

# Transport Secretary's statement on coronavirus: Friday 7 May 2021

Good afternoon.

Welcome to today's Downing Street press conference.

I'm pleased to be joined here today by Dr Jenny Harries, the Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency and Paul Lincoln, Director General of Border Force.

We've made enormous progress this year tackling the pandemic across Britain.

We're not at the end of it, but the signs are very hopeful.

That progress has been hard won.

Won by the speed and success of our NHS vaccination programme.

By the huge scale of our testing.

And by the sheer sacrifice and the discipline of the public.

And it's so important that we don't risk undermining all that, now.

Getting a vaccination feels like being given your life back.

The newly vaccinated thanking the wonderful volunteers.

People in tears of relief.

But as well as the joy, there is also concern about a resurgence of Covid.

And it's a caution we absolutely share as a government.

And it's why the only route out of this pandemic is a careful, prudent, responsible one.

Of course we're also a nation that thrives on travel, a nation with family ties across the globe.

Notably, nearly 1 in 3 new mothers in the UK was born overseas.

And, in 2019, UK residents took over 93 million trips abroad.

So, I'm glad to be standing here today (7 May 2021) [announcing the first, albeit tentative, steps towards unlocking international travel.](#)

We want a summer in which, with the help of vaccines and testing, we can reunite family and friends.

Travelling to places we love.

We want to start looking outward again.

Whilst Covid has isolated us, travel reunites us.

Even if video calls have kept us all connected during the lockdown, there's simply no substitute for human contact.

Travel is of course also crucial for rebuilding our economy.

Bringing long-awaited relief to hard-hit airlines, airports and the tourism sector, which taxpayers have spent £7 billion in supporting.

But I have to be straight with you.

Our success in combatting Covid here, with two thirds of adults now vaccinated, is not yet replicated in many places abroad.

We in this country have managed to construct a fortress against Covid.

But the disease is still prevalent in other parts of the world, most notably at the moment in India.

In fact, more new cases of Covid have been diagnosed around the world in the last 7 days than at any time since this pandemic began.

Nobody wants to go back into lockdown. Not Ever!

That is why today's announcement, removing the 'Stay in the UK' restriction from the 17 May (2021), is necessarily cautious.

We must make absolutely sure that the countries we reconnect with are safe.

That their infection rates are low, and their vaccination rates are high.

It means making sure that they are not incubating the most dangerous variants and that their data is reliable and trustworthy.

That is why our [Global Travel Taskforce](#) has come up with a [traffic light system classifying destinations by risk](#).

This is based on data by the Joint Biosecurity Centre, which will be published on gov.uk.

Red countries are those we should not be visiting except in the most extreme of circumstances, where repeated testing and isolation in designated government hotels on return is compulsory.

Non-UK residents who have been in a red country in the last 10 days will still be barred from entering the UK.

I have to tell you now that due to concerns about Covid rates and variants of concern, Turkey, the Maldives and Nepal must, regrettably, be added to the

red list.

Amber countries form the biggest group. As with Red list countries, you should not be travelling to these places right now

Returnees will have to test 3 times, once before departure and twice after arrival, and isolate in a place of their choosing for 10 days.

Finally, we have the green countries, which you will have the opportunity to visit no earlier than the 17th May (2021) so long as you take a pre-departure test before returning to England, and a second – PCR test – 2 days after your return.

And with these green countries, you do not need to quarantine.

Travellers will be glad to hear that we have been successful in driving down the cost of tests.

However, by necessity, this initial green list must be limited.

So, I am announcing today that from May 17th, you will be able to travel to 12 green list countries and territories including Portugal, Gibraltar and Israel.

I regret that favourite summer destinations, like France, Spain and Greece are not yet included.

But, every 3 weeks from reopening we will review countries to see if we can expand the green list.

So this is just a first step.

The signs overseas are now more promising as their vaccination programmes begin to crank up and as the summer progresses we hope that more traditional tourist destinations will be unlocked.

