

Consultation to extend NHS pension scheme

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- Move would help to bolster the workforce ahead of winter so they can continue to bust the Covid backlogs

Retired and partially retired NHS staff could have important NHS pension changes extended to make it easier for them to return to the workforce or to continue supporting the health system over winter, as the government launches a new consultation today.

Ahead of what could be a challenging winter where we expect more people to come forward for checks, these measures will help support and boost the workforce. In this way, we are putting in place preparations that will put the health system in the strongest possible position to tackle the pressures and bust the Covid backlogs.

Since March 2020, certain retire and return rules in the pension scheme have been suspended to allow retired staff to return to work or increase their working commitments without having the payment of their pension benefits suspended.

The measures are currently set to run until 31 October 2022 and the consultation will gather views from the public and stakeholders on whether to extend the measures to 31 March 2023.

This would allow skilled and experienced staff and have stepped up to support the system to continue working for the NHS throughout the potentially challenging upcoming winter period, easing pressures on the system and helping to tackle the Covid backlogs.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

The country is hugely thankful to all the retired staff who returned to support the NHS and the public during the pandemic.

This winter will be challenging too and we are putting in place the necessary preparations to support the NHS while it continues to deliver first-rate care to patients.

As part of this we are now consulting on extending temporary changes to the NHS pension scheme, which have so far allowed highly-skilled retired staff to return to the workforce without having their pension benefits affected.

The NHS pension scheme is one of the best available, providing generous retirement benefits for hardworking staff after a lifetime of service looking after the nation's health.

The government is committed to growing and supporting the NHS workforce, with over 4,100 more doctors and 9,600 more nurses compared to last year, and remains on track to deliver on the manifesto commitment to have 50,000 more nurses by 2024, with 29,000 more nurses already. The government has also commissioned NHS England to develop a long term workforce plan to recruit and support staff while they deliver high-quality, safe care to patients.

To prepare for winter, the government is working closely with the NHS at pace to prepare for the pressures ahead, including by increasing capacity, boosting NHS 111 and 999 support with at least 4,800 staff working in 111 and 2,500 in 999 call rooms to meet high demand, tackling delayed discharge and using new innovations such as virtual wards by creating the equivalent of at least 7,000 more beds.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and NHS England [recently set out plans to address winter pressures](#). He has also launched a taskforce to drive up the recruitment of international staff into critical roles across the system, alongside recruiting and retaining more doctors and nurses, so staff can continue their work of busting the Covid backlogs, having now virtually eliminated waits of over two years as part of the Elective Recovery Plan – backed by record investment.

Background

- These measures were originally provided by Section 45 of the Coronavirus Act from March 2020 to March 2022, then until 31 October 2022, they have been continued via temporary amendments to NHS Pension Scheme regulations. The consultation will run until 12 September 2022.

PM Boris Johnson: The next few months will be tough but I'm convinced Britain's bounceback will be golden

The months ahead are going to be tough, perhaps very tough. Our energy bills are going to be eye-watering. For many of us, the cost of heating our homes is already frightening.

And yet I have never been more certain that we will come through this well – and that Britain will emerge stronger and more prosperous the other side.

Let us remember who caused this global surge in the cost of energy, and what

is at stake.

Yes, we were already seeing supply chain pressures last year, caused by the aftershocks of Covid, and that was causing a rise in some global prices.

But by the end of last year we were fixing it. The world was finding the lorry drivers. The container ships were moving. We were sourcing the silicon chips.

What no one had bargained for was the decision of Vladimir Putin – and it was his decision alone – to launch a vicious and irrational attack, on February 24, against an innocent European country.

It was Putin's barbaric invasion that spooked the energy markets.

It is Putin's war that is costing British consumers. That is why your energy bill is doubling. I am afraid Putin knows it. He likes it. And he wants us to buckle.

He believes that soft European politicians will not have the stomach for the struggle – that this coming winter we will throw in the sponge, take off the sanctions and go begging for Russian oil and gas.

He believes we will tire of backing Ukraine and begin discreetly to encourage the Ukrainians to do a deal, however nauseating, with the tyrant in the Kremlin.

That would be utter madness. In this brutal arm-wrestle, the Ukrainian people can and will win. And so will Britain.

With every month that goes by Putin's position grows weaker. His ability to bully and blackmail is diminishing. And Britain's position will grow stronger.

