

UK Government appoints Special Envoy to the US on Northern Ireland

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis MP has today announced the appointment of a Special Envoy to the United States on Northern Ireland.

Trevor Ringland MBE will be the first Special Envoy to the United States on Northern Ireland and will be responsible for promoting Northern Ireland interests across the US – in the Administration, Congress and within the Irish American community.

The creation of this new post reflects the UK Government's enduring commitment to the peace, prosperity and stability of Northern Ireland. It will support the Government's vision for Northern Ireland, built on its promotion as an excellent place to live, work and do business.

Through this new appointment the Government will seek to foster greater dialogue with key US stakeholders on the causes that matter to Northern Ireland and its people, drive inward investment into Northern Ireland and build on the ongoing partnership between the UK and US, which remains vital to safeguarding Northern Ireland's stability and prosperity.

As Special Envoy, Mr Ringland will also be tasked to work with US firms and investors with an interest in Northern Ireland to build on established links and support Northern Ireland's long term economic development.

Mr Ringland is a solicitor, former Rugby international and committed community activist. He will draw on his extensive knowledge of Northern Ireland's society and political context to support his work in the role, utilising his connections across civic society and the private sector.

He will report to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Prime Minister.

Welcoming Mr Ringland's appointment, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis MP, said:

"I am delighted that Trevor has accepted my invitation to take up this position to represent the UK Government in Northern Ireland, working to support its best interests in the United States.

"This is an exciting new appointment and recognises Northern Ireland's unique relationship with the United States and its people. I look forward to working with Trevor to harness all the opportunities that lie ahead."

Mr Ringland said:

"I am honoured to take up this role on behalf of the UK Government. I very much look forward to supporting the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

in ensuring the UK Government's policies on Northern Ireland are well represented to US audiences and playing my part in forging deeper political, social and economic ties between our two countries."

Notes to Editors

- Trevor Maxwell Ringland MBE is a solicitor and former rugby player.
- Mr Ringland is a full-time solicitor for Macaulay and Ritchie. He is also active with the PeacePlayers International, an organisation devoted to promoting inter-religious unity in Belfast through sport.
- In rugby, Mr Ringland made 31 competitive appearances for Ireland. He also represented Ulster and Ballymena.
- In 1983, he toured New Zealand with the British and Irish Lions. Since retirement he has coached at Ballymena and been a committee member of the Irish Rugby Football Union.
- Mr Ringland was awarded an MBE for services to the community in Northern Ireland in the New Year Honours 2009.
- This is an unsalaried position – however, an allowance will be provided to cover necessary expenses.

[Major testing drive ahead of return to schools next week](#)

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson is urging all secondary school and college students and their families to take a coronavirus test before returning to the classroom next week (7 June) following the half term break.

A major testing programme has been in place for students since schools and colleges returned in March to identify asymptomatic cases and isolate them as quickly as possible, helping to keep classrooms open.

Figures published earlier this week show more than 50 million rapid coronavirus tests have now been conducted by students and staff at schools and colleges across England since 04 January.

Building regular twice-weekly testing into routines has been critical in

reaching this milestone number of tests, and is testament to the dedication of students and staff to keep the virus out of schools and colleges.

Rapid testing continues to help find the one in three people with Covid-19 who show no symptoms, allowing them to isolate rather than unknowingly spread the virus, preventing outbreaks from taking hold.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

A year ago it was unimaginable to suggest that a testing programme of this scale and impact could be delivered at the speed we have seen, and I am hugely grateful to the families, students and all those working in education for their role in making it happen.

Asymptomatic testing helps break chains of transmission by taking people who are infectious but don't know it out of circulation.

As the half term comes to an end, take a covid test before going back to the classroom.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

Rapid testing has underpinned the entire reopening of schools and it's been a remarkable success that is testament to the herculean efforts of teachers, children and parents playing their part by making a test part of their everyday lives.

Around one in three people who have COVID-19 experience no symptoms and could go under the radar without regular testing. By getting tested multiple times a weeks, children have shown us that it is possible to keep the things we all love open by quickly identifying outbreaks and taking decisive action.

As parents gear up to return their children to the classroom tomorrow, I'd urge them all to carry on doing their bit by keeping calm and carrying on testing during the term ahead.

Covid-related pupil absence has remained consistently low since the start of the summer term, with only approximately 1% of pupils absent from state-funded schools for covid-related reasons each day since 21 April.