But we have to turn that key slowly, and green list countries will be placed on a “watchlist” if we start to have concerns.

And if it’s necessary, because of a new upswing in cases or a new variant, we will not hesitate to act fast and withdraw green status.

So it’s up to you to check thoroughly before travelling.

If you are thinking of booking a holiday in a green list destination, please check the restrictions applying to new arrivals.

You can get this information on gov.uk and it’s important because each country has its own restrictions.

Indeed, our strong advice is not to book any holiday which does not include a refund in the event of Covid-related cancellation.

And, I’m afraid, we do expect longer delays at the airport. Paul will say

more about that in a moment.

But all these measures are necessary to protect us from new variants, and guard against a resurgence of infections.

That is why the UK has now developed the most comprehensive testing regime on the planet. Testing up to 2 million people per day.

Mobilising our world-leading genome sequencing to spot mutations that can lead to new variants. These are the walls of our fortress.

Because the first duty of any government is to preserve the safety of its people.

But it's also our responsibility to show global leadership.

To work with other countries to create safe standards for international travel.

These were issues [I discussed with G7 Transport Secretaries when I chaired a meeting with them earlier this week.](#)

And I was able to set out our own traffic light system.

As part of this international leadership, the government is working to develop global standards for digital travel certification.

So from 17 May, English residents will be able to use their existing NHS health app to gain access to their vaccine records.

Alternatively, they will be able request a paper letter to verify their vaccination status.

Before I finish, let me make one final point.

I know there are many watching who might want restrictions to be lifted faster and to go further.

And there are, if anything, more people who prefer a slower pace.

But what unites us all is the belief that we do not want a return to the days of misery, suffering and loss.

We must keep our fortress, built at such huge cost to us all, secure.

Until brighter days, when unrestricted travel will allow us to meet the people who mean the most to us.

But for now, we must tread carefully – respecting the science that will guide us along the way.

I'd now like to turn to Jenny to cover the epidemiological position and then Paul to discuss the Border Force situation.

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## [Guide for students released today by Ofqual](#)

The easy-to-use '[Student guide to awarding: summer 2021](#)' – published today by the qualifications regulator – is written for students. It complements the materials that have already been published for teachers.

It also contains important advice on where students in England and their families can go for more information and support, including with mental health concerns.

The guide reminds students, parents and carers not to put teachers under pressure over grading.

It states:

The government has said that many exams and assessments cannot be held fairly this year as a result of the disruption students have faced due to the pandemic.

Your teachers will instead submit grades to the exam boards, based on their assessment of what you have shown you know and can do, enabling you to progress to the next stage of your education, training, or employment.

Interim Chief Regulator Simon Lebus said:

The arrangements we have put in place offer the fairest way forward and it is important that students, parents and the wider public have confidence in this year's process.

Students this year will only be assessed on what they have been taught – because of differing levels of lost learning due to COVID-19-related disruption.

The arrangements follow a public consultation in January which attracted more than 100,000 responses – mainly from students, parents, carers and teachers.

GCSEs, A levels and AS levels will be graded by teachers' judgements using evidence from mocks, tests, coursework, or other work. They will be signed off by school, college and department heads before going to the relevant exam board no later than 18 June.

Schools, colleges and exam boards will then carry out quality assurance

checks so that students, their parents, employers and the wider public can have confidence in how this summer's grades are determined. After grading, all centres will send samples of some students' work to exam boards, which will carry out further checks at random or where there are concerns.

The new guide also outlines how students can appeal if they believe a grade is wrong. For most qualifications, students will have the option of sitting exams this autumn to improve their summer grade.

Arrangements for many vocational and technical qualifications follow similar principles, although assessments will still be needed for qualifications that require students to demonstrate occupational or professional competence or proficiency. This is explained further in the guide and [Ofqual's qualification explainer tool](#). The guide also contains advice for private candidates.

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## [Embracing the possibilities of our green future](#)

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to speak at this Business Climate Leaders Summit.

In the fight against climate change, it is vital that we have the innovation, the influence and the energy of the private sector on our side.