We must and we will help people through the crisis. Colossal sums of taxpayers' money are already committed to helping people pay their bills. That cash is flowing now – and will continue to flow in the months ahead.

Another chunk of the £650 is already due to go to the eight million most vulnerable households this autumn. There is another £300 going to pensioners in November, £150 for the disabled and £400 for all energy bill payers.

Next month – whoever takes over from me – the Government will announce another huge package of financial support. It is worth remembering why we are in a position to make these payments.

We have the cash to support families across the country because we have already proved the pessimists wrong.

I remember sitting in the Cabinet room for an economic briefing in 2020 as the waves of the pandemic broke over the world and we saw the biggest drop in output for 300 years. They told me UK unemployment would top 14 per cent.

They said that millions would be thrown on to the economic scrapheap – with all the consequent costs to the Exchequer.

They were wrong. After becoming the first country in the world to approve an effective vaccine, we staged the fastest vaccine roll-out in Europe, the fastest exit from Covid. As a result we had the fastest growth in the G7 last year and instead of mass unemployment we have about 640,000 MORE people in payrolled employment than before the pandemic began.

Instead of being at 14 per cent, unemployment is at 3.8 per cent, nearly the lowest for almost 50 years. That is giving us the fundamental economic strength to endure this crisis – as the Russian economy continues to melt down.

We are ending our dependency on Russian hydrocarbons. In June, for the first time in decades, we did not import any fuel from Russia. The UK has already stepped up production of domestic gas – 26 per cent more this year than last.

With every new windfarm we build offshore, with every new nuclear project we approve, we strengthen our strategic position. We become less vulnerable to the vagaries of the global gas price and less vulnerable to Putin's pressure.

It is this Government that has reversed the apathy of decades and greenlighted new nuclear plants.

[Political content redacted]

We are going to build a new reactor every year and will have a colossal 50 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2030 – almost half our total electricity consumption.

This British Energy Security Strategy is just a part of a vast programme to make the economy more productive and competitive.

In just three years we have increased the coverage of gigabit broadband from seven per cent of households to 70 per cent. We are strengthening the economic sinews of the country with the biggest investment in rail – three new high speed lines – for a century.

We have invested massively in skills, so that people can improve their qualifications throughout their lives.

We have taken decisive steps to make this the best place in the world to invest and start a business. We are axing dozens of burdensome EU laws – including Solvency 2 and MiFID, that acted as unnecessary deterrents to investment.

We are creating eight new free-ports, cutting taxes on investment and lengthening our lead as a science superpower – with £22 billion of investment in science and a new Advanced Research agency to crack the big problems of our time, from dementia to zero carbon aviation.

All this is paying off in jobs and growth. In the first quarter of this year

the UK attracted more venture capital investment in technology than China.

We have more tech investment than France, Germany and Israel combined and we produce a new billion pound “unicorn” company roughly every two weeks.

These new ideas are blooming not just in the golden triangle of Oxford, Cambridge and London but across the whole UK as we drive forward our levelling up agenda.

We have laid the foundations for long-term gains in prosperity and productivity. We know we will bounce back from the crisis in the cost of energy as we rapidly build up our own UK supplies.

That is why we will succeed and why we cannot flinch now.

If Putin is allowed to get away with his murder and mayhem, and to change the borders of Europe by force, then he will simply do it again, elsewhere on the periphery of the former Soviet Union.

Other countries will draw the lesson that violence and aggression can pay off and that will usher in a new cycle of political and economic instability.

That is why we must continue to back the Ukrainians – and their military success continues to be remarkable. Volodymyr Zelenskyy has shown his country is fundamentally unconquerable.

Now is the time for the West to double down our support, not to go wobbly.

[Political content readacted]

We have more than enough resilience to get through tough months ahead. We have shown that before.

And we have made the long term decisions – including on domestic energy supply – to ensure that our bounceback can and should be remarkable and that our future will be golden.

UK International Trade Secretary visits New Zealand and Australia

Press release

Cabinet Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan begins a 9-day tour of New Zealand and Australia following Free Trade Agreements being signed.



- Trip will encourage more businesses to reap the benefits of the UK's newly signed deals
- Trevelyan is the first Cabinet Minister to meet the new Australian government on Aussie soil.
- Opportunity to discuss continued support for the UK's work to accede accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

Anne-Marie Trevelyan is visiting the region to promote Global Britain and opportunities for UK businesses after the UK signed trade deals worth £800 million with New Zealand and £2.3 billion with Australia.

