

River levels remain exceptionally high across England

Flooding remains a risk to some areas in England, particularly the North West and West Midlands. This follows heavy rain from Storm Christoph that fell on already saturated ground, which has led to exceptionally high river levels in recent days.

Very sadly, around 500 properties have been flooded so far and the Environment Agency's officers are working hard with partners to help reduce the risk, including up to 30 properties in Bewdley in Worcestershire. However, 35,000 properties across the country have already been protected from flooding and teams are operating flood defences, flood storage reservoirs and putting up temporary barriers where needed to help protect communities.

At 12.15pm on 23 January, 1 severe flood warning currently remains in place, where flooding poses a significant risk to life or significant disruption to communities, there are 95 flood warnings, meaning that flooding is expected, and 95 flood alerts, meaning that flooding is possible.

People living in northern and central parts of England, especially around Ironbridge and Bewdley and further down the river Severn where river levels remain high, are being urged to prepare for the risk of flooding over the weekend. The public should sign up to flood warnings and check the latest safety advice.

Dan Bond, Flood Duty Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

Our thoughts are with anyone who has been affected by Storm Christoph, especially those whose homes or businesses have been flooded. Environment Agency officers are out today across the country assessing defences and operating flood barriers, and so far 35,000 properties have been protected.

As river levels react to recent heavy rainfall from Storm Christoph this could bring flooding to some areas, particularly along parts of the River Severn today and into Sunday, with a risk of damage to buildings in some communities. There is also a chance of localised flooding of land and roads across parts of the North West of England on Tuesday due to further rain.

We urge people to keep away from swollen rivers and not to drive through flood water – it is often deeper than it looks and just 30cm of flowing water is enough to float your car.

People should check their flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest situation at via [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) or follow @EnvAgency on Twitter for the latest flood

updates.

Storm Christoph brought some heavy, and at times record breaking, rain to parts of England. Provisional figures show Honister, in Cumbria, received 123.8 mm of rainfall on Tuesday 19 January, a new daily rainfall record for this winter and 2021. Figures also show parts of Cleveland, in North Yorkshire, received more than their average January rainfall in just a 48 hour period. Tuesday 19 January was the wettest January day for Rochdale (46.8mm), Preston (43.6 mm) and Stonyhurst, Lancashire (43.8mm) since 1954.

Evacuating people from their homes is a multi-agency decision where all risks are considered. Preparations for evacuations and to create Covid-secure rest centres will have been made by the relevant agencies as a precautionary measure. We would urge anyone advised to evacuate to follow the advice of the emergency services at the time.

Find out if you're at risk of flooding in [England](#)

Sign up for flood [warnings](#)

Get help during a [flood](#)

What to do after a [flood](#)

[Over 600,000 people get first dose of Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine](#)

The government has today published figures which show the number of people who have received the vaccine between 8 December and 20 December in the UK is 616,933.

The UK government has procured doses on behalf of the entire UK. The number of people who have received their first dose of the vaccine in each of the 4 nations is:

- England: 521,594
- Scotland: 56,676
- Wales: 22,595
- Northern Ireland: 16,068

In line with advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), vaccines have been administered to care home residents, those aged 80 and over and health and social care staff through over 500 vaccination sites across the UK. The vaccination programme will continue at pace over Christmas.

The vaccine roll-out in care homes in England began on Wednesday 16 December, with hundreds of residents vaccinated across 7 care homes in Slough, Aintree, Herne Bay, Thanet, Chalfont St Peter, Droitwich and Cheltenham, as well as Chelsea Pensioners.

Larger care homes with 50 to 70 beds will be prioritised first, with around 2,900 care homes of this size in England.

Over the coming weeks and months, the rate of vaccination will increase as more doses become available and the programme continues to expand, with more vaccines being delivered direct to care homes.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Thanks to a huge effort from the NHS to overcome significant logistical challenges, 616,933 people across the UK have had their jab of the coronavirus vaccine.

In just over 3 weeks, the NHS in every part of the UK has already set up hundreds of vaccination sites to ensure those most in need can receive their jab as quickly as possible.

This is just the beginning and we are continually expanding our vaccination programme to help everyone get back to normal in the future.

Figures on vaccination uptake for the UK will be published on a weekly basis from today on the [PHE coronavirus data dashboard](#).

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was the first vaccine to be authorised for use by the medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Patients require 2 doses of the vaccine for the vaccine to be at its most effective. Thanks to the work of the government's Vaccines Taskforce, 40 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine have been secured for the whole of the UK.