Surge testing is also available in areas of high prevalence of the virus or variants of concern, including on-site testing in selected schools and colleges to provide an additional boost to efforts to keep the virus under control across the country.

Secondary schools and colleges continue to provide packs of tests to their students so they can take two tests a week. Primary schools are also providing packs to their staff.

Everyone is encouraged to test twice a week, with one of the two tests at the weekend to catch cases before starting the new school week. Testing before returning to school after the half-term break will be particularly important after mixing with different groups over the break.

Anyone not working from home is encouraged to follow a similar routine.

With national rates of the virus now much lower than they were, positive cases identified by rapid testing are confirmed with a PCR test, meaning nobody has to worry about isolating unnecessarily following a positive rapid test result.

ENDS

Over 40 million people receive first dose of COVID-19 vaccine in UK

- 27 million people have received both doses – the strongest possible protection
- public urged to come forward for vaccines to help protect against the threat of new variants

Over 40 million people in the UK have received their first dose of a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine, the [latest figures](#) show today, as the UK's vaccination programme continues at pace.

Health services across the UK have now administered a total of 67,287,864 vaccines between 8 December and 5 June, including 40,124,229 people with first doses 76.2% and 27,160,635 people with both doses 51.6% ensuring they have the strongest possible protection against COVID-19 from a second dose.

A recent study by Public Health England (PHE) shows that 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant first identified in India. Vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic disease from the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant is similar after 2 doses compared to the B.1.1.7 (Alpha) variant dominant in the UK, and we expect to see even higher levels of effectiveness against hospitalisation and death.

The government met its target of offering a vaccine to the most vulnerable by 15 April and remains on track to offer a first dose to all adults by the end of July. NHS England has extended the offer of a vaccine to everyone over the age of 30.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

It is an astonishing achievement to deliver over 40 million first

doses in just 6 months. In all 4 corners of the UK, people are stepping up when their time comes to protect themselves and the people around them.

It seems with every day we pass another major milestone on the road back to recovery. Over three-quarters of adults have received a first dose and over half of adults have now been vaccinated with the life-saving second dose.

I pay tribute to the tireless work of the NHS and armed forces in building this momentum – but our work is not yet done. I encourage everyone who is eligible to join the millions who have the fullest possible protection from this virus by getting their jab when the time comes.

Last week, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) announced that Janssen's COVID-19 vaccine was authorised for use in the UK. It is expected doses will become available later this year. The single-dose vaccine was shown to be 67% effective overall in preventing COVID-19 infection and 85% effective in preventing severe disease or hospitalisation.

To ensure people have the strongest possible protection against COVID-19, appointments for second doses have been brought forward from 12 to 8 weeks for the remaining people in the top 9 priority groups who have yet to receive both doses.

The move follows updated advice from the independent experts at the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which has considered the latest available evidence and has recommended reducing the dosing interval to counter the threat of new variants of concern.

The government and its scientific experts are monitoring the evolving situation and rates of variants closely, and will not hesitate to take additional action as necessary.

Vaccines Minister, Nadhim Zahawi said:

Our vaccination programme, the biggest and most successful in NHS history, has now delivered over 40 million first doses into arms – a fantastic achievement.

I am incredibly proud of everyone involved who have worked tirelessly to help us reach milestone after milestone. It is time to redouble our efforts on the second dose, to ensure everyone has maximum protection.

The offer is open to everyone over the age of 30, so when you get the call, get the jab. It could save your life and protect your loved ones.

Vaccinated people are far less likely to get COVID-19 with symptoms. Vaccinated people are even more unlikely to get serious COVID-19, to be admitted to hospital, or to die from it and there is growing evidence that vaccinated people are less likely to pass the virus to others.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

It's fantastic for the vaccine programme to have achieved 3 such important and significant milestones in just one week, and proves we are heading in the right direction.

The UK government is supplying vaccines for people in all parts of the United Kingdom and today's news that 40 million people have now had their first dose underlines the scheme's success. It's heartening to see that so many are doing the right thing and getting their jab when eligible.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

"Today's latest milestone highlights the magnificent work being undertaken by all those delivering the largest and most successful vaccination programme in UK history.

"We must continue to build momentum in our effort to save lives and ensure that everyone receives maximum protection. I encourage everyone to continue to do the responsible thing, help to protect loved ones and to get their jabs as soon as they can."

