](#) will apply if the vehicle was first registered outside the UK on or after 1 April 2017. Vehicles registered outside the UK before this date will continue to be taxed as they are now.

If the vehicle had a list price or notional price of over £40,000 when it was first registered outside the UK, the additional rate of £310 a year will be added to the standard rate. The additional rate is applicable for either:

- a five year period from the end of the first licence (if imported and registered for the first time in the UK)
- up to six years from the date of first registration outside the UK, when imported as a used vehicle but first registered on or after 1 April 2017

Check out [new vehicle tax rates from 1 April 2017](#) for more information.

Follow DVLA on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and subscribe to our [Digital Services Blog](#).

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[Paul Blomfield responds to reports](#)

that EU nationals are finding it difficult to get mortgages agreed by UK lenders

Paul

Blomfield MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Exiting the European Union,

commenting on

reports that EU nationals are finding it difficult to get mortgages agreed by UK lenders, said:

"How

many more reports like this does the Government need before it realises it is committing a huge act of self-harm by not granting non-UK EU citizens certainty?

"EU

nationals, many of whom have been here decades, will simply vote with their feet if they can't secure jobs or homes here.

"This

would spell disaster for our economy, our public services and our communities.

"It's

beyond time for the Government to see sense."