- In NZ she meets Minister for Trade and Export Growth, Damien O'Connor to discuss how to maximise the benefits of the trade agreement and increase business awareness of it. She will also meet Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel.
- She will receive a formal Marae welcome, known as a pōwhiri, in Rotorua, and tour Miraka, a Māori owned and sustainable milk processing plant. She will also meet with Te Taumata, the Māori trade advisory board, to discuss the opportunities to boost Māori business cooperation through the UK-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement.
- And on the final leg in Auckland she will meet Mayor Phil Goff, and visit Babcock International to promote UK and New Zealand defence industry partnerships.
- In Sydney she will visit Qantas to be briefed about Project Sunrise and purchase of key Airbus plane components and Rolls Royce engines; host an Electric Vehicle roundtable, promote the strengths of the UK's tech ecosystem and launch a Net Zero Innovation handbook, to showcase British expertise in climate tech. She will also visit Central Station, where UK and Australia partnership is leading the way in sustainable design and engineering.
- In Adelaide she will visit leading defence companies including BMT, MacTaggart Scott and the BAE Systems frigate shipyard.
- The Trade Secretary will also deliver a speech alongside her counterpart, Minister Farrell, on the next steps of the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement, and the wider UK business and trading relationship.

The visit also provides an opportunity for the International Trade Secretary to discuss both countries continued support for the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

by the end of the year. The CPTPP is a £9 trillion trading block, which could see 99.9% of UK exports becoming eligible for tariff-free trade with the 11 member countries. This would further boost opportunities for UK businesses in the region.

British Consul General and Deputy Trade Commissioner Asia Pacific (Australia & New Zealand), Louise Cantillon said:

Trade is a huge part of the modern partnership between the UK and Australia and New Zealand, and I am delighted to welcome the International Trade Secretary to this region.

This is her first visit since the Free Trade Agreements were signed and is a key part of our work to prepare businesses to make the most of the deals. In NZ I'm particularly pleased we are able to meet with so many Maori businesses who will benefit from the FTA Chapter to promote the benefits of international trade.

This visit will showcase amazing British companies showing how UK innovation, technology and skills in the region are being used in partnership to deliver economic growth.

British High Commissioner to Australia, Vicki Treadell said:

Australia and this region are key to the UK's Indo Pacific tilt and I am pleased to welcome International Trade Minister Trevelyan. Strong trade and investment flows are a key pillar of our partnership and having signed Free Trade Agreements our work now turns to preparing realise the benefits.

This wide-ranging visit will see the Minister engage across trade, defence and climate – testament to the importance of our modern partnership to maximise opportunities and tackle current challenges together.

British High Commissioner to New Zealand, Iona Thomas said:

I am delighted to host the International Trade Secretary during this important visit, focused on how to maximise the benefits of the FTA, the UK's efforts to join the CPTPP and future cooperation on global trade. There is huge potential for economic growth by working together, increasing prosperity for both countries.

I am excited to meet thriving British Businesses across New Zealand and showcase the unique and dynamic relationship between NZ and the UK. Both countries believe strongly in global responses to global problems and challenges, in protecting our democratic values, championing free trade and taking urgent action to protect our

climate and oceans.

I am particularly pleased to be engaging with Māori businesses who have sustainability at the heart of their work during this visit. Growing the UK's relationship with all of New Zealand is a key priority for the team in New Zealand.

Notes to Editors:

- The UK Government is working to complete domestic ratification processes so that UK, Australian and New Zealand businesses can make use of the agreement as soon as possible.
- The UK-New Zealand FTA is expected to boost trade by almost 60%, generating jobs, increasing wages and adding £800 million to the UK economy.
- The UK-Australia FTA is expected to unlock £10.4 billion of additional trade, eliminating tariffs on 100% of UK exports and boosting the economy by £2.3 billion.

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New government scheme to promote next generation of UK artists around the world

- Known as X-UK, the project will acquire works by exciting British artists to go on display in more than 125 countries
- The collection will work with networks to support standout artists to showcase the best of Britain to the world

Contemporary British artists are set to benefit from a new scheme which will see their work displayed in the country's network of embassies and government buildings around the world.

