

# CMA consults on new internal market role

The UK Internal Market Act establishes the independent OIM within the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The OIM's mandate is to support the effective operation of the UK internal market using economic and technical expertise. Through a set of advisory, monitoring and reporting functions, it will assist the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government to manage the potential evolution of different regulatory approaches in a way which protects the effective operation of the internal market.

The OIM will produce annual and 5-yearly monitoring reports on the effective operation of the internal market, which it will lay before all 4 legislatures in the UK.

As part of this, the OIM will report on a range of areas, including:

The OIM will be able to conduct reviews of areas which are relevant to the effective operation of the internal market. All governments will also be able to request advice or a report from the OIM on the impact of a specific regulation on the UK internal market, or expected impact if the regulation is yet to come into effect.

Additionally, the OIM will develop an online tool to gather information from suppliers, producers and consumers on matters relating to the internal market.

The draft guidance provides an opportunity for interested stakeholders to comment on the analysis that the OIM expects to undertake and the procedures that the OIM will adopt. This includes how it expects to receive and manage requests for advice from national authorities and how it will prioritise work.

The OIM's work will assist governments in understanding how effectively companies are able to sell their products and services across the 4 nations of the UK, and the impact of regulation on this, including the impact on competition and consumer choice.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said: "The Office for the Internal Market will be a resource for all four Governments across the UK. We are determined that it will be even-handed in its approach and rigorous in its technical analysis."

[Rachel Merelie was recently announced as the Senior Director for the OIM](#) and is joined by team members based in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London.

The consultation on the draft guidance will run until 23 July 2021. More information can be found on the [consultation page](#).

1. The Market Access Principles aim to limit trade costs of differences in regulation, for both goods and services, by facilitating market access.

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## 'Votes for life' for British citizens living abroad

- British citizens who have moved abroad will be given 'votes for life' as the Government scraps the arbitrary 15-year limit on the voting rights.
- New measures announced today will also make it easier for overseas electors to remain registered to vote for longer.
- Together, these changes will empower more British citizens living overseas to participate in our democracy.

New measures announced in the Queen's Speech will make it easier for British citizens who have moved abroad to participate in our democracy.

Decisions made in the UK Parliament on foreign policy, defence, immigration, pensions and trade deals affect British citizens who live overseas. It is therefore right that they have a say in UK Parliamentary General Elections.

Today the Government is setting out further detail on plans to scrap the arbitrary rule that prevents British citizens from voting in General Elections if they have lived abroad for more than 15 years.

The changes, which will form part of the Elections Bill, will also include measures to enable overseas electors to stay registered to vote for longer, with an absent voting arrangement in place.

Minister of State for the Cabinet Office Lord True, said:

In an increasingly global and connected world, most British citizens living overseas retain deep ties to the United Kingdom. Many still have family here, have a history of hard work in the UK behind them, and some have even fought for our country.

These measures support our vision for a truly Global Britain, opening up our democracy to British citizens living overseas who deserve to have their voices heard in our Parliament, no matter where they choose to live.

Our proposals fulfil a manifesto commitment to deliver 'votes for life', extending the voting franchise for General Elections to all British citizens living overseas who have been previously registered or previously resident in the UK.

In addition, new rules will mean overseas electors can stay registered for longer, including with an absent voting arrangement in place, requiring them to renew their registration details once every three years, rather than annually.

Electors will be able to reapply for a postal vote or refresh their proxy vote at the same time as renewing their voter registration, streamlining the process and helping to ensure overseas electors have appropriate voting arrangements in place ahead of an election.

Those who are entitled to vote should always be able to exercise that right freely, securely and in an informed way. The Government's wider Elections Bill will also: improve access to voting for electors with disabilities; prevent foreign interference by hostile actors; tackle electoral fraud by post, proxy, in polling stations or through intimidation and undue influence; and increase transparency and accountability within our elections. We will make further announcements on its measures ahead of the Bill's introduction.

#### **Notes to editors:**

- Currently, to register as an overseas elector you must be a British citizen and have been registered to vote in UK Parliamentary Elections in the UK within the previous 15 years (or, in some cases, you may register if you were too young to have been registered before you left the UK).
- Overseas electors will only be entitled to register in respect of one UK address. We will also put in place clear rules regarding the address under which an overseas elector may register, while also ensuring that the individual continues to have a demonstrable connection to a UK address.
- Individuals will apply to register at the last address at which they were registered, or, if they were never registered, at the last address at which they were resident.
- Their last address can be demonstrated in a number of ways: By checking past copies of the electoral register where these are accessible, by checking other local data (eg council tax records) which the ERO has access to, through documentary evidence or, failing the above, an attestation from another registered elector, if none of the above are possible, the applicant will not be able to register.

