

Businesses give back £1.3 billion in furlough cash

- New statistics show that businesses have returned £1.3 billion in furlough cash, with £300 million returned in the last three months.
- These repayments are coming in as more employees return to work and the economy recovers.
- The number of people on furlough has fallen to the lowest level since the start of the pandemic, with 340,000 people moving off the scheme in July alone.

Figures released today show that firms who have overclaimed or decided they no longer need payments received through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme handed back £300 million in the last three months.

In total, they have repaid £1.3 billion to HMRC since July 2020 through adjustments to claims and the voluntary disclosure service, which will continue into 2022.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

This Government stepped in to help when people needed it most, supporting nearly 12 million jobs through furlough. This worked, nearly 2 million fewer people are now expected to be out of work in the UK than previously feared.

Now with our recovery underway it is heartening to see that £1.3 billion in furlough grants have been returned as the economy recovers.

HMRC is also cracking down on those who have fraudulently claimed furlough through its 1,250-strong Taxpayer Protection Taskforce.

With businesses reopening and employment rising to near pre-pandemic levels thanks to the successful rollout of the vaccination programme and the Government's roadmap out of the pandemic, the number of people on furlough has fallen to a record low of 1.6 million. Around 340,000 people left the scheme in July, with more than a third aged between 18 and 34 – a clear sign the government's Plan for Jobs is working.

The furlough scheme has protected nearly 12 million jobs and supported more than 1.3 million businesses, with 910,000 jobs in Scotland protected, 470,000 jobs in Wales and 280,000 jobs in Northern Ireland, securing livelihoods in communities across the United Kingdom.

Furlough was the right thing to do at the height of the pandemic, when necessary health restrictions were in place – this way we were able to protect lives and livelihoods. As the economy reopened and businesses started

to trade again its right that employees can get back to work.

The government is doubling down on its Plan for Jobs as the UK economy rebounds – focusing our support on giving people the skills and opportunities they need to succeed in the jobs of tomorrow through schemes including Kickstart, Restart and apprenticeships.

Further information:

Customers can make a repayment online by card through [HMRC's online repayment service](#) or by bank transfer.

The CJRS closes on 30 September. Employers need to make their September claims by 14 October.

[Coastal monitoring and historical coastal change workshops](#)

News story

Join upcoming workshops on coastal monitoring techniques and technologies that are available to document historical coastal change



Coastal change. Crown Copyright.

As part of the Defra-funded [Coastal Monitoring and Historical Coastal Change](#) project, the British Geological Survey (BGS) are looking for participants to share their knowledge in a series of workshops.

The first, taking place on 12 October 2021, aims to identify techniques for deriving historical coastal change in different coastal environments. There will also be a discussion around user requirement for coastal change data.

The second, taking place on 2 December 2021, will be focused on exploring

different historical coastal mapping technologies, with the aim of helping BGS develop a ranking system.

The goal of this project is to review and document historical coastal change along the English and Welsh coastlines over the last 100 years, to help better inform future coastal management and decision making.

If you're interested, you can [register](#) your availability to participate in the workshops, and BGS will be in touch.

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[Foreign Secretary meeting with Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State, 20 September](#)

Press release

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss met US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during the United Nations General Assembly in New York.



A Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office spokesperson said:

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed the close partnership between the UK and the USA and their shared ambitions to build a stronger economic and security alliance between the two countries.

As two leading free enterprise democracies they recognised the shared common ground between the UK and USA on a wide range of areas including the Indo-Pacific and regional security there and the need to build back better from the Covid pandemic.

They discussed how they could use the Build Back Better World initiative to provide developing countries with reliable investment to meet their infrastructure needs in a sustainable way.

They welcomed the recently agreed Aukus partnership on security in the Indo-Pacific region.

And they discussed the benefits to both countries of the USA decision to lift travel restrictions on fully vaccinated travellers from the UK from November.

On Iran, they agreed on the need for an immediate release of all arbitrarily detained British and American nationals and on the need for Iran to return to negotiations on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in Vienna.

They discussed the ongoing situation in Afghanistan and recognised the need for the international community to deliver a coordinated response to the developing humanitarian crisis and an agreement on how to engage with the Taliban.

The Foreign Secretary also raised the case of Harry Dunn and the need to make progress on delivering justice for Harry's family.

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Government celebrates trade success of UK creative industries with new export help announcements

The creative industries will benefit from government support thanks to a new package of measures announced at an event hosted by the Department for International Trade (DIT) yesterday (Monday 20th September).

The event brought together business leaders from the UK's creative industries – TV and Film, Music, Publishing, Fashion, Gaming, Advertising, and Immersive Technology – to celebrate their export success and encourage more businesses in these fields to take advantage of the opportunities to sell their world class goods and services globally.

It is part of DIT's new "Made in Britain, Sold to the World" campaign, that provides practical export help and encourages the nation to take pride in our exporters.

The package of support announced includes £330,000 worth of funding for the music industry via the Music Export Growth Scheme (MEGS) in joint partnership with DCMS and the International Showcase Fund (ISF).

The event also saw the launch of our new exporting research for the museum sector, being published to help UK suppliers of museum-related products export to new markets. Alongside this, Chief Executive of the British Fashion Council, Caroline Rush, has been appointed as the new Chair to head up the Creative Industries Trade and Investment Board (CITIB).

From fashion to film, the UK is home to some of the world's leading creative talent, exporting £37.9 billion in 2019. With global demand increasing, our creative industries are one of the UK's export success stories.