The Government Art Collection (GAC), which is part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), is launching a five-year acquisitions project to acquire works from exciting talent and showcase the best of British creativity – promoting further interest in the country's globally renowned creative sector.

GAC will work with the Contemporary Visual Arts Network in England, the Scottish Contemporary Art Network, and networks in Wales and Northern Ireland to identify the next generation of potential artistic stars.

The X-UK project initially ran as a successful pilot scheme in 2020-21 when more than 90 pieces by 45 contemporary visual artists were acquired for the collection. These works are now on display in government buildings around the country and internationally in British embassies and residences including Paris, Ankara, The Holy See in Rome, and 10 Downing Street.

The pilot revealed the impact that an acquisition by the Government Art Collection can have on an artist's career by helping to bring their art to new audiences and raising their profiles.

Glasgow-based artist Alberta Whittle went on to represent Scotland at the 59th Biennale di Venezia in 2022 and currently has pieces on display in the National Galleries of Scotland following the pilot scheme's acquisition of her work.

The acquisition of work by Manish Harijan led to his being granted a global talent visa by the British Council, and Ghanian-born artist Harold Offeh saw his art join a national collection for the first time in his career.

Arts Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay said:

This fantastic new scheme will shine a light on the UK's brilliant up-and-coming artists and promote our cutting-edge creative industries on the world stage.

The five-year X-UK project aims to be a true reflection of every part of the United Kingdom and will bring some of our most exciting artists to audiences in more than 125 countries.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

As the Edinburgh summer festivals draw to a close, the international appetite for Scottish culture and creativity has never been more apparent. Through the UK Government's extensive global network of embassies and residencies, this fantastic project will showcase the best of Scottish creative talent to the world and help raise the global profile of our outstanding homegrown visual artists.

Secretary of State for Wales, Sir Robert Buckland said:

I'm delighted that the UK Government is supporting contemporary Welsh art. Acquiring pieces by emerging artists for the Government Art Collection immediately provides publicity and recognition and showcases this wonderful work to the world.

Wales has a rich heritage of celebrated artists from Richard Wilson's 18th century landscapes to Gwen John and Sir Kyffin Williams, and it's great to see the new generation of Welsh talent supported and promoted by the X-UK project.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Shailesh Vara said:

The X-UK project by the Government Art Collection is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the very best of Northern Ireland's artistic talent alongside the rest of the United Kingdom in over 125 countries across the world.

I am excited to see the high calibre of artwork, which will undoubtedly serve as a fantastic springboard for new and emerging artists from Northern Ireland to display their talent on the world stage.

Contemporary visual artist Manish Harijan said:

Coming from the foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal, this is a valuable opportunity that has opened doors for me into the art world. Connecting with important art networks like CVAN Yorkshire and Humber, who nominated me to the Government Art Collection, has been inspiring, and following the acquisition of my work by the Collection, the British Council granted me a Global Talent visa.

Contemporary visual artist Harold Offeh said:

As a Cambridge-based artist having my work selected for the Government Art Collection was a huge boost. The recognition and validation of my practice has been extremely encouraging, and I'm excited to be part of a national collection for the first time.

The project will also provide a focus for the Government Art Collection's public engagement activity with artists and young creatives during this five-year period. This will include work in 2022-23 with Glynn Vivian Art Gallery in Swansea, the Museum-in-Residence in 10 Downing Street, and work in Bradford during its time as UK City of Culture in 2025-26.

Notes to Editors:

[X-UK acquisitions programme 2022-2027:](#)

- 2022/23 – Wales, East Midlands and West Midlands

- 2023/24 – Scotland, North East
 - 2024/25 – Northern Ireland, North West
 - 2025/26 – Wales, Yorkshire, East
 - 2026/27 – Scotland, South East, South West
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Consultation launched on NHS pension changes to boost winter workforce

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- Move would help to bolster the workforce ahead of winter so they can continue to bust the Covid backlogs

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Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

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Matthew Taylor, chief executive of the NHS Confederation (which includes NHS Employers), said:

The NHS will need all of the help it can get this winter and so, we are pleased the Government will be consulting on ways to provide support to the NHS's workforce by encouraging recent and partial retirees back to the frontline.

This is not the only action that it is needed to respond to the rising demand for healthcare services but leaders hope it will help. On behalf of our members, we look forward to providing views in the consultation.