

New Attorney General appointed

The Prime Minister has appointed Victoria Prentis as Attorney General of England and Wales and Advocate General for Northern Ireland.

The Attorney General will oversee the work of the Law Officers Departments which include the Crown Prosecution Service and Serious Fraud Office, and the Government Legal Department and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate.

The Attorney General also carries out a number of functions in the public interest, such as considering unduly lenient sentences, and taking action when there has been a contempt of court. These functions are carried out independently of their role as a Government minister.

Commenting on her appointment, Attorney General Victoria Prentis said:

I am honoured to be appointed as Attorney General for England and Wales and look forward to working with my officials and with the many excellent professionals across the Law Officers' Departments. I am delighted to be returning to the law, having spent seventeen years as a government lawyer before being elected to Parliament.

I want to thank my predecessor Rt Hon Michael Ellis KC MP who twice served in the role and has left me with such a strong record to build upon.

One of my first priorities is to continue the government's work in rebuilding confidence in our justice system, particularly with victims.

I am proud to be joining the Attorney General's Office, a unique and historic government department that makes law and politics work together at the heart of the UK constitution.

Victoria Prentis' biography:

Victoria Prentis was appointed Attorney General on 25 October 2022. Victoria was previously Minister of State at the Department for Work and Pensions from 7 September 2022 to 25 October 2022. Her responsibilities included the labour market and Universal Credit. Previous to that she served as Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs from 16 September 2021 to 7 September 2022, covering fisheries, farming and food.

Before that, she was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department

for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs from 14 February 2020 to 15 September 2021.

She was elected as the Conservative MP for Banbury in May 2015.

Political career

Victoria served on the Justice Select Committee from 2015 to 2019, the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments from 2015 to 2017, and as a lay member on the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art from 2019.

Victoria also served as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Attorney General from 2019 to 2020, to the Leader of the House of Commons from 2017 to 2019, and to Junior Ministers at the Department for Transport from 2016 to 2017.

Career outside politics

Victoria was called to the bar in 1995. For seventeen years Victoria was a lawyer for the Treasury Solicitors' Department and headed up the government's Justice and Security team. Her responsibilities included providing advice on military, prisons and national security matters and representing the government in court.

Visitors from Thailand

News story

Politicians and government officials from Thailand have visited GAD as part of research to accompany a pension reform plan in their country.



Senior politicians and government officials from Thailand have visited the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) to research how an actuarial function can operate within government.

The delegation was made up of more than 20 people. It included the Minister of Labour, the chairs of 2 parliamentary committees and senior officials.

Fact finding visit

The visit was part of research to accompany a pension reform plan. At present Thailand does not have a single department to produce actuarial analysis for the government. Instead, each agency has its own in-house unit to produce reports and analysis.

As part of a 4-year project, the Thai government is considering the creation of an actuarial unit to produce analysis and inputs to policy making and reforms.

GAD's expertise

During the visit, the officials met both the Government Actuary and Deputy Government Actuary. They heard about GAD's historic origins, reporting lines, operating approach and main areas of expertise.

The visiting delegation also learned about GAD's working relationship with other organisations such as HM Treasury, the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs.

Actuaries from GAD shared information about different projects. These included GAD's work on the National Insurance Fund and the State Pension Age review.

Decorative plaque from the Thai delegation, marking their visit to GAD.

The Deputy Government Actuary Matt Gurden said: "We were really pleased to have been given the opportunity to host this key event for such an influential group of people.

"The breadth and depth of expertise in GAD means we can offer a range of actuarial services to government and the public sector.

"We hope sharing our extensive experience will be of value to the Thai government in its plans for an actuarial unit."

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Russian and regime intransigence

continues to preclude progress in Syria

Thank you President, and let me thank Special Envoy Pedersen and Ms Ghelani for their briefing today. I'd like to make three points.

First, the United Kingdom supports the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen to progress the implementation of 2254 through the Step for Step initiative. We welcome the news of his recent discussions in New York, Damascus and elsewhere. But Russian and regime intransigence continues to preclude progress and we call for their participation in good faith. We urge them to de-politicise the Constitutional Committee. We are clear that the Committee should reconvene in Geneva, as agreed, and begin to focus fully on substance rather than process.