Minister for Exports Mike Freer said:

The UK's creative industries are a force to be reckoned with. We create, write, produce and code amazing products, and sell them to the world. The nation can be proud of our creative industries exporters, and the jobs they create in our economy.

Along with the trade deals we're striking, we are committed to helping our creative businesses fulfil their potential on the world stage, fuelling sustainable growth for British businesses and creating new jobs in every region and nation of the UK.

The UK is the second largest exporter of music in the world and exports reached a record high last year, up 6% to £19.7m compared to 2019. The announcement will support artists like The Orielles who have benefited from government funding.

Esmé Dee Hand-Halford, member of The Orielles said:

MEGS turned our dream of performing in America into a reality. As a band on an indie label in the UK, we could never have funded this trip ourselves.

MEGS removed the stress of funding an expensive US tour, so we could concentrate on playing to new audiences internationally. We are very grateful to the scheme to enable independent acts such as ourselves, and giving musicians the opportunity, to promote their music overseas".

The announcement complements the wide range of export support provided to businesses at [great.gov.uk](https://www.great.gov.uk). Exports generated by creative industries' services were worth £37.9 billion in 2019 – nearly 12 % of total UK service exports.

Demand internationally is growing for UK products, particularly in Asia with

the region set to be home to the 66% of the global middle classes by 2030, hungry for high quality British goods and services.

DIT has an array of existing support for budding exporters, who supported 6.5 million jobs across the UK in 2016. DIT is developing an ambitious cross-government Export Strategy to drive an economic recovery and level up the entire country, which will be published later this year.

Exports contribute billions into the UK economy, supporting millions of jobs and providing sustainable growth for thousands of businesses.

[Consultation to protect plants from harmful pests and diseases](#)

Keen gardeners, nursery owners, farmers, landowners and environmental groups are all being encouraged to help shape the country's future plant biosecurity strategy, as a 10-week consultation is launched today (Tuesday 21 September) to protect the country from the threat of plant pests and diseases.

Healthy plants are essential for both the environment and the economy. In the UK, 80% of the food we eat comes from plants, they produce 98% of the oxygen we breathe and the value that our plants and trees provide to society each year is estimated at £10.5 billion.

Great Britain already has some of the most robust biosecurity measures in the world but our approach is kept under constant review to ensure these standards are maintained and plants are protected as we face emerging challenges.

Rising temperatures increase the risk that non-native pests and diseases, which were previously unable to survive in the UK, will spread across parts of the country. Disease outbreaks can be hugely costly to businesses, government and the wider economy.

Plant diseases like Xylella – a disease that affects over 560 different plant species and devastated olive trees in Europe – have the potential to cost the UK taxpayer millions of pounds a year if they arrived on our shores.

The joint Defra, Scottish and Welsh Government consultation sets out a new vision for plant health and potential measures to strengthen the existing biosecurity regime. Specifically, views are sought on:

- the effectiveness of our current plant and tree health regulations;
- ways industry and the Government can work together to support a biosecure plant supply chain and ensures the safe sourcing of planting stock;

- how we enhance the nation's technical capability, using innovative science and technology to keep pace with emerging threats and ensure preparedness for the future; and
- tougher action to protect against biosecurity risks associated with trees susceptible to high-risk pests and diseases.

Launching the consultation from RHS Chelsea Flower Show, Minister for Biosecurity Lord Benyon said:

The threat from plant pests and diseases is significant and growing due to globalisation and climate change. The risks to food production and our precious landscapes, trees, parks and gardens are all too real.

We already have some of the highest biosecurity standards in Europe but as we look to build back greener from the pandemic, we want to consider any further safeguards needed to protect our natural world. That's why we're asking for views from all sectors, including horticulture, forestry and farming, to help us shape our future biosecurity strategy and ensure our trees and plants are protected for future generations.

UK Chief Plant Health Officer Nicola Spence said:

We take the nation's biosecurity very seriously and currently have some of the strongest measures in Europe. This consultation provides an opportunity for us to build on our current regulations and ensure our high plant health and biosecurity standards are maintained.

I urge everyone working in the sector and the public to respond to this consultation so we can uphold our biosecurity standards for future generations.

Wales' Minister for Climate Change, Julie James said:

The consultation reflects our shared ambitions for a strengthened biosecurity regime, and is clear on the need to work in partnership to achieve our aims.

Plant Biosecurity is hugely important to address threats from pests and diseases and this consultation is an opportunity for all to inform our future approach to plant health.

Scotland's Minister for Environment and Land Reform Màiri McAllan said:

Plants underpin our environment, rural industries, wellbeing and

biodiversity. With an ever increasing number of plant health threats, we need to work collaboratively to effectively shape our policies and safeguard against biosecurity risks in the years ahead. I would therefore encourage all stakeholders to contribute to that process by responding to this consultation.

Today's announcement coincides with the Chelsea Flower Show. This year's RHS Show shines a spotlight on the importance of protecting biodiversity and our planet with the COP26 garden, ahead of the UK's Presidency at the climate change summit this November.

This consultation supports Defra's campaign – [Plant for Our Planet](#) – which aims to inspire the nation to get planting, helping us to build back greener and step up our efforts to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss. Our plants have a crucial role to play in fighting climate change, providing a home for nature, and bring numerous environmental, economic, social and wellbeing benefits.

The new strategy will align with forthcoming GB Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy, ensuring a joined-up approach to the restoration and improvement of the environment as set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan where we have committed to improving biosecurity.

The consultation closes on 30 November 2021 and can be found [here](#).