

[DLUHC Secretary of State's update on Ukrainian Sponsorship Scheme](#)

Mr Speaker, with your permission, I would like to make a statement on our government's response to help those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine.

This government, this House, indeed everyone in the United Kingdom, continues to be in awe of the bravery of the people of Ukraine. They are victims of savage, indiscriminate, unprovoked aggression. Their courage under fire and their determination to resist inspires our total admiration.

The United Kingdom stands with the Ukrainian people.

My Right Honourable Friend the Defence Secretary has been in the vanguard of those providing military assistance. The Foreign Secretary has been co-ordinating diplomatic support and, with the Chancellor and the Business Secretary, implementing a new, tougher than ever, sanctions regime. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Home Office have also been providing humanitarian support on the ground to Ukraine's neighbours, helping them to cope with the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

But more can, and must, be done.

To that end, My Right Honourable Friend, the Home Secretary, has already expanded the "family route".

She has also confirmed that from tomorrow, Ukrainians with passports will be able to apply for UK visas entirely online, without having to visit Visa Application Centres.

As a result, the number of Ukrainians now arriving in this country is rapidly increasing and numbers will grow even faster from tomorrow.

We also know however, that the unfailingly compassionate British public wants to help further.

'Homes for Ukraine' Scheme

Which is why Mr Speaker, today we are answering that call with the announcement of a new sponsorship scheme, 'Homes for Ukraine'.

I'd like to thank my Right Honourable Friend the Home Secretary, officials in the Home Office, in my own department and across government for their work over the course of the last days and weeks in order to ensure that we can stand up the scheme as quickly as possible.

And in particular, I would like to thank My Honourable Friend Richard Harrington, now Lord Harrington of Watford. His experience in ensuring that

the Syrian Refugee Resettlement programme was a success will prove invaluable in making sure that we do right by the people of Ukraine.

The scheme that he has helped us to design draws on the enormous goodwill and generosity of the British public, and our proud history of supporting the vulnerable in their hour of greatest need.

The scheme will allow Ukrainians with no family ties to the UK to be sponsored by individuals or organisations who can offer them a home. There will be no limit to the number of Ukrainians who can benefit from this scheme.

Requirements

The scheme will be open to all Ukrainian nationals or the immediate family member of a Ukrainian national who were resident in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022.

They will be able to live and work in the United Kingdom for up to 3 years. They will have full and unrestricted access to benefits, healthcare, employment and other support.

Sponsors in the UK can be of any nationality, with any immigration status, provided they have at least 6 months' leave to remain within the UK.

Payments

Sponsors will have to provide accommodation for a minimum of 6 months and in recognition of their generosity, the government will provide a monthly payment of £350 to sponsors for each family whom they've got.

These payments will be tax free, they will not affect benefit entitlement nor council tax status.

Ukrainians arriving in the United Kingdom will also have access to the full range of public services – doctors, schools and full local authority support.

Security

Of course we want to minimise bureaucracy and make the process as straightforward as possible while also doing everything we can to ensure the safety of all involved.

Sponsors will therefore be required to undergo necessary vetting checks and we are also streamlining processes to security assess the status of all Ukrainians who will be arriving in the United Kingdom.

Launch of expression of interest webpage

From today anyone who wishes to record their interest in sponsorship can do so on GOV.UK and the [webpage has gone live](#) as I speak. We will then send any

individual who registers further information setting out the next steps in this process; we will outline what is required of a sponsor and we will set out how sponsors can identify a named Ukrainian individual or family, who can then take up each sponsorship offer.

Phased response

Because we want the scheme to be up and running as soon as possible, Homes for Ukraine will initially facilitate sponsorship between people with known connections.

But we will rapidly expand the scheme in a phased way, with charities, churches and community groups, to ensure that many more prospective sponsors can be matched with Ukrainians who need help. And we are of course also working closely with the devolved administrations to make sure that their kind offers of help are also mobilised.

I know that all concerned want to play their part in supporting Ukrainians who have been through so much to ensure they feel at home in the United Kingdom. I am committed to working with everyone of goodwill to achieve this.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, our country has a long and proud history of supporting the most vulnerable during their darkest hours.

We took in refugees fleeing Hitler's Germany, those fleeing repression in Idi Amin's Uganda and of course those who fled the atrocities of the Balkan wars. More recently we have offered support to those fleeing persecution in Syria, Afghanistan and Hong Kong. And we're doing so again with Homes for Ukraine.

We are a proud democracy. All of us in this House wish to see us stand and uphold our values, and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our allies and to offer a safe haven to people who have been forced to flee war and persecution.

The British people have already opened their hearts in so many ways.