And so I am really pleased to say that business has been stepping up to the plate.

Through investments and innovations, companies are developing the solutions we need to make the transition to a low-carbon future.

And momentum for real, meaningful climate action is growing across the corporate world.

In 2015, the countries of the world signed the Paris Agreement, and established a framework to tackle the climate crisis.

That included a commitment to limit global average temperature rises to well below two degrees celsius, whilst pursuing efforts to limit the rise to 1.5 degrees.

Back then, in 2015, a movement was just beginning for businesses to set emission reductions targets.

Today we have over 2000 companies and 130 investors signed up to the Race to Zero.

It's the gold standard of climate action.

It's a rigorous and robust commitment to help to keep the 1.5 degree target within reach.

By reaching net zero by 2050 at the latest.

And by setting short term targets, based on science, to get there.

A third of the UK's largest firms have joined. Including Sainsbury's, Natwest, and National Grid.

Race to Zero membership spans the globe, and indeed the economy.

Firms from every sector are on board – from transport to retail, from finance to construction.

Including of course those industries where the move to net zero poses the greatest challenges, like, for instance, cement.

And momentum continues to grow. We have more than twice as many company members today than we did last September.

Such action from business is vital for two key reasons.

Firstly, meeting the goal of the Paris Agreement, and limiting global temperature rises, depends on changes across the real economy.

Secondly, action from companies encourages action from countries.

To make bold commitments, governments need to know that they will be welcomed, not resisted by business.

That firms are indeed clamouring for climate action.

Joining Race to Zero sends just this message.

So the increase in membership of course is absolutely fantastic.

But, we need it to move faster. Much faster.

Because to keep the 1.5 degree goal within reach, we must halve our emissions over the next decade.

So I am urging all companies to get on board and join the Race to Zero ahead of the UN Climate Conference COP26, this November.

Not only for the sake of the planet, but for the sake of your bottom line.

Today, we will hear from leading CEOs about how their companies have benefited from shifting their business model to align with net zero.

And it is clear that the world is moving towards a clean, green future.

When the UK was announced as the host of COP26, less than 30 percent of the world economy was covered by a net zero emissions target. Today, it is 70 percent of the global economy.

Every country in the G7 now has a short-term emissions reduction target that puts them on a path to net zero emissions.

Wind and solar power is now cheaper than new coal and gas across most of the world.

And the green economy presents huge commercial opportunities. While those that do not move now risk being left behind.

Analysis suggests that, together, 215 of the world's biggest companies have almost \$1 trillion at risk from climate impacts.

Yet, those same companies have the potential to gain double that amount from the move to green economies.

Joining Race to Zero is a clear statement that you can see the possibilities our green future presents. And that you are determined to take them.

It also tells your customers that you are serious about genuine climate action.

So, to those companies that have joined the Race to Zero, I say: thank you

And, now, please encourage your peers to do the same. Get them to sign up.

And to those companies that have not yet signed up, I say: please, join us.

Take the opportunities presented by the low carbon economy.

And play your part in this momentous year for climate action, the year of COP26.

Thank you.

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## **£39,000 invested in fisheries in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire**

This financial year, over 170 projects were funded by the Environment Agency's Fisheries Improvement Programme (FIP).

The FIP funding has been matched by partners including local angling clubs and fisheries, resulting in a total estimated investment of over £3.2 million.



The Environment Agency fisheries teams in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire were assigned just under £39,000 to deliver local improvements which would benefit wildlife and anglers.

Overgrown vegetation which was covering a section of the river, making it impossible fish. The Environment Agency worked with partners to remove this.

£15,000 was used on a backwater enhancement project on the river Great Ouse at Eaton Ford on the lower section.

A backwater is an aquatic habitat which connects to the main river and has two important functions depending on the flow.

In high flows the backwater becomes a refuge for adult fish to rest in until the normal flows return.

In normal flows, the shallower water left in the backwater will warm up quicker than the main channel and promote the growth of young fish.