Rolling reviews on the Oxford/AstraZeneca, Moderna and other vaccine candidates are underway and, if authorised by the MHRA, will mean there are more doses available to vaccinate those in need.

Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

I am extremely proud the UK is the first country in the world to roll out the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and protect the most vulnerable from this awful disease.

The NHS across the UK is working incredibly hard to scale up the vaccination programme as fast as they can to make sure everyone on the priority list can get their vaccine easily.

England

All vaccinations in England are recorded between 8 December and 20 December and represent the first doses only.

The data for England is drawn from 2 sources depending on the vaccination site:

- for hospital sites the data is reported from the National Immunisation Management Service, which is the system of record for the NHS vaccination programme
- for local vaccination services this is an initial data extract from the Pinnacle system, which is being used by GPs to record COVID-19 vaccination events. This data will also be aggregated into the National Immunisation Management Service

Northern Ireland

As the vaccination programme began on 8 December 2020, the number of individuals reported to have been vaccinated in week ending 13 December 2020 only includes data from 8 to 13 December 2020.

Scotland

Vaccinations that were carried out in Scotland are reported in the Vaccination Management Tool. As the vaccination programme began on 8 December 2020, the number of individuals reported to have been vaccinated in week ending 13 December 2020 only includes data from 8 to 13 December 2020.

Wales

Vaccinations that were carried out in Wales are reported in the Welsh Immunisation System, and are extracted each Tuesday to reflect activity up to the close of the preceding Sunday. As the vaccination programme began on 8 December 2020, the number of individuals reported to have been vaccinated in the week ending 13 December 2020 only includes data from 8 to 13 December 2020.

[Statement on Gibraltar future relationship](#)

News story

A statement on Gibraltar future relationship.



The UK, side by side with the Government of Gibraltar, has held constructive discussions with Spain regarding future relationship issues relating to Gibraltar. All sides acknowledged the challenging nature of this process at the outset of talks. Although an agreement has not yet been reached on Gibraltar's future relationship with the EU, we will continue our discussions with Spain to safeguard Gibraltar's interests, and those of the surrounding region.

In addition, we are also working closely with the Government of Gibraltar, in discussion with Spain and the EU, to mitigate the effects of the end of the Transition Period on Gibraltar. We are totally committed to protecting Gibraltar's interests. That includes ensuring border fluidity, which is clearly in the best interests of the communities that live on both sides.

Published 24 December 2020

[Prime Minister's statement on EU negotiations: 24 December 2020](#)

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It is four and a half years since the British people voted to take back control of their money, their borders, their laws, and their waters and to leave the European Union.

And earlier this year we fulfilled that promise and we left on Jan 31 with that oven-ready deal.

Since that time we have been getting on with our agenda.

Enacting the points based immigration system that you voted for and that will come into force on Jan 1.

And doing free trade deals with 58 countries around the world.

And preparing the new relationship with the EU.

And there have been plenty of people who have told us that the challenges of the Covid pandemic have made this work impossible.

And that we should extend the transition period.

And incur yet more delay.

And I rejected that approach precisely because beating Covid is our number one national priority and I wanted to end any extra uncertainty and to give this country the best possible chance of bouncing back strongly next year.

And so I am very pleased that this afternoon that we have completed the biggest trade deal yet, worth £660 billion.

A comprehensive Canada style free trade deal between the UK and the EU, a deal that will protect jobs across this country.

A deal that will allow UK goods and components to be sold without tariffs and without quotas in the EU market.

A deal which will if anything should allow our companies and our exporters to do even more business with our European friends.

And yet which achieves something that the people of this country instinctively knew was doable.

But which they were told was impossible.

We have taken back control of laws and our destiny.

We have taken back control of every jot and tittle of our regulation.

In a way that is complete and unfettered.

From Jan 1 we are outside the customs union, and outside the single market.

British laws will be made solely by the British Parliament.

Interpreted by UK judges sitting in UK courts.

And the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice will come to an end.

We will be able to set our own standards, to innovate in the way that we want, to originate new frameworks for the sectors in which this country leads the world, from biosciences to financial services, artificial intelligence and beyond.

We will be able to decide how and where we are going to stimulate new jobs and new hope.

With freeports and new green industrial zones.

We will be able to cherish our landscape and our environment in the way we choose.

Backing our farmers and backing British food and agricultural production.

And for the first time since 1973 we will be an independent coastal state with full control of our waters with the UK's share of fish in our waters rising substantially from roughly half today to closer to 2/3 in five and a half years' time after which there is no theoretical limit beyond those placed by science or conservation on the quantity of our own fish that we can fish in our waters.