I am hopeful that many will also be ready to open their homes and help those fleeing persecution find peace, healing and the prospect of a brighter future.

And that is why I commend this Statement to the House.

[Foreign Secretary announces historic](#)

round of sanctions: 15 March 2022

- Foreign Secretary announces more than 370 new sanctions now possible thanks to new urgent Economic Crime Act powers
- After today the UK will have designated over 1,000 individuals and entities under the Russia sanctions regime since the invasion
- Today's designations also include Putin's key political allies, regime spokespeople and Kremlin-backed disinformation agencies

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss announces over 370 more Russian and Belarussian sanctions today (Tuesday 15 March), which means by the end of today the UK will have designated over 1,000 individuals and entities since invasion under the Russia sanctions regime.

Today's historic sanctions include more Russian oligarchs and their family members, Putin's political allies and propagandists. The UK is sanctioning over 370 more individuals, 51 of whom are oligarchs and their family members.

The vast majority of today's designations are made possible under the Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act – which has Royal Assent. This has given the Government new powers to act in the public interest and immediately designate individuals and entities under an urgent procedure, while evidence is gathered to sanction them under our own standard procedure.

Russian oligarchs now subject to UK sanctions include Mikhail Fridman, Petr Aven, and German Khan. The oligarchs who will be sanctioned today have a combined estimated worth of more than £100 billion*.

Putin political allies now sanctioned include Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and former President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev. Meanwhile, Russian propagandists who have been designated include Putin's Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov and Russian Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, among others. A notorious internet 'troll farm', the Internet Research Agency, has also been sanctioned.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

We are going further and faster than ever in hitting those closest to Putin – from major oligarchs, to his Prime Minister, and the propagandists who peddle his lies and disinformation. We are holding them to account for their complicity in Russia's crimes in Ukraine.

Working closely with our allies, we will keep increasing the pressure on Putin and cut off funding for the Russian war machine.

The UK will continue to tighten the screw on the Russian economy in the

coming days, as the Government makes full use of powers necessary to tackle the biggest security crisis in Europe since World War II.

The new provisions brought in by the Economic Crime Act have streamlined the previous legislation so the UK can respond even more swiftly and effectively to the current crisis.

Individuals sanctioned today will have their assets in the UK frozen which means no UK citizen or company can do business with them and they are also banned from travelling to or from the UK.

The UK has led the international sanctions effort, cutting off whole sectors of the Russian economy by targeting its defence companies, its trade and transport sector, and working with allies to exclude Russia from the SWIFT financial system.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- Asset freeze: an asset freeze prevents any UK citizen, or any business in the UK, from dealing with any funds or economic resources which are owned, held or controlled by the designated person and which are held in the UK. It will also prevent funds or economic resources being provided to or for the benefit of the designated person.
- Travel ban: a travel ban means that the designated person must be refused leave to enter or to remain in the United Kingdom, providing the individual to be an excluded person under section 8B of the Immigration Act 1971.

A complete list of sanctions can be found on GOV.UK.

*Estimated net worth based on Forbes.

Prominent persons designated today include:

Oligarchs:

- Mickhail Fridman, founder of Alfa Bank, the largest private bank in Russia. He also owns shares in LetterOne. His net worth is reported as an estimated £11.9 billion.
- German Khan, a business partner of Aven and Fridman in both Alfa Bank and LetterOne. His net worth is reported as an estimated £7.8 billion.
- Petr Aven, who was President of Alfa Bank and co-founder of LetterOne. His net worth is reported as an estimated £4 billion.
- Alexey Mordashov, a member of who are reported to be Russia's richest family. Mordashov's net worth is reported as an estimated £22.4 billion. He is a majority shareholder in steel company Severstal.
- Andrey Melnichenko, the founder of EuroChem Group. Reported estimated

net worth of £13.7 billion.

- Viktor Vekselberg, owner of the Renova Group. His net worth is reported at an estimated £6.8 billion.
- Alexander Ponomarenko, chairman of the board of Sheremetyevo, the biggest airport in Russia. His estimated net worth is £2.22 billion.
- Dmitry Pumpyansky, owner and chairman of OAO TMK. His net worth is estimated at £1.84 billion.
- Vadim Moshkovich, chairman of the board of directors of Rusagro Group. His net worth is an estimated £1.84 billion.

Political allies:

- Dmitry Medvedev, a Russian politician serving as deputy chairman of the Security Council of Russia since 2020.
- Mikhail Mishustin, a Russian politician and the current Prime Minister of Russia since January 2020. He was the head of the Federal Taxation Service 2010-2020. He was formally the President of the UFG Group (OFG Invest), one of Russia's largest investment companies.
- Sergei Shoigu, a Russian politician serving as Defence Minister since 2021. He was previously appointed Governor of the Moscow Region.