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said:

The rapid pace of our vaccine programme has enabled us to deliver over 40 million first doses, this is an astonishing pace and I thank each of our frontline workers for the success of the rollout.

Vaccines are our sure way out of this pandemic, with the UK government supporting each of the nations to ensure the public is vaccinated as quickly as possible. I urge you all to get the jab, as soon as you're eligible.

Data from PHE's real-world study shows the vaccines are already having a significant impact in the UK, reducing hospitalisations and deaths, saving

more than 13,200 lives and preventing 39,700 hospitalisations in England.

PHE analysis also shows that individuals who receive a single dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine have approximately 80% lower risk of death against the B.1.1.7 (Alpha) coronavirus variant originating in Kent and a second dose of the vaccine can provide 85 to 90% protection against symptomatic disease. Protection against death from the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine rises from approximately 80% after one dose to 97% after 2 doses against the B.1.1.7 (Alpha) variant.

Data published by YouGov shows the UK continues to top the list of nations where people are willing to have a COVID-19 vaccine or have already been vaccinated.

ONS data published on 6 May found that more than 9 in 10 (93%) adults reported positive sentiment towards the vaccine.

Approved vaccines are available from thousands of NHS vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England and vaccinations are taking place at sites including mosques, community centres and football stadiums.

[Home Secretary visits Ghana and the Netherlands](#)

News story

As part of a three-day visit, Home Secretary Priti Patel travelled to Ghana and the Netherlands.



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She met counterparts to discuss shared security challenges, tackling illegal

migration, and serious and organised crime.

In Ghana, the Home Secretary met President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and Ghana's Minister for National Security Albert Kan-Dapaah co-hosting the first UK-Ghana security dialogue.

In the Netherlands, the Home Secretary held meetings with Migration Minister Ankie Broekers-Knol and Justice and Security Minister Ferdinand Grapperhaus, discussing the shared challenges of illegal migration, countering terrorism, and serious and organised crime.

The Home Secretary was also briefed on some of the operational successes led by the National Crime Agency and their Dutch counterparts and travelled to the Hook of Holland port to see first-hand the work UK and Dutch law enforcement do there.

Home Secretary Priti Patel added:

The challenges of illegal migration and serious organised crime, and the devastating effects it has on our all countries, are shared between the UK, Ghana and Netherlands.

Only by all working together can we put an end to this criminal activity and ensure vulnerable people are protected, drugs and weapons are kept off our streets, and ultimately our citizens are safer.

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G7 Finance Ministers Agree Historic Global Tax Agreement

- G7 Finance ministers strike seismic agreement on global tax reform that will mean the largest multinational tech giants will pay their fair share of tax in the countries in which they operate.
- Following two-days of talks chaired by Chancellor Rishi Sunak in London, counterparts agree to reforms which will see multinationals paying tax in the countries where they do business;
- As part of landmark deal, finance ministers also agree to the principle of a global minimum rate that ensures multinationals pay tax of at least 15% in each country they operate;
- Nations also agree to follow UK lead in making climate reporting mandatory, and agree measures to crack down on the proceeds of environmental crimes.

Chairing the G7 Finance Ministers meeting in London, Rishi Sunak rallied his counterparts to work together to tackle the tax challenges that arise from the global digital economy.

Following years of discussions, finance ministers agreed to reforms which will see multinationals pay their fair share of tax in the countries they do business.

They also agreed to the principle of a global minimum rate that ensures multinationals pay tax of at least 15% in each country they operate in.

Ensuring markets play their part in the transition to net zero, the group also followed the UK's lead by giving a commitment to make it mandatory for firms to report the climate impact of their investment decisions – and concrete steps to crack down on environmental criminals.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak said:

These seismic tax reforms are something the UK has been pushing for and a huge prize for the British taxpayer – creating a fairer tax system fit for the 21st century.

This is a truly historic agreement and I'm proud the G7 has shown collective leadership at this crucial time in our global economic recovery.

Global Tax Reform:

During the meeting, Finance Ministers agreed the principles of an ambitious two Pillar global solution to tackle the tax challenges arising from an increasingly globalised and digital global economy.

Under Pillar One of this historic agreement, the largest and most profitable multinationals will be required to pay tax in the countries where they operate – and not just where they have their headquarters.

The rules would apply to global firms with at least a 10% profit margin – and would see 20% of any profit above the 10% margin reallocated and then subjected to tax in the countries they operate.