Second, the United Kingdom is appalled by the human rights situation in Syria. Tens of thousands of Syrians have been forcibly disappeared, detained and tortured since the beginning of the conflict. Including in the notorious Sednaya prison, where as civil society have told us repeatedly, detainees are tortured and killed on a daily basis.

We strongly condemn these violations. We call for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2254, which includes release of the arbitrarily detained along with a nationwide ceasefire; unhindered aid access; conditions for safe voluntary and dignified refugee return and free and fair elections pursuant to a new constitution.

The UK is closely monitoring the escalation of hostilities in north west Syria. It is essential that all parties to the conflict respect the ceasefire.

Finally, President, as we've heard, the spreading cholera outbreak highlights the frankly horrifying humanitarian context, and the need for a sustained response by the humanitarian community. The United Nations is stepping up its cross-line delivery where possible.

But cross-border remains a vital lifeline for many in the north west. We look forward to this Council renewing the cross-border mandate in January, ensuring aid for millions of Syrians during winter months.

Thank you.

Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited: information for creditors and interested parties

On 25 October 2022, winding-up orders were made against Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited and the court appointed the Official Receiver, Gareth Jonathan Allen, as Liquidator.

Following an application made by the Official Receiver, the court has also appointed Alan Hudson and Joanne Robinson of Ernst & Young LLP as Special Managers of the companies. The Special Managers have been appointed to assist the Official Receiver with the liquidations.

The Official Receiver will wind-down the affairs of Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited in an orderly manner in accordance with his statutory duties. The Official Receiver also has a duty to investigate the cause of the companies' insolvency and the conduct of current and former directors.

Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited provide specialist cloud-based services to UK public sector and private sector organisations. The Official Receiver, with the assistance of the Special Managers, is maintaining operations whilst the liquidation strategy is being developed. The strategy will consider the provision of services, transition of contracts and whether a sale is viable.

Information for customers and suppliers

If you are a customer of Virtual Infrastructure Limited and UKCloud Limited, please contact the Special Managers via email: ukcloudcustomers@uk.ey.com.

If you are a supplier of Virtual Infrastructure Limited and UKCloud Limited, please contact the Special Managers via email: ukcloudsuppliers@uk.ey.com.

Information for employees

If you were an employee of Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited or UKCloud Limited, and were dismissed following the winding up order, the information in this section provides advice about claiming money you're owed and where you can seek support.

Who is eligible?

You can apply to the Insolvency Service for redundancy and other payments if:

- you worked for these companies under an [employment contract](#)
- you live in England, Scotland or Wales.

How to apply

The Official Receiver will give you details about how to apply and will also give you a case reference number (for example CN12345678).

Once you have this information you can [apply online](#).

What you can apply for

What you can apply for depends on your circumstances. The Insolvency Service can pay:

- money you're owed by Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited, for example unpaid wages, overtime and commission
- redundancy pay: if you've worked for Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited or UKCloud Limited for at least 2 years
- pro rata holiday pay (known as 'holiday pay accrued'): the leave you were entitled to take between the start of your leave year and the date you were made redundant
- holiday pay taken (HPT): if Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited or UKCloud Limited hasn't paid you for annual leave you took before liquidation
- statutory notice pay: if you've worked for Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited or UKCloud Limited for at least 1 month

There are caps on what we can pay you for each type of claim. [Find out how much we can pay you](#).

Paying your claim

The Insolvency Service's Redundancy Payments Service aims to make payments for redundancy pay and related claims within 6 weeks of receiving your completed application, and information from the insolvency practitioner.

Find more information about [what we can pay](#).

Please avoid contacting The Insolvency Service about how to claim or to check the status of your application. This will help deal with everyone's application as quickly as possible.

Information for creditors

You will need to [register as a creditor](#) in the liquidation if:

- you have not been paid for goods or services you've supplied to Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited (in liquidation)
- you have paid Virtual Infrastructure Group Limited and UKCloud Limited (in liquidation) for goods or services that you have not received

To register as a creditor you will need to complete a [Proof of Debt form](#) which you should then email to VIG.Liquidator@Insolvency.gov.uk.

Once you have registered and the Official Receiver receives your [Proof of](#)

[Debt form](#) he will add you to the list of creditors and include you on future correspondence about the case.