Propagandists:

- Dmitry Peskov, Putin's press secretary and a Kremlin spokesperson.
- Maria Zakharova, the Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. She is the MFA Spokesperson.

361 individuals and 8 entities will be added to the Sanctions List under the new 'urgent procedure' set out in the Economic Crime Act, which has received royal assent.

After today we will have designated over 1,000 individuals and entities under our Russia sanctions regime since the invasion.

All those on today's list have already been sanctioned by our key allies, the US, EU, Canada or Australia and hence were subject to the new mirroring provisions of that act.

We have also sanctioned four individuals under our own standard procedure, building our own grounds rather than relying on those provided by the EU:

- Mikhail Fridman
 - Petr Aven
 - German Khan
 - Russian Duma member and propagandist Oleg Matveychev.
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Close season for coarse fishing gets underway for 2022

The Environment Agency is reminding anglers that the close season for coarse fishing comes into effect today (Tuesday 15 March) and runs until 15 June inclusive. The annual close season prevents fishing for coarse fish in rivers and streams across England, helping to protect fish when they are spawning and supporting vulnerable stocks.

Throughout the close season, Environment Agency (EA) officers conduct patrols to ensure anglers respect the no fishing period. Notices have been displayed in key fishing areas across England reminding anglers of the law. As part of Operation CLAMPDOWN, Angling Trust (AT) volunteers support the EA by keeping watch on riverbanks and reporting incidents to the 24-hour incident hotline 0800 80 70 60.

2022 marks the 10th anniversary of Operation CLAMPDOWN and this year it will be officially launched on the River Tone in Taunton, Somerset. Environment Agency officers will support the launch by also undertaking a week of action from Tuesday 15th March to Sunday 20th March. Patrols will continue for the duration of the close season.

Kevin Austin, Deputy Director for Agriculture, Fisheries and the Natural Environment at the Environment Agency, said:

Every year, between March and June, our rivers start to reawaken, and our coarse fish populations will soon begin spawning. The close season aims to protect fish during this delicate time to ensure they remain healthy and resilient. Alongside our fisheries improvement work, the close season gives our fish populations the chance to recover.

Going fishing is a great way to connect with nature, relax and unwind – and we always encourage new anglers to give fishing a go. However, we are aware that not all new anglers will have knowledge of fishing rules like the close season. If you know a new angler, please remind them of the close season dates.

Anglers who do still want to get out on the banks during close season can still visit many stillwaters and canals, depending on landowner agreement, or try their hand at trout fishing, though a valid fishing licence is still required.

Nino Brancato, Angling Trust National Enforcement Support Manager, said:

After ten years the positive impact of the work of the Voluntary Bailiff Service cannot be underestimated in supporting fisheries

enforcement across England. A key part of this has been our work on Operation CLAMPDOWN.

This year's close season will offer another great opportunity for the Fisheries Enforcement Support Service and the Voluntary Bailiff Service to work closely with the Environment Agency and police during Operation CLAMPDOWN 10.

Our dedicated volunteer bailiffs will be out on patrol and taking part in coordinated joint activity around the nation's waterways in an eyes and ears capacity – gathering intelligence and reporting incidents in support of our enforcement partners as part of our multi-agency approach to protecting fish and fisheries.

The coarse fish close season applies to rivers, streams, drains and some canals, as well as certain stillwaters within specified 'sites of special scientific interest' (SSSI). The canals and SSSI stillwaters covered by the statutory close season can be found on the [national rod fishing byelaw guidance page on gov.uk](#)

The Environment Agency takes illegal fishing very seriously. Anyone fishing illegally should expect to be prosecuted and to face a substantial fine. Those who suspect illegal fishing should report it to the Environment Agency's incident hotline 0800 80 70 60

Further information

- To help tackle unlicensed and illegal fishing, the Environment Agency urges anyone to report incidents by calling the Environment Agency Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60. Information can also be reported anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111
- The coarse fish close season runs from 15 March until 15 June inclusive on rivers, streams, drains, some canals and specified SSSI stillwaters.
- Coarse fishing is still allowed on most stillwaters and canals, depending on fishery owner agreement. You can find out which stillwaters and canals still have a statutory close season in operation by checking the byelaws which apply in your area on Gov.uk.
- Enjoy fishing and make sure you fish legally. Annual fishing licences are available from only £30. It's easy to buy online. We have created a new way to view your fishing licence. You can now get your licence digitally, as an email or a text message, or you can continue to get your licence card in the post. Find out more on our [fishing licence information page on gov.uk](#)
- The Environment Agency works closely with the Angling Trust as part of the Building Bridges Project to educate and integrate migrant anglers, supporting them to fish legally in local communities. You can find out more on the [Angling Trust's website](#).
- Fishing licence income is used to fund work to maintain, improve and develop fisheries, fish habitats and angling. This includes improving fish passage, river habitat improvements and fish rescues, as well as activities to promote angling

- You can learn more about how the licence fee income is used in [EA's Annual Fisheries Report](#)
 - Visit the [get fishing website](#) to find out about angling events, fisheries and venues
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[CMA launches investigation into recycling of cars and vans](#)

Press release

The CMA has launched an investigation into suspected anti-competitive conduct in relation to the recycling of old or written-off vehicles.