The fairer system will mean the UK will raise more tax revenue from large multinationals and help pay for public services here in the UK.

Under Pillar Two, the G7 also agreed to the principle of at least 15% global minimum corporation tax operated on a country by country basis, creating a more level playing field for UK firms and cracking down on tax avoidance.

Discussions on the two Pillars have been ongoing for many years – with the Chancellor making securing a global agreement a key priority of the UK's G7 Presidency. The agreement will now be discussed in further detail at the G20 Financial Ministers & Central Bank Governors meeting in July.

Improving climate disclosures:

Finance Ministers also accelerated action on environmental issues, following in the UK's footsteps by committing for the first time to properly embed climate change and biodiversity loss considerations into economic and financial decision-making.

Six years since the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) was created, the UK was instrumental in getting G7 countries to move towards making climate disclosures mandatory across their respective economies. It comes just over six months after the UK led the way by being the first country in the world to commit to do so in November 2020.

This is a major step towards ensuring the global financial system plays its part transition to net zero, as investors better understand how firms are managing climate risks and can allocate finance accordingly.

A coordinated G7 approach is crucial to avoid inconsistent information across markets and extra red tape, so the Finance Ministers also backed work by the International Financial Reporting Standards Foundation to develop a baseline global standard for high-quality, granular sustainability reporting, built from the TCFD framework and work of sustainability standard-setters.

Supporting nature and tackling environmental crime:

In support of the UK's work to foster a nature-positive economy, the Finance Ministers welcomed the imminent launch of a taskforce on nature-related financial disclosures – to mirror the TCFD – and agreed to crack down on the proceeds of environmental crimes by introducing and strengthening central company beneficial ownership registries. The UK was one of the first countries in the world to introduce a public beneficial ownership registry in 2016.

Making beneficial ownership public through these registries help law enforcement trace ill-gotten gains that are laundered through complex company structures, identify who ultimately owns or controls the company and bring the criminals to justice. And the increased transparency will also protect the UK and the rest of the G7 from other criminal threats – like corruption, fraud and terrorist financing.

Support for vulnerable countries:

The G7 also committed to continue supporting the poorest and most vulnerable countries as they address health and economic challenges associated with COVID. Building on their milestone backing of \$650bn general allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) earlier this year, Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors called for swift implementation by the end of August.

G7 countries also agreed to actively consider voluntarily channelling a proportion of their allocated SDRs to support further health needs, including vaccinations and help enable greener, more robust economic recoveries in the most affected countries.

Tackling debt vulnerabilities and promoting debt transparency is essential in unlocking sustainable and inclusive growth in developing countries. The G7 also committed to publishing the detail of new lending on a loan-by-loan basis and hope the G7 leading the way on debt transparency will pave the way for G20 nations and private sector creditors to do the same.

The G7 also welcomed the World Bank's efforts on global health and vaccines, and urged them to use their financial firepower to help poor countries obtain vaccines, including through COVAX. The G7 also called on the IMF to ramp up its efforts to finance vaccines, and agreed that private sector, including the pharmaceutical industry, to play their parts more too.

In recognition of need to continue learning lessons from Covid-19, and being prepared for future pandemics, Finance Ministers also agreed to develop new proposals to unlock the market incentives for producing antibiotics to prevent anti-microbial resistance. Finance Ministers agreed that they must act now to secure the health and economic prosperity of citizens across the G7 and that of future generations.

Further information:

- You can read [the communiqué](#) online.
- The G7 group agreed on the need for appropriate coordination between Digital Service Taxes and the new Pillar One rules. The Chancellor has reaffirmed his commitment to remove the UK DST once a Pillar One solution is in place. It is intended to serve as a temporary solution, and is a fair, proportionate, non-discriminatory tax that ensures that digital businesses pay UK tax that reflects the value they derive from UK users.
- An SDR is an asset issued by the IMF to boost members' reserves and provide liquidity for vulnerable countries.
- Photographs of the meeting can be found on [HM Treasury's Flickr page](#).
- To mark the commitment on TCFDs, trees will be planted in the National Forest, with eight species of trees representing each of the G7 countries plus the EU delegation and include a Japanese Red Cedar and a Wellingtonia amongst others.
- The G7 comprises of the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States and the EU. The heads of the IMF, World Bank Group, OECD and FSB.