

# Readout – Foreign Secretary call with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

News story

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has spoken with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken



A spokesperson from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said:

In their first phone call, the Foreign Secretary congratulated Secretary Blinken on his confirmation to the role. They discussed the opportunities to work together on a shared agenda, to reinforce democratic values across the world and to strengthen the two countries' global alliance. They spoke about the UK's presidencies of the G7 and COP26, the need to tackle Iranian destabilising behaviour and cooperation to hold China to its international commitments.

The Foreign Secretary welcomed President Biden's commitment to tackling climate change, including by re-joining the Paris Agreement, as well as the US re-engaging with the World Health Organization.

They agreed to speak again soon and continue the ongoing conversation.

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# GCA Webinar – 4 February 2021

On 4 February 2021, Mark White, the Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) delivered his first webinar talking about:

- The role of the Adjudicator
- His first impressions and market observations
- His outlook for the role, work to date and priorities
- Working with suppliers and trade associations
- Introduction of the [‘Tell the GCA’](#) reporting platform

You can watch a recording of the [GCA Webinar](#) on YouTube.

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## Tougher border controls to protect public health

News story

Further action to minimise travel across international borders.



Photo: Getty Images

The government has announced further action for outbound and inbound

passengers to minimise travel across international borders and reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

While the focus is on protecting the UK's world-leading vaccination programme, this action will reduce the risk of a new variant of the virus being transmitted from someone coming into the UK.

The measures announced today include:

For those wishing to travel out of the UK

- Declaring reason for travel: anyone who does not have a valid reason for travel will be directed to return home and may face a fine. The reason for travel will be checked.
- Increased police enforcement: there will be an increased police presence at ports and airports, fining those in breach of the stay at home regulations. Anyone without valid reason for travel will be directed to return home and may face a fine.
- Reviewing travel exemptions: the list of travel exemptions will be urgently reviewed so that only the most important and exceptional reasons are included.

For those seeking to enter the UK

- Managed isolation in hotels: this will be for those arriving from countries where we have imposed international travel bans and who cannot be refused entry. They will be required to isolate for ten days without exception and more details will be provided in due course.
- Police checks: police are carrying out more physical checks at addresses to make sure people are self-isolating.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

There are still too many people coming in and out of our country each day. The rules are clear – people should be staying at home unless they have a valid reason to leave. Going on holiday is not a valid reason.

As we have done throughout this global health emergency, we will continue to take all steps necessary to protect the public and help prevent the spread of the virus.

These new measures are on top of the restrictions already in place, all of which help reduce the risk of importing a new variant.

- Refusing entry: we will continue to refuse entry to non-UK residents from red list countries which are already subject to a UK travel ban.
- Entering the UK: passengers arriving in the UK need to provide evidence of a negative pre-departure Covid test. There is also the requirement for people arriving from abroad to self-isolate on arrival, and the requirement to complete a passenger locator form, with fines for those

who fail to comply.

- Detecting new variants: we will help other countries to access to the UK's world-leading gene sequencing capabilities to help with early identification of any new and dangerous variants of the virus.

All measures will be kept under review and further action will be taken to protect the public if needed.

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## [UK and Switzerland to deepen cooperation on financial services](#)

News story

Plans to move forward to the next stage of talks between the UK and Switzerland on an agreement on financial services were agreed between the Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer today.



Following successful initial exploratory talks, the two countries will move forward with negotiations on the ambition of delivering a comprehensive mutual recognition agreement that would reduce costs and barriers for UK firms accessing the Swiss market, and vice versa. Negotiations are expected to cover a wide range of sectors such as insurance, banking, asset management and capital markets, including market infrastructure.

In addition, the Chancellor also held a roundtable today with some of the biggest global banks. The Chancellor reiterated the Government's commitment to the future of UK financial services, and confidence that Britain will remain one of the world's pre-eminent financial centres having left the EU. This will be followed next week by a meeting with representatives from the insurance industry, asset managers and other firms from across the sector.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak said: "The UK and Switzerland are both global financial centres, with a shared commitment to high standards of regulation, market integrity and investor protection. Our ambition is to deliver one of the most comprehensive agreements of its kind in financial services as part of our plan to seize new opportunities in the global economy now we have left the EU."