The £15,000 project was a partnership with the Environment Agency, St Neots Angling society, Huntingdonshire District Council and St Neots Town Council.

The river once the vegetation was removed.

The work involved removing silt which increased the depth of the channel and clearing plants which were making it impossible for anglers to fish.

Several fishing platforms were also constructed and fallen tree branches were removed to improve accessibility for fishing.

An additional £10,000 was spent on a separate backwater enhancement project further along the river Great Ouse at Eaton Ford.

Taken before the project, the overgrown vegetation and willow which were causing problems for anglers.

This partnership project was carried out with Luton Angling Club. The project enhanced habitat on the river by removing over grown willow which grows rapidly and causes accessibility issues for anglers.

Silt was also removed from the backwater to deepen the area for fish and to provide better fishing conditions and safer access.

This area is used by members of Luton Angling Club with mobility impairments who find accessing the main river bank difficult.

The same section of river as the previous image but after the work had been

completed.

The silt removed from both of the backwater projects was used to re-profile the banks, this makes the bank stronger. It was also re-seeded with wild flower mix to benefit pollinators.

Four other projects benefited from the FIP funding, which included an in-channel restoration project on the river Nar and access improvements at Hinchingsbrooke Park Lake. This consisted of new fishing platforms, signage and vegetation control.

Chris Middleton, a fisheries officer in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, said:

The Fisheries Improvement Programme gives us the opportunity to make a real difference that benefits anglers, wildlife and the environment. It is also a great way of re-investing fishing licence income in projects that improve fisheries and angling.

It was great being able to work with our partners who delivered these key projects and we are looking forward to getting stuck in with this year's projects.

Roger Handford, Environment Agency Senior Fisheries Advisor, said:

Anglers often ask us about how we spend the money raised from the sale of fishing licences. The FIP is a prime example of the wide range of activities this income pays for in order to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries.

Heidi Stone, Environment Agency Fisheries Manager said:

All of the projects we fund must demonstrate benefits for anglers. The Fisheries Improvement Programme allows us to identify and invest in work supporting a local, sustainable future for angling.

The programme is a great demonstration of our partnership efforts, many of the projects completed with the support of land owners, local businesses and fisheries. It's a real team effort! The more people who go fishing, the more we can invest.

Looking forward, the Environment Agency wants to hear from more clubs and fisheries about the work and projects they would like to see undertaken.

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# £58,000 invested in fisheries in Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk

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The Environment Agency fisheries teams in Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk were assigned just over £58,000 to deliver local improvements which would benefit wildlife and anglers.

In Essex £10,000 has been allocated to help set up a new fishery for military veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Environment Agency, in partnership with iCarp, are renovating Lifted Lakes near Harwich. The venue will be used to teach fishing to those with mental health issues.

One of the fishing platforms created with iCarp at Lifted Lakes near Harwich.

The money is being used to fund treatment rooms, shower facilities and fishing platforms. The venue is also intended to be used as a base for treatment and future mental health research.

Ben Norrington, Fisheries officer in Essex, said:

The project is in early stages but work is well underway with treatment rooms, toilets and lake restoration.

Updates through the year will be documented and we hope to see people enjoying fishing here by autumn.

Our FIP contribution to the iCarp project means we can reach out via angling to better people's mental well-being.

One of the treatment rooms created with the FIP funding at Lifted Lakes in Essex.

In Norfolk Cawston Angling Club received £6,000 to help with their Booton Clay Pit lake. The lake was overrun with water soldier, a rare plant which grows in ponds and lakes. Due the intense spread of the plant fishing becomes impossible until it is removed.

One of the fishing banks stabilised at Booton Clay pit.

The money was also used to stabilise the fishing banks resulting in improved access for anglers.

A fishing bank stabilised at Booton Clay pit.

Another 8 projects also benefited from the FIP funding, they include installation of toilet facilities and improvements to access at Hadleigh and District Angling Society. The building of 2 accessible angling platforms at Scole Nature Trails Trust, and an in-depth research program on the movement of sea trout in Norfolk.

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