

# A message of thanks from Peter Schofield

News story

A personal message from Peter Schofield, Head of the Operational Delivery Profession (ODP).



As you're aware, the UK is facing some of the most difficult times in recent history. Now, perhaps more than ever before, our citizens are becoming reliant on the vital public services that you deliver every day.

That we have come together as a community to meet these challenges head on makes me immensely proud of the Operational Delivery Profession. Despite significant changes to our working environment and practices you continue to uphold our commitment to support, assist and protect every customer that depends on us.

That's why I wanted to make absolutely clear my appreciation of the work you do. In a period that is unsettling for all of us, you continue to provide reassurance by being there for the people that need us; often some of the most vulnerable people in society. Your work is recognised and thoroughly appreciated.

So I'd like to send you my personal and heartfelt thanks. It is clear to me from the responses I see every day from members of the profession that by working together, and by being there for each other, we can overcome the challenges we face.

Thank you again for making me so proud to be your Head of Profession.

Peter Schofield Operational Delivery Head of Profession; and Permanent Secretary of Department for Work and Pensions.

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# Over 69,000 loans approved in the first day of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme

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The seven largest lenders (Barclays, Danske, HSBC, Lloyds, RBS, Santander and Virgin Money) received more than 130,000 Bounce Back Loan Scheme applications on the first day of the scheme (4 May). Over 69,000 of these have been approved on the first day, and lenders are working hard to process and approve the rest as quickly as possible.

Bounce Back Loans are helping thousands of small firms get finance quickly at a low, affordable rate and with a 100% government-backed guarantee.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

Small businesses will be the driving force of our recovery from the pandemic, creating jobs and securing economic growth.

These loans will help them bounce back from this crisis – getting money fast – so it's great to see more than 69,000 business benefitting in just the first day.

It's vital this speedy progress continues in the days and weeks ahead.

The Bounce Back Loan scheme is one part of the government's package of business support that includes: £8 billion to pay the wages of furloughed staff at 800,000 firms, nearly 700,000 business properties benefiting from £8.6 billion of business grants, generous VAT deferrals and scrapping businesses rates.

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## [Business rates revaluation postponed](#)

A revaluation of business rates will no longer take place in 2021 to help reduce uncertainty for firms affected by the impacts of coronavirus, Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP has announced.

Legislation had been introduced to bring the next revaluation forward by one year from 2022 to 2021, but following the recent economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic ministers want to ensure businesses have more certainty during this difficult time.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We have listened to businesses and their concerns about the timing of the 2021 business rates revaluation and have acted to end that uncertainty by postponing the change.

Now is the time for us to continue to focus on supporting businesses affected by the pandemic, including through our unprecedented package of almost £10 billion in business rates relief.

The government is continuing work on the fundamental review of business rates, with the key aims of reducing the overall burden on businesses, improving the current business rates system, and considering more fundamental changes in the medium-to-long term. The call for evidence for the review will be published in the coming months.

The postponement comes on top of the government's support package for business and workers during the economic emergency including:

- businesses are set to receive a [discount of almost £10 billion](#) on their rates bills this financial year in response to coronavirus, after the business rates retail discount was increased to 100% from 50% for 2020 to 2021
- over £12 billion for local authorities to deliver grants of up to £25,000 to eligible businesses. As of 3 May, over £8.6 billion has been

paid out to over 697,000 business properties

- [protections for UK high street shops and other companies](#) under strain will be protected from aggressive rent collection and asked to pay what they can during the coronavirus pandemic
- the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) where small and large employers will be eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month, backdated to March 1 and available for at least 3 months. The first grants have been paid.
- a deferral of the next quarter of VAT payments for firms, until the end of June – representing a £30 billion injection into the economy
- a total of £330 billion worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses

The Non-Domestic Ratings (List) Bill 2019-20 was introduced to bring the date of the next revaluation forward from 2022 to 2021.

The government remains committed to frequent revaluations to ensure that business rates receive bills that more accurately reflect up-to-date property rental values.

A revaluation is the review of the rateable values of all business and other nondomestic property in England at a particular point in time.

Revaluations are done to maintain fairness in the system by redistributing the total amount payable in business rates, reflecting changes in the property market.

A property's business rates bill is based on a precise estimate of the premises' rental value. Business rate bills are calculated using specific valuation methods. It is important for rateable values to be regularly updated through revaluations to ensure bills stay accurate. With changing circumstances as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the next revaluation will not go ahead in 2021.

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## [Celebrating 70 years of partnership with a cool contest!](#)

World news story

To mark the platinum wedding we are happy to announce a contest on our Instagram channel. Full terms and conditions below.



This week, Britain and Israel celebrate 70 years since the establishment of their diplomatic relations. To mark the occasion together with our wonderful embassy followers, we are holding a competition: We want you to send us an original image (painting, photo, collage, etc. – be creative) that symbolizes this relationship. Let your imagination go wild because we have cool prizes. Competition ends on Friday 22 May at 12 Israel time.

### **Prizes**

- First Prize – Fuji Instax Mini instant development camera AND change our cover photo to the winning image
- Second prize – JBL portable speaker

### **Participation:**

Share a photo to Instagram, tag the embassy account [@UKINISRAEL](#), AND email it at [ukinisrael@gmail.com](mailto:ukinisrael@gmail.com). The photos will be uploaded to a special album on our Facebook page.