The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has reason to suspect anti-competitive behaviour has taken place involving a number of vehicle manufacturers, and some industry bodies. This conduct relates to arrangements for recycling old or written-off vehicles, specifically cars and vans, which are known in the industry as 'end-of-life vehicles' or ELVs.

ELVs are vehicles that are categorised as waste, generally due to age-related failure or accident, and regulation requires these vehicles to be disposed of in a sustainable way. Vehicle manufacturers must offer their customers a free service for recycling ELVs, a service manufacturers often outsource to third parties.

The CMA is working closely with the European Commission, which has also launched an investigation into this matter today.

Following a period of investigation and information gathering, the CMA may issue a statement of objections if it comes to the provisional view that competition law has been infringed. At this stage, no assumptions should be made about whether competition law has been broken.

This investigation reflects the CMA's commitment – outlined in its [draft](#)

[Annual Plan 2022 to 2023](#) – to prioritise promoting environmental sustainability through effective competitive markets.

Further detail of the CMA's [procedures in competition cases is available in its guidance](#), and any updates to this investigation will be made via the dedicated web page: [Suspected anti-competitive conduct in relation to the recycling of end-of-life vehicles](#).

1. The competition legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation is the Competition Act 1998. The Chapter I prohibition of the Competition Act 1998 prohibits agreements, concerted practices and decisions by associations of undertakings which have as their object or effect the prevention, restriction or distortion of competition within the UK or a part of it and which may affect trade within the UK or a part of it unless they are excluded or exempt.
2. The CMA will normally publish the names of the parties under investigation as soon as possible when a formal investigation is opened, other than in exceptional circumstances, such as where doing so could, in the CMA's view, prejudice a CMA investigation or an investigation of one of the CMA's enforcement partners. In this case, the CMA will not be naming the parties under investigation at this stage, but would usually do so at a later stage of the investigation, or if a statement of objections is issued.
3. There is no legal deadline to complete inquiries under the Competition Act 1998. As with all its work, the CMA will progress this investigation at pace whilst ensuring a robust and detailed review is conducted and parties' rights of defence are respected.
4. Under the CMA's leniency policy, a business that has been involved in certain types of anti-competitive conduct may be granted immunity from penalties or a significant reduction in penalty in return for reporting cartel activity and assisting the CMA with its investigation. Individuals involved in cartel activity may also be granted immunity from criminal prosecution for the cartel offence under the Enterprise Act 2002 and from director disqualification. The CMA also operates a rewards policy under which it may pay a financial reward of up to £100,000 in return for information which helps it to identify and take action against illegal cartels. For more information on the [CMA's leniency policy](#) and the [CMA's informant reward policy](#).
5. Anyone who has information about a cartel is encouraged to call the CMA cartels hotline on 020 3738 6888 or email cartelshotline@cma.gov.uk.
6. All enquiries from journalists should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk or by phone on 020 3738 6460.

7. All enquiries from the general public should be directed to the CMA's General Enquiries team on general.enquiries@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6000.

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[British Embassy and local community combat climate change together](#)

World news story

The British Embassy in Ashgabat worked with local volunteers to plant 80 trees.



British Embassy staff were delighted to join friends and volunteers from the local community to celebrate the arrival of spring together by planting over 80 trees outside the Embassy. Those helping with this climate change initiative included Ashgabat youth groups, members of the Support Centre for Persons with Disabilities, and Public Organisation Yenme. British Ambassador Lucia Wilde said:

It was a real pleasure to work side-by-side with the future generation of the country, all of us equally contributing to make a difference to the major challenge facing our planet. It was a pleasure and a privilege to meet such talented, friendly and dedicated young people and I look forward to meeting them again.

Climate change affects us all. We can all take steps to address the problem. Even planting and looking after a single tree will help in the fight against climate change.

A single tree can absorb as much as 22kg of carbon each year, potentially keeping it locked up in its wood and roots for decades or even centuries to come. On average, one tree produces almost 118kg of oxygen every year.

We hope that our small efforts will help supplement tree planting programmes and other national actions planned across Turkmenistan to tackle climate change.

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