- This approach maximises continuity with the existing registration system, which electors and administrators are familiar with.
- Overseas electors registered in Great Britain will continue to be able to vote by proxy, by post, or in person if they happen to be in their constituency on polling day.

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## [Students in England should still apply for student finance](#)

### News story

Derek Ross, SLC Executive Director of Operations tells new students that they can still apply for student finance even though the deadline has passed.



The deadline for new full-time undergraduate students in England to apply for student finance passed last Friday. As anticipated, we have seen an incredibly strong demand for our service with application levels reaching record highs. Our team are now hard at work processing applications to ensure that students who applied before the deadline have their funding in place when their studies begin.

There will be some applicants who may have missed the deadline and our advice is not to worry. They should still [apply online](#) now and if they are eligible, they will receive a basic funding package at the start of term. A top up payment will be made as soon as their full application is processed.

The significant rise in the number of applications received this year does present us with some challenges, particularly as we continue to prioritise the health and safety of colleagues by enabling them to work remotely.

We are currently experiencing a very high volume of calls and some callers are having to wait longer than we would like to speak to us. We know how

frustrating this can be and are therefore asking students to follow the advice below:

- Try and find an answer to your question online first. – Please only call us if you really need to as this will help free up our advisers to assist those applicants who need extra support. There is also an option to message us directly via SFE's [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) channels although this service is also very busy right now.
- Remember it can take 6 to 8 weeks to process an application – There is no need to contact us during this time as we will be in touch if we need anything further. Applicants can also check their application status online and view a 'to do list' of any outstanding actions they need to take.
- Submit any evidence we ask for – We have published [guidance and a short video](#) which explains how to do this. However, we would ask that to avoid delays, only the evidence we specifically request is submitted.
- Take advantage of the information and resources provided online – These resources are continually updated to respond to the needs of students and their parents and partners as they progress through the application cycle. Students should visit our [FAQs](#) and follow SFE on social media channels ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)) to stay up to date with the very latest information.

In the coming months we look forward to delivering improvements that will make it easier for students and their parents and partners to self-serve without having to contact us. I would like to thank all those who use our services for their continued patience as we work towards providing student finance to more students than ever before in the 2021/22 academic year.

Returning students should apply now for student finance at <https://studentfinance.campaign.gov.uk>. The deadline for returning students is 25 June.

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## **[Appeal for Calderdale residents to tackle invasive plant species to protect the local environment and reduce flood risk](#)**

Launching during Invasive Species Week, the campaign calls on residents, gardeners, walkers, joggers, families, landowners and voluntary groups to take simple actions this summer to help prevent the spread of Japanese

Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam in the Calder Valley.

People can log cases where they see invasive plants on the iRecord app <https://irecord.org.uk/app/> as well as take action by pulling out Himalayan balsam.

People are being asked to only report Japanese Knotweed, not to pull it out, as there is strict legislation around the control and movement of this plant, and it can propagate from small pieces.

Japanese knotweed

Sally Kelling, flood resilience officer with the Environment Agency, who is coordinating the campaign in Calderdale, said:

Invasive species like Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed have a very negative impact on our environment. It often results in bare river banks in winter increasing the chances of soil erosion, danger of landslides and risks of flooding which is a particular problem for the Calder Valley.

Gavin Roberts, volunteer co-ordinator for Calder Future, said:

It would be great to involve as many local residents in this campaign as possible to make a big hit on invasive Himalayan Balsam in 2021. Areas where local activists have been pulling balsam over the last years have seen a marked improvement and an increase in native flora coming back after the removal of the balsam, so it really is worthwhile continuing this effort. For more information contact [info@calderfuture.org.uk](mailto:info@calderfuture.org.uk)

John Cave, project officer for West Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, said:

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and its partners are taking action to control Japanese knotweed along the river network in Calderdale. We are observing significant impacts to wildlife along many of the watercourses within the catchment, where this plant finds favourable conditions to grow and spread abundantly. Careful management by trained professionals over a number of years is required to control populations effectively.

I encourage Calderdale landowners which have identified issues along a river or watercourse to contact our team for advice about management and support our efforts by submitting sightings of Japanese knotweed to our team by using the iRecord App.

