

# [Andrew Patrick appointed UK Migration and Modern Slavery Envoy](#)

Press release

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office diplomat Andrew Patrick has been appointed as the UK's Migration and Modern Slavery Envoy.



Andrew takes up the position following a posting as British Ambassador to Myanmar. He was previously the Deputy Head of Mission in Kabul and Pretoria, and has worked on NATO and the Balkans during his FCD0 career. Andrew succeeds Acting UK Envoy Keith Shannon, who was covering for Jennifer Townson, the first Envoy appointed to the role in 2019.

As [UK Envoy](#), Andrew will engage with our international partners on the hugely important issues of migration and modern slavery. He will continue building the close ties and international coordination needed to meet the UN's goal of ending the scourge of modern slavery.

2013 to 2018 Head of Mission, Myanmar

2007 to 2009 Deputy Head of Mission, Afghanistan

2004 to 2007 Deputy Head of Mission, South Africa

2001 to 2004 Head of Newsroom, Foreign & Commonwealth Office Press Office

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## [PM meeting with Polish President Andrzej Duda: 10 February 2022](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson met Polish President Andrzej Duda in Warsaw today.



The Prime Minister met Polish President Andrzej Duda in Warsaw today.

The Prime Minister emphasised the UK's resolute commitment to NATO and to Europe's defence and security.

He noted the important role Poland plays as a valued partner and ally on NATO's front line. The Prime Minister outlined the UK's support to Poland, including the 350 troops deployed this week to bolster the country's defences.

The Prime Minister emphasised the need for NATO allies to speak with one voice against ongoing Russian hostility. The leaders agreed that allies must continue working on a package of sanctions which would take force in the event of any further hostility. They also underlined the need for European countries to reconsider the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline in that event.

The leaders discussed the steps allies are taking to encourage de-escalation and find a diplomatic solution to the current tensions on the Ukrainian border. The Prime Minister stressed that the UK would remain absolutely resolute in defence of our principles.

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## [Strengthened UK Russian sanctions legislation comes into force](#)

Press release

Legislation has been laid in Parliament today to toughen and expand the UK's sanctions regime against Russia



The Government now has the power to impose tough new sanctions against Russia, after legislation was laid in Parliament today as part of measures to urge the Kremlin to end its campaign of aggression in Ukraine. Minister for Europe, James Cleverly, signed the legislation today.

This legislation provides the framework for the strongest sanctions regime the UK has had against Russia. It means the UK can now impose sanctions on Russian businesses and individuals in a wide range of economic and strategically significant sectors, such as the chemical, defence, extractives, ICT and financial services industries.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

The UK is resolute in its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and right to self-determination.

We urge Russia to de-escalate and choose the path of diplomacy. If Russia persists with its aggression towards Ukraine the UK and its partners will not hesitate to act.

The UK can now sanction not just those linked directly to the destabilisation of Ukraine, but also Government of Russia affiliated entities and businesses of economic and strategic significance to the Russian government, as well as their owners, directors and trustees.

- The UK has implemented an independent sanctions policy and powers since 31 December 2020. The Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 (the Sanctions Act) provides the legal framework for the imposition of UK sanctions and the implementation of UN sanctions
- Under the current sanctions regime, the 2019 Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations, the UK has been able to sanction those involved in destabilising Ukraine or undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty or independence of Ukraine
- On 31 January the Foreign Secretary announced in Parliament that she was proposing amendments to the Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations

2019 that would broaden the scope of our designation criteria, enabling the UK to more readily designate a greater number of individuals and businesses associated with the Kremlin

- These changes will not designate or impose sanctions on any individuals or businesses automatically, but will provide the additional powers we need to be able to do so in the event of any further Russian incursion into Ukraine.

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## [UK completes over 2 million SARS-CoV-2 whole genome sequences](#)

The database was expanded in January 2020 to host SARS-CoV-2 genome sequences and to facilitate rapid sharing of sequenced data. It stores sequences submitted by 240 countries and territories from across the world to inform the global pandemic response.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is on the front line protecting the nation from infectious diseases and other public health threats. This includes responsibility for developing and expanding pathogen genomic surveillance in partnership with scientific organisations including the Wellcome Sanger Institute, NHS, public health agencies from all 4 countries of the UK, academic institutions and the COVID-19 Genomics UK (COG-UK) consortium.

Genomic sequencing provides a better understanding of how the virus is evolving to help inform the global pandemic response. Significant UK discoveries have been made as a result of genomic sequencing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. These include identifying the Alpha variant, which helped to explain epidemiological changes in data and transmission, as well as helping to track the emergence and spread of the Delta and Omicron variants as they replaced Alpha in turn.