British Ambassador to Israel Neil Wigan will choose the Winning Picture!

### **Please note the terms and conditions:**

Please tag just one photo from each Instagram account and email address. Family who would like to send photos of several family members (more than one photo) are invited to indicate this in the body of the email. Abusive content will be deleted and the advertiser removed from the page.

### **General Terms:**

- Images submitted will be original images only and a participant in the competition is prohibited from making use of any image protected by intellectual property rights. The embassy disclaims any responsibility for infringement of intellectual property rights of any kind and a participant breaching such rights shall indemnify the embassy for any damage caused to the embassy as a result of such breach
- Without derogating from the generality of the foregoing, the embassy reserves the right to use any available means to identify the originality of the images, for the purpose of preventing counterfeiting or intellectual property rights infringement. The embassy's determination, at its sole discretion, as to the originality of the

images, shall be final and irrefutable and shall be binding for every purpose and intent

- The embassy is not and shall not be liable for anything related to the prizes and/or their use and/or their quality and/or related or associated services and/or to any damage resulting from use thereof. The responsibility of the embassy is limited solely to conducting the competition and awarding the prizes as set forth in this document
- Responsibility for participating in the competition shall be solely with the participants. The embassy shall not be liable for any damage caused to any of the participants and/or any other third parties in connection with the participation in the competition
- The embassy may publish the names of the winners and the prizes they have won, by means of advertisements and/or in newspapers and/or social media platforms. Each participant in the competition confirms that by participating in the competition, he/she agrees to the disclosure, by any means mentioned above, of his/her name, winning and prize
- The winner will be notified by email and/or DM on Instagram/Facebook within 28 days of the closing date. If the winner cannot be contacted or do not claim the prize within 14 days of notification, we reserve the right to withdraw the prize from the winner and pick a replacement winner
- Prizes are not and cannot be converted into money and/or converted into any other benefit and/or paid in kind. Embassy employees and their family members are prohibited from participating in the competition. Any tax and/or levy and/or fee imposed, if imposed, on the award of the prizes to the winners shall be borne by the winners.

The embassy may, at its sole discretion, amend this document and/or extend the competition period.

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## **CMA blocks sports-fashion merger**

Following an in-depth Phase 2 investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has concluded that this transaction would lead to a substantial lessening of competition nationally. This would leave shoppers with fewer discounts or receiving lower quality customer service.

It is obvious that coronavirus (COVID-19) has led to retailers facing uncertain and challenging trading conditions and the CMA has considered how this might affect the competition concerns surrounding this transaction. While it is significantly affecting the sector, the CMA has not found evidence that the impact of coronavirus would remove its competition concerns. However, the CMA does believe that the continuing uncertainty means that JD Sports should be allowed sufficient time in which to sell Footasylum,

given the additional challenges associated with coronavirus.

In reaching this final decision, the CMA analysed a wide range of evidence looking at how closely these firms compete as well as competition from other retailers, whether they are online-only or also have stores, and the constraint from suppliers like Nike and adidas. This evidence included more than 2,000 of the companies' own internal strategy and decision-making documents, which showed that JD Sports and Footasylum monitor each other's activity closely. Additionally, the CMA conducted two large surveys of together more than 10,000 of the companies' customers. These surveys showed that many JD Sports and Footasylum shoppers see the other firm as their next best alternative. For example, more than two thirds of Footasylum's in-store customers said that they would shop at JD Sports if they could no longer shop at Footasylum – substantially higher than for any other retailer. The CMA also found that Footasylum store openings negatively impacted footwear and clothing sales at nearby JD Sports stores. The evidence generally showed a consistent picture: JD Sports and Footasylum are close competitors.

Although JD Sports is a larger retailer than Footasylum, they have millions of customers in a fast-growing sector. Therefore, the loss of competition between them is important. Both companies are among a small number of retailers that sell the latest sports-inspired casual footwear and clothing across the UK, typically to younger, trend-conscious consumers. Shoppers can buy footwear and clothing from other retailers and suppliers, so the CMA ensured it carefully examined the level of competition from these rivals – both now and in the foreseeable future – but found that it was not sufficient to stop shoppers being worse off after the merger.

During Phase 2 investigations, decisions are made by independent inquiry groups chosen from the CMA's panel members who come from a variety of backgrounds, including economics, law, accountancy and business. In this case, the Group has decided that the only way to address the competition concerns is for JD Sports to sell Footasylum, in full, to an approved buyer.

Kip Meek, Chair of the CMA inquiry group, said:

Our investigation analysed a large body of evidence that shows JD Sports and Footasylum are close competitors. This deal would mean the removal of a direct competitor from the market, leaving customers worse off. Based on the evidence we have seen, blocking the deal is the only way to ensure they are protected.

This decision comes at a very difficult time for retailers and we have been careful to consider the effects of coronavirus. However, we need to make sure we think about the impact of this merger on shoppers, both now and in the foreseeable future and we do not see the effects of the current crisis changing the competitive dynamics in a way that diminishes the substantial lessening of competition which we need to remedy.

We never take decisions to block mergers lightly, but in this case

the evidence has shown it is necessary for JD Sports to sell Footasylum, so that they can continue to compete against each other as independent businesses.

For more information, visit the [JD Sports / Footasylum merger inquiry case page](#).

For media queries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or [press@cma.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gov.uk).