WTO Trade Policy Review of Barbados: UK statement

Chair, let me warmly welcome the Barbados delegation, led by the Minister of State the Honourable Sandra Husbands to their 4th Trade Policy Review. We are grateful to the Government of Barbados and to the WTO Secretariat for their Reports, and to our most distinguished Chair and Discussant, the Ambassador of Maldives, for kindly facilitating this Review with their insights.

Barbados's Trade Policy Review (TPR) Report and its own policy statement describe a relatively small and open economy, vulnerable to exogenous shocks and facing economic challenges with a large current account deficit and public debt, but committed to an open trade policy as a key plank of its economic strategy. We commend that commitment to trade as a driver for sustainable growth. In our Advance Written Questions, the UK was keen to understand developments in areas including customs administration, tariffs, intellectual property, the harmonisation of standards, and the manufacturing sector. We thank Barbados for their helpful responses.

The dramatic effects of climate change, and damage wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, are recurrent features in TPRs at the moment. We are particularly cognisant of the disproportionate impact felt by Small Island Developing States and other small and vulnerable economies. Let me pay tribute to Barbados for its efforts to champion these perspectives at the WTO, as they have also done so effectively elsewhere, including in the Commonwealth and at COP26 in Glasgow.

Turning to Barbados's trade profile, the UK agrees wholeheartedly with the Government's own assessment that growth and development are predicated on an openness to the global community, in which free trade plays an integral part. We were pleased to note Barbados's commitments in its policy statement to liberalised international trade and its aversion to trade barriers, despite the additional economic stresses caused by a global pandemic, the volcanic eruption, and significant climate events.

Additionally, prudent fiscal solutions implemented since 2018 (such as the BERT Plan) have demonstrated the effectiveness of responses by the Barbadian Government. The fall in Barbados's current account deficit from over 9% of GDP in 2014 to under 3% in 2019 illustrates the impressive effectiveness of Barbados' fiscal consolidation path response.

We also note the concerted strategic efforts made by Barbados to increase linkages with African continental markets and the Middle East. These

demonstrate Barbados's commitment to diversifying its economy and to targeting opportunities for export-driven growth.

Chair, the threat of climate change to livelihoods and prosperity throughout the world – (which we were discussing here just yesterday in our agriculture retreat) – obliges us all to put the environment at the heart of our economic policies. So we commend Barbados's National Energy Policy target to reach 100% renewable energy and carbon neutrality by 2030. We appreciated the clarifications within the Secretariat Report regarding both demand and supply-side solutions. The outlined two-pronged attack – of increasing the adoption of energy efficient technologies and promoting energy conservation, and diversifying sources of energy, respectively – suggests a reassuringly holistic strategy.

Let me pay tribute to the leadership role that Barbados plays, not only in this organisation, but across multilateral Geneva. In particular, let me reiterate our pleasure that Barbados ratified the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) back in January 2018 and encourage Barbados's ongoing progress in implementing the TFA. We note, as Barbados and others have acknowledged, that Barbados has various outstanding WTO notifications. We welcome the assurance that the Minister gave this morning. We are sympathetic and receptive to Members' individual pressures and we encourage Barbados and other Members in similar circumstances to consult with the WTO Secretariat and to utilise the resources already available. Notifications are a vital WTO transparency component, and their value is highly regarded both across the Membership and outside this organization. We want to make these tools workable and useful for delegations like Barbados, and effective for the Membership as a whole.

Finally, let me underline the healthy state of the long-standing and deep-rooted bilateral relationship between our two countries. At the economic heart of that modern relationship lies the UK-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement, which came into force in January 2021, ensuring continuity from the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement. The first meeting of that agreement's Trade & Development Committee took place in October last year. The meeting was an opportunity for parties to provide updates on relevant trade policy developments in the United Kingdom and in the Caribbean region, and to reaffirm their desire for a prompt ratification of the EPA by all parties.

The United Kingdom and CARIFORUM States discussed matters of joint interest including tariff liberalisation, trade in Goods & Services, and Geographical Indications. The parties noted with satisfaction that the EPA had secured continuity of a trading relationship worth almost three billion pounds in 2020 and expressed their desire to develop further sustainable and inclusive trade underpinned by the EPA.

And so, to conclude, Chair, we wish Barbados well in building on its trade-centred growth and development path as it recovers from the pandemic and confronts the challenges of climate change, and we thank our colleagues in Barbados for their engagement in this important transparency exercise. Let this be a successful and fruitful 4th Trade Policy Review.