

Travel corridor update, 3 December 2020

There will be no additions to or removals from the travel corridor list this week following data received from the Joint Biosecurity Centre and Public Health England.

The government will continue to take decisive action if necessary, to contain the virus, including removing countries from the [travel corridor list](#) rapidly if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

A range of factors are taken into account when deciding to remove a country from the travel corridor list, including the continued increase of coronavirus (COVID-19) within a country, the numbers of new cases, imported cases, information on a country's testing capacity, testing regime and test positivity rate. None of these indicate the need to amend the list of travel corridors this week.

The government has also announced today (3 December 2020) a limited number of exemptions for passengers arriving into England, including for business travellers who meet a set of required criteria.

From 4am on Saturday 5 December, individuals undertaking specific business activity which would deliver a significant benefit to the UK economy – including activity that creates or preserves 50+ UK jobs – will no longer need to self-isolate when travelling or returning from non-exempt countries.

Individuals will only be exempt when undertaking the specific business activity and will only be able to meet with others as required by that specific activity. Further information will be available on gov.uk when these exemptions come into force.

Exemptions will also come into force at the same time for domestic and international performing arts professionals, TV production staff, journalists, and recently signed elite sportspersons, ensuring that industries which require specific, high talent individuals who rely on international connections can continue to complete their work.

PHE do not anticipate these changes will raise the risk of domestic transmission, due to the protocols being put in place around these exemptions, however all exemptions will remain under review.

All travellers, including those from exempt destinations, will still be required to show a complete [passenger locator form](#) on arrival into the UK unless they fall into a small group of exemptions.

COVID-19 has profoundly changed the nature of international travel. Travellers should continue to check the [latest advice from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#), given the potential for changing

coronavirus infection rates to affect both the advice about travelling to other countries and rules about self-isolation on return.

Penalties for those breaching the [self-isolation rules](#) when returning from non-exempt countries have increased from £1,000 for first offences up to £10,000 for subsequent offences, mirroring penalties for those breaching self-isolation following a positive COVID test or contact from Test and Trace.

Government to add COVID-19 to Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme

- COVID-19 vaccines will only be deployed once they meet strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality and are approved for use by the regulator
- No safety concerns have been reported in clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines authorised for use
- Addition of COVID-19 a responsible step and standard process to further prepare for safe roll out

In advance of a rollout of an authorised COVID-19 vaccine and in line with other immunisation programmes, the government is taking the precautionary step to ensure that, in the very rare possibility where someone is severely disabled as a result of taking a COVID-19 vaccine, they can access financial assistance through the Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme (VDPS).

No safety concerns have been reported in vaccines authorised for use following rigorous clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people and extensive analysis of the vaccine's safety, quality and effectiveness by experts from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine is now the first COVID-19 vaccine to be authorised for use in the UK, and the MHRA will keep safety under continual review.

Adding diseases to the VDPS is not new and numerous diseases have been added as successive governments have rolled out more immunisation programmes, such as HPV and Meningitis B. In response to the H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic, the previous government added swine flu to the VDPS on 10 October 2009.

Generally, only those who were administered vaccines as part of a childhood immunisation programme are covered under the VDPS. However, because COVID-19 vaccines will be rolled out to a large proportion of the adult population, the government will amend the eligibility requirements, ensuring adults who are administered a COVID-19 vaccine in the UK or Isle of Man, or as part of