Discussions between the UK and Switzerland are set to continue at official level over coming months.

Earlier this month, the UK laid regulations aimed at granting share trading equivalence to Switzerland's trading venues. Subject to parliamentary approval this will come into force on 3 February 2021. Once the UK decision is in force it's expected that the Swiss will reciprocate by removing restrictions on UK trading venues.

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## [Corby career criminal jailed for stockpiling waste](#)

A 68-year-old Corby man is behind bars after repeated waste offences spanning the course of the last decade.

Stephen Lack, of Monkton Sidings, Corby, was responsible for an illegal waste site that put human health and the environment at risk.

Her Honour Judge Lucking QC, sitting at Northampton Crown Court on 25 January 2021, sentenced Lack to 18 months' immediate imprisonment after he had pleaded guilty to breaching environmental laws at an earlier hearing following a prosecution by the Environment Agency.

Lack, trading under the name Abbey Skips, repeatedly stockpiled waste on a site at Monkton Sidings, Fineshade, without the necessary permits.

Any business that handles, stores, treats or disposes of waste must hold the right Environment Agency permits. The permitting process ensures precautions are taken to protect people and nature from harm.

But in the hearing on 14 October 2020, the court heard how Lack repeatedly and deliberately ignored advice and warnings from the Environment Agency that his actions were illegal and dangerous.

Environment Agency lawyer Sarah Dunne told the court that his activities risked contaminating nearby woods and farmland, caused odours and toxic smoke, and could have attracted large quantities of flies and other vermin.

She said that Lack had saved thousands of pounds by burning and burying his waste rather than disposing of his waste lawfully at authorised waste sites.

Lack did initially have a permit to run the waste site in 2009, but a year later, he was already in court for illegally burning waste, resulting in noxious fumes and odours. Despite being ordered to pay thousands in fines and costs, he continued to offend. The permit was revoked in 2011 and Lack was ordered to clear the site by the following spring.

When officers followed up in March 2012, it appeared Lack was complying. But 5 years later, complaints started pouring in from the local community. Environment Agency officers responded and found waste was again being stored and burnt on the site.

Again Lack was warned to stop these activities – advice he ignored – and environment officers soon discovered he was also storing a further 1,000 tonnes of waste at a second site at Easton on the Hill.

In April 2019, Lack pleaded guilty to a number of charges arising from his activities and was handed a 6 month sentence, suspended for 2 years, for ‘intentionally and flagrantly disregarding the law’ intended to protect the environment.

Wary environment officers kept an eye on Lack’s land and were shocked when, less than a month after the sentencing, activities once again ramped up – including more illegal burning.

Lack was arrested and released on bail, but warned by the court that he’d be remanded in custody if he was found to be involved in ‘any activity remotely connected with waste.’

In the midst of last summer’s coronavirus lockdown, Lack’s return to his old ways saw him breach the conditions of his bail. Officers visiting the Monkton Sidings site in July and August saw multiple skips arrive full of tyres, metal and other waste – and caught Lack himself operating the machinery.

Lack was again arrested in September amidst further evidence of burning and burial of waste.

Judge Lucking described Lack’s offending as ‘blatant’ and told him that ‘he had a history of significant disobedience to court orders and had shown a complete disregard to instructions given by the Environment Agency.’

The judge made an order requiring Lack to clean up the site within the next 12 months, and adjourned the consideration of a claim for more than £30,000 Environment Agency costs until March 2021.

Yvonne Daly, Environment Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

It’s our job to regulate waste activity to make sure it doesn’t put people or the environment at risk.

This case is a shocking example of an individual driven by profit blatantly ignoring their responsibilities, putting people and nature in harm's way, and attempting to undercut legitimate businesses.

The custodial sentence reflects the seriousness of the crime, and we hope it serves as a warning to others – we won't hesitate to take action against those flout the rules.

Anyone who suspects illegal waste activity is reminded to report it to our 24-hour hotline by calling 0800 80 70 60, or anonymously contacting Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Last year, the Environment Agency and partners launched the [Joint Unit for Waste Crime](#), aiming to stop serious and organised crime in the UK Waste Industry.

### **Additional information**

On 14 October 2020, Stephen Lack pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 12 and 38(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 by depositing, treating and storing of waste other than was allowed by the conditions of his permit.