Professor Susan Hopkins, Chief Medical Advisor to UKHSA, said:

Sequencing 2 million genomes is a fantastic achievement and a testament to the UK's scientific strength and expertise. We are hugely grateful to everyone who has worked hard and at incredible speed to make this happen.

Global co-operation is key in the fight against COVID-19 and UKHSA

is proud to play its part along with public health and academic colleagues from the 4 nations of the UK. The UK's genomic sequencing technology is world-leading and we are playing a vital role in informing the global response to the pandemic.

Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) is a method for analysing entire genomes and has been used to identify COVID-19 variants from samples taken from infected people.

The UK started to sequence samples from people who had been infected with SARS-CoV-2 in March 2020. These sequences are then uploaded to the international GISAID database. This allows countries to understand what is happening internationally and to take action to help mitigate transmission across borders, as well as to isolate and respond to new variants.

New variants are the most serious risk to global recovery from the pandemic, particularly those which have characteristics that make them more transmissible, cause more severe illness or are more likely to evade immune responses developed from vaccination or prior infection.

By understanding which variants are emerging and circulating in the UK and around the world, the UK is able to respond early and take steps to help keep people safe.

The UK's contribution to GISAID makes it the second largest contributing country and represents around a quarter of all global samples sequenced across the world to date.

The UK has sequenced samples from over 10% of all COVID-19 cases, higher than almost all the other major contributors to GISAID, enabling comprehensive surveillance of variants. The UK is also one of the fastest to upload sequences to GISAID – helping researchers around the world respond as fast as possible to new variants.

The UK is working with global partners to fill global sequencing capability gaps, either by helping other countries build their sequencing infrastructure or processing samples in the UK if there is no capability within a country.

By using the UK's world class scientific abilities, UKHSA plays a major role in protecting people from COVID-19 and future emerging health threats at home and abroad.

Sir Patrick Vallance, Government Chief Scientific Adviser, said:

The UK has world-leading genomic sequencing capabilities which have played a crucial role in our fight against COVID-19 by providing a better understanding of the virus.

Significant discoveries have been made as a result of genomic sequencing in the UK, and the feat of uploading a quarter of all SARS-CoV-2 sequences published globally to date is truly

remarkable.

Dr Ewan Harrison of the Wellcome Sanger Institute and COG-UK said:

Over the last 2 years a monumental effort by a broad consortium of UK scientists in academia, public health and the NHS has led to the development of the routine SARS-CoV-2 sequencing service in the UK that has enabled this milestone to be passed.

The importance and utility of whole genome sequencing for tracking and understanding pathogens is now abundantly clear. Exciting opportunities now lie ahead for the development of routine global genomic surveillance of pathogens to improve our understanding and management of infectious diseases and for future pandemic preparedness.

Minister for testing Maggie Throup said:

The UK is a global leader in surveillance and this milestone is a testament to the scientists and academics who are working round the clock to monitor COVID-19.

Sharing data and further developing our surveillance of potential variants is a priority as we learn to live with COVID-19. We're proudly working closely with partners including the World Health Organization (WHO) to exchange scientific expertise and improve surveillance around the world.

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## [UK candidates make it through to next round of European Space Agency's astronaut call](#)

Press release

The latest figures from the European Space Agency (ESA) show more than 160 applicants from the UK have made it through to the next round of their astronaut call.



Credit: ESA/NASA

The window to apply for ESA's astronaut vacancy opened on 31 March 2021 and closed 18 June. This is the first call for new astronauts in over 10 years and the first-time candidates with a physical disability had been invited to apply.

Of the 22,523 valid astronaut applications received by ESA, 2,000 of these were from the UK.

Following a comprehensive screening phase, 1,361 people were invited to phase two of ESA's astronaut selection. This is a full day of psychological performance testing at a facility in Europe. Of these, 166 were from the UK, comprising 89 men and 77 women.

The UK had the third highest number making it through to phase two of all the member states, behind only France, with 404, and Germany, with 194.

Sue Horne, Head of Space Exploration at the UK Space Agency, said:

It's exciting to see so many UK candidates making it through to the next phase of ESA's astronaut selection and the number shows the high calibre of our applications. Those who make it through the round of psychometric and psychological tests will be invited to further testing at the European Astronaut Centre in Germany.

The UK space sector continues to grow and, while being an astronaut is a dream for many people, there are a range of potential career paths out there to explore.

In total 530 women and 831 men have made it through to phase two, with at least three candidates from every Member State. In addition, 27 candidates who applied for the parastronaut vacancy have been invited to phase two.

Candidates who are successful at phase two will go on to participate in a set of psychological interviews and group tests ahead of medical testing. Those who successfully pass each of these selection stages will be invited to recruitment interviews. ESA's new class of astronauts and reserve astronauts is expected to be announced in autumn 2022.

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