Councillor Scott Patient, Cabinet member for climate change and resilience with Calderdale Council, said:

Last year we reached a lot of people across Calderdale with information about invasive species, this year we hope we can get the support of even more people to report Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed and help us to manage these damaging plants.

Invasive plants can be spread through soil used by people carrying out renovations or development works to their homes or gardens. It is important to make sure that any imported soil is certified to be clean of hazardous material including any minute pieces of invasive plant species such as Japanese knotweed. Any material contaminated with invasive plant material must be disposed of at a licenced site not through council refuse collections.

The campaign is being led by organisations working in the Calder Valley including the Environment Agency, Calder Future, Calder Valley Clean-up Team, Calderdale Council, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Forus Tree, the Canal and Rivers Trust, Treesponsibility, National Trust, Calder and Colne Rivers Trust, Yorkshire Water, the River Stewardship Company and Slow the Flow.

For advice on managing invasive species safely contact the team at Yorkshire Wildlife Trust at [invasives@ywt.org.uk](mailto:invasives@ywt.org.uk).

For more information about invasive species and the action being taken in Calderdale visit <https://eyeoncalderdale.com/invasive-species>

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## [Government sets out next phase of strategy to combat bovine tuberculosis in England](#)

- Work on badger vaccination, increased cattle testing and development of cattle vaccine to be accelerated
- Licensing of new intensive culls set to end after 2022 following a significant reduction in the disease
- New schemes launched to roll out badger vaccination across the country

Work to develop a vaccine for cattle and to vaccinate badgers is underway as new measures to eradicate bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in England by 2038 have been announced by the Environment Secretary George Eustice.

A five-year badger vaccination programme in East Sussex has been awarded £2.27 million to enable farmers to deploy vaccinations over an area of 250

square kilometres. The results of this trial will help inform the government on how to deploy future vaccination schemes at scale across England, halting the culling of this protected species.

The licensing of new intensive badger culls, which have effectively helped reduce bTB rates by half in certain areas, will cease after 2022.

In addition, existing cull licenses could be cut short after two years, down from five years, where supported by sufficient scientific evidence, and there will be no option for them to be renewed. The Government will develop a monitoring system to track the badger population and disease levels to help tackle the disease, with the findings being routinely published on gov.uk.

Last year, the Government announced that [bTB cattle vaccination trials in England and Wales had been given the green light](#), as a result of ground-breaking research by government scientists. These trials are expected to commence in June and, if successful, the project will remain on track to enable the deployment of a cattle bTB vaccine by 2025.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Bovine TB is one of the most difficult and intractable animal health challenges that the UK faces today, causing considerable trauma for farmers and costing taxpayers over £100 million every year.

The badger cull has led to a significant reduction in the disease but no one wants to continue the cull of a protected species indefinitely. That is why we are now building on this progress by accelerating other elements of our strategy, including cattle vaccination and improved testing so that we can eradicate this insidious disease and start to phase out badger culling as soon as possible.

The announcement follows an [eight-week consultation](#) launched in January, which sought the public's views on a range of proposals in [response to an independent review of its 25 year bTB strategy](#), led by Professor Sir Charles Godfray.

Bovine TB is one of the most difficult and intractable animal health challenges that England faces. In the last year, over 27,000 cattle in England have had to be slaughtered to tackle the disease.

The [Government's response to the Godfray Review](#) outlined the need for a combined approach which includes tighter cattle movement controls, regular testing, as well as badger and cattle vaccination to eradicate the disease in England by 2038.

Following the consultation, the Government has also announced new services to support farmers in improving biosecurity standards on farms across England. A new bTB Advisory Service will offer bespoke advice to livestock keepers about



the practical and cost-effective measures they can take to build herd resilience, including those outlined in the [TB biosecurity five point plan](#).

Under the new plans, Defra will also expand its surveillance programme to test cattle for the disease every six months throughout the High Risk Area. Affected herd owners will shortly receive a letter confirming the additional testing will begin from 1 January 2022.

As part of the Government's efforts to vaccinate more badgers against the disease a new training scheme called '[Train the Trainer](#)', is being launched alongside more accessible and affordable training courses, meaning that more people will become qualified vaccinators.

Defra has also supported CHECs, formerly known as Cattle Health Certification Standards, to deliver the '[Entry Level Membership](#)', a new scheme helping farmers to reduce the risk of TB breakdowns in their herds.

The Government's response to the consultation can be found [here](#).