And to get ready for that moment those fishing communities we will be helped with a big £100m programme to modernise their fleets and the fish processing industry.

And I want to stress that although of course the arguments with our European friends and partners were sometimes fierce this is, I believe a good deal for the whole of Europe and for our friends and partners as well.

Because it will not be a bad thing for the EU to have a prosperous and dynamic and contented UK on your doorstep.

And it will be a good thing – it will drive jobs and prosperity across the whole continent.

And I don't think it will be a bad thing if we in the UK do things differently, or take a different approach to legislation.

Because in so many ways our basic goals are the same.

And in the context of this giant free trade zone that we're jointly creating the stimulus of regulatory competition will I think benefit us both.

And if one side believes it is somehow being unfairly undercut by the other, then subject to independent third party arbitration and provided the measures are proportionate, we can either of us decide – as sovereign equals – to protect our consumers.

But this treaty explicitly envisages that such action should only happen infrequently and the concepts of uniformity and harmonisation are banished in favour of mutual respect and mutual recognition and free trade.

And for squaring that circle, for finding the philosopher's stone that's enabled us to do this I want to thank President von der Leyen of the European Commission and our brilliant negotiators led by Lord Frost and Michel Barnier, on the EU side Stephanie Rousseau as well as Oliver Lewis, Tim Barrow, Lindsay Appleby and many others.

Their work will be available for scrutiny, followed by a parliamentary vote I hope on Dec 30.

This agreement, this deal above all means certainty.

It means certainty for the aviation industry and the hauliers who have suffered so much in the Covid pandemic.

It means certainty for the police and the border forces and the security services and all those that we rely on across Europe to keep us safe.

It means certainty for our scientists who will be able to continue to work together on great collective projects.

Because although we want the UK to be a science superpower, we also want to be a collaborative science superpower.

And above all it means certainty for business from financial services to our world-leading manufacturers – our car industry – certainty for those working in high skilled jobs in firms and factories across the whole country.

Because there will be no palisade of tariffs on Jan 1.

And there will be no non-tariff barriers to trade.

And instead there will be a giant free trade zone of which we will at once be a member.

And at the same time be able to do our own free trade deals as one UK, whole and entire, England, NI, Scotland and Wales together.

And I should stress this deal was done by a huge negotiating team from every part of the UK, and it will benefit every part of our United Kingdom, helping to unite and level up across the country.

And so I say again directly to our EU friends and partners, I think this deal means a new stability and a new certainty in what has sometimes been a fractious and difficult relationship.

We will be your friend, your ally, your supporter and indeed – never let it be forgotten – your number one market.

Because although we have left the EU this country will remain culturally, emotionally, historically, strategically and geologically attached to Europe, not least through the four million EU nationals who have requested to settle in the UK over the last four years and who make an enormous contribution to our country and to our lives.

And I say to all of you at home.

At the end of this toughest of years.

That our focus in the weeks ahead is of course on defeating the pandemic.

And on beating coronavirus and rebuilding our economy.

And delivering jobs across the country.

And I am utterly confident that we can and will do it.

By today we have vaccinated almost 800,000 people and we have also today resolved a question that has bedevilled our politics for decades.

And it is up to us all together.

As a newly and truly independent nation.

To realise the immensity of this moment and to make the most of it.

Happy Christmas to you all.

That's the good news from Brussels – now for the sprouts.

[Scottish Secretary welcomes UK's historic deal with EU](#)

News story

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack comments on the UK and EU today reaching a deal on their future relationship



Commenting on today's announcement of the UK and EU today reaching a deal, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

The UK's deal with the EU is great news for Scotland's businesses. There are huge opportunities ahead – not just with this exceptional access to the EU market, but also in new markets right around the world.

We have an agreement on fisheries which will ensure that our fishermen, and our coastal communities, will flourish outside of the EU's unfair Common Fisheries Policy. The UK will once more be a sovereign coastal state.

The deal protects famous Scottish products such as whisky, Arbroath Smokies and Orkney cheddar.

People in Scotland will benefit from a wide range of social security and healthcare rights while travelling, working and living in the EU.

Now, Scottish businesses need to get ready. The UK Government has been preparing intensively, and working with businesses, and that will continue. The Scottish Government also needs to do its bit and take action in devolved areas – we have given the Scottish Government nearly £200 million to prepare for Brexit.

The United Kingdom will always be a welcoming, outwards-facing nation. Our European neighbours are our friends, and that will not change. EU citizens will continue to be an important part of many of Scotland's communities. This is a historic moment for us all. There are enormous opportunities ahead of us, and we all need to make the most of them.

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