

People urged to apply now for British passport

People have been urged not to delay in applying for a British passport and to allow more time for it to be processed.

While it is still illegal to holiday overseas and the "Stay in the UK" regulation remains in place, by applying for a passport now, people can make sure nothing stands in their way when they can.

During the pandemic, Her Majesty's Passport Office has seen a significant drop in the number of people applying for passports. In a normal year it processes around seven million passport applications, however in 2020 just over 4 million people applied for their passport.

While all applications will be processed as quickly as possible, people should now allow up to 10 weeks when applying for their British passport to help manage this demand.

Director General of Her Majesty's Passport Office, Abi Tierney, said:

It is vital those who may need to apply for a new passport do so now. If you have delayed renewing your passport or are applying for the first time, please apply now so you can receive it in good time.

Our dedicated staff work tirelessly to ensure that passport applications are processed as quickly as possible.

This new advice will help to ensure that we continue to meet the travel plans of our customers during any period of the very highest passport demand.

Her Majesty's Passport Office will be sending text messages to people whose passports are nearing expiration to let them know to allow more time when they renew.

As per the roadmap, international travel will not be allowed until 17 May at the earliest. It will be confirmed in advance whether leisure travel can resume on 17 May, or whether we will need to wait longer before lifting the outbound travel restriction.

As the Prime Minister announced yesterday, when "Stay in the UK" is removed it will be replaced by a risk-based "traffic light" system with red, amber and green ratings – this will help ensure the UK's vaccine progress isn't jeopardised and provide clear guidance for travellers.

It is too early to predict which countries will be on which list over the

summer. Our decisions will be driven by the evidence available at the time, as such, we continue to advise people not to book summer holidays abroad.

[Applying online](#) is the cheapest and easiest way to obtain your passport.

[Notice of direction to prohibit access issued](#)

News story

Following the location and identification of the wreck of Nicola Faith, a second Notice of Direction to Prohibit Access to the wreck has been issued by MAIB.



The Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents has issued a 'Notice of Direction to Prohibit Access' around the wreck requiring that it be left undisturbed until further notice, pending further action by the MAIB.

MAIB DIRECTION No 2/2021

WRECK OF NICOLA FAITH 53°20.019'N – 003° 41.876'W

Under the powers contained in:

Regulation 10(6) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/1743)

and

Section 259(2)(d) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995

the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) hereby PROHIBITS access to and/or interference with the wreck of NICOLA FAITH or its equipment, or any vessel operating under direction of the MAIB in and around the position stated, and GIVES DIRECTION requiring that the same shall be left undisturbed

and not approached until further notice, pending completion of underwater survey and wreck recovery operations.

Specifically prohibited are: anchoring in the vicinity of the wreck, fishing by nets, trawls or lines in the vicinity of the wreck, and any diving operations on the wreck or its outlying gear.

AND – Approaching the position of the wreck while underwater operations are in progress.

For the purposes of this direction, the vicinity of the wreck shall be taken to be a circle, radius 500 metres, centred on the wreck's location.

Published 6 April 2021

Last updated 17 May 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 17 May 2021

Following the location and identification of fishing vessel Nicola Faith, and our announcement to raise the sunken vessel, a second Notice of Direction to Prohibit Access to the wreck has been issued by MAIB's Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents.

2. 6 April 2021

First published.

[Face coverings in schools and colleges to remain in place](#)

The government has today, Tuesday 6 April, confirmed that face coverings should continue to be worn in secondary school and college classrooms as a precautionary measure when students return after the Easter break.

This cautious approach will help limit the risk of transmission and enable continued monitoring of the effect of school and college returns, as twice weekly testing is established and embedded in pupil's routines.

It is expected that face coverings will no longer be required to be worn in classrooms, or by students in other communal areas, at step 3 of the roadmap, which will be no earlier than May 17th. At that point the next stage of easements, including increased social contact indoors, will be confirmed following a review of the latest data on infection and vaccination rates. It will also allow time for the vaccination programme to reach everyone in priority groups one to nine with their first dose before any change is committed.

All changes will be confirmed with one week's notice and all other safety measures will remain in place, including regular asymptomatic testing, smaller group bubbles, increased hygiene, ventilation, and social distancing where possible.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The return to school and college from 8 March has been an incredible success and I would like to thank staff, parents and pupils for their compliance with the guidance on reducing transmission of the virus. Our latest data also showed that attendance in school remains higher than at any point during the autumn term.

On top of the protective measures previously in place such as regular handwashing and ventilation, we introduced face coverings in the classroom for secondary schools and colleges to help reduce transmission in parallel with the introduction of twice weekly testing.

Schools and students have done a great job adapting to Covid secure guidance and working hard to make sure it doesn't impact learning. We obviously all want to get back to facemask-free classrooms and we will do this in line with the latest scientific data while balancing the interests of students, teachers and the wider community.

The ongoing review of evidence on the use of face coverings in schools and colleges took into consideration a number of factors including scientific evidence and data from PHE and stakeholder intelligence gathered by the Department for Education on the experiences of face covering use in classrooms.

Rapid testing will continue to play a crucial role in keeping schools and colleges safe, as millions of tests are now taken each week by students and staff. With as many as one in three people who have the virus not displaying symptoms, testing is helping find and isolate cases, stopping outbreaks before they develop. Since 4 March this year, around 17 million coronavirus tests were taken across all nurseries, schools and colleges.

Alongside rapid testing, the available scientific evidence is that, when used correctly, wearing a face covering reduces the emission of virus-carrying particles when worn by an infected user, helping to protect others.

Those who are currently exempt from wearing face coverings will remain so, including pupils or staff who are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate.

Professor John Simpson, Head of Public Health Advice, Guidance and Expertise Pillar (PHAGE) at Public Health England, said:

The return to school after Easter will allow us to continue monitoring the impacts of measures to reduce the spread of Covid, as we encourage families to test regularly.

Wearing face coverings in secondary schools is an extra control measure to reduce the risk of transmission to support children continuing their education in the classroom.

ENDS

£6.1 million Fisheries and Seafood Scheme opens for applications

Today (6th April) the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has opened applications for a new grant scheme that will support the fishing and seafood sector in England.

The Fisheries and Seafood Scheme will provide £6.1 million over the next 12 months to support England's seafood sector, coastal communities and marine environment.

Initially the fund will focus on projects that help businesses adapt to life outside the EU's Common Fisheries Policy and recover from the impacts of Covid-19.

It will also fund a wide range of projects from providing professional advice to local businesses and encouraging local sales, to making fishing gear more selective of size and species and working conditions safer. In line with the Government's commitment to tackle climate change across all sectors of the UK economy, the scheme will work with the fishing industry to reduce emissions and provide environmental improvements.

Fisheries Minister Victoria Prentis said:

We are fully committed to the fishing and seafood sector, and as an independent coastal state we now have a renewed focus to level up coastal communities across England.

Through investment across the catching, aquaculture and processing sectors, the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme will support the long-term sustainability and success of seafood businesses throughout England and will help safeguard our marine environment. I encourage all eligible businesses to apply.

The Marine Management Organisation will administrate the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme on behalf of Defra.

Tom McCormack, Chief Executive Officer of the Marine Management Organisation, said:

MMO continues to support our fishing and seafood industry. We look forward to managing applications to the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme, and helping businesses to develop, adapt and succeed.

The Fisheries and Seafood Scheme will match fund projects that aim to:

- Create new opportunities for businesses – such as new local markets and support to sell a wider range of products
- Support business to adapt to new markets and respond to new trading conditions
- Support sustainable innovation – with the potential to boost the traceability of the fish landed and promote environmentally-friendly processing methods
- Protect the environment – with equipment that reduces the impact of fishing on the marine environment
- Improve safety on fishing vessels and on shore – by supporting a high standards of health, safety, hygiene, and working conditions across the seafood sector

MMO and Defra will also continue to engage with stakeholders on a regular basis, to ensure the scheme meets the sector's needs.

At the Spending Review the Government announced £32.7 million was to be split between the UK's fishing administrations. This Scheme draws on the £13.5 million allocated to England to deliver financial support, carry out essential monitoring and support the sustainable management of fisheries and the marine environment.

This fund is in addition to the £23 million recently delivered through the Seafood Disruption Support Scheme and the Seafood Response Fund to seafood exporters, fishing and aquaculture businesses affected by Covid-19 and new trading conditions earlier this year.

For more information and on-line application go to:

www.gov.uk/guidance/fisheries-and-seafood-scheme.

UK-German Roundtable on countering

online harms, March 2021

In March 2021, the UK's Department for International Trade (DIT), the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) and the North Rhine Westphalian Cyber Crime Agency ZAC invited UK and German stakeholders to a first virtual roundtable on the role innovation and technologies can play to fight online harms. With the aim to spur collaboration between both countries, the roundtable was hosted by UK Consul General Rafe Courage and opened by North Rhine Westphalian Minister for Justice Peter Biesenbach as well as DCMS' Director General Susannah Storey. Participating attendees included senior executives from UK and NRW's government, law enforcement, media authorities, industry, associations and universities.

A positive and productive roundtable with a few key themes emerging from the discussion:

A shared objective of raising awareness

Germany and the UK share a common understanding on the urgency of countering online harms. Participants highlighted the rapid distribution of illegal content such as child pornography, hate speech and misinformation which bears the risk of destroying the integrity of media and our democratic institutions. Both countries have initiated regulatory action to mitigate repercussions. While a strict regulatory framework will be essential, the sheer amount of harmful incidents poses new challenges to police, law enforcement and society as massive data sets need to be scrutinised, a task that is exacerbated by rogue actors' determination to overcome existing safeguarding technologies in real time and circumvent national regulation.

Technology to the rescue

While technology will not solve this alone, it forms a key part of a mitigation strategy. The roundtable participants acknowledged that an increasing number of UK and German organisations offer innovative technologies such as Artificial Intelligence that help government, law enforcement and industry, schools, individuals tackle the issue. While in public debates a narrow view often prevails by focussing on the big social media platforms, much is to be won in taking a more holistic view on the full spectrum where technologies can be used to fight online harms. In both countries, innovators have come up with solutions to help trace, locate and facilitate the removal of illegal content, reduce the risk of children being exposed to harmful content, prevent grooming, bullying, radicalisation, support age verification and help tackle disinformation. A recent report commissioned by DCMS indicates a huge potential for an upcoming safety tech sector that is growing 35% year on year and heading for £1bn revenues.

UK-German collaboration

As online harms is hardly resolved on a national level, the UK is keen to support the growth of the emerging industry; Germany with a highly developed

technology sector and key ally in online harms regulation is set to be a strong partner. The roundtable participants identified a keen interest to build up momentum and formalise collaboration structures such as a UK-German safety tech interest group as well as launching a series of events and engagement opportunities to share best practice examples and encouraging the exchange of ideas. Initiating a fast evolving UK-German safety tech eco system with key stakeholders from law enforcement, industry, start-ups, authorities and regulators will lead to strong UK-German collaboration networks and improve efficiency in the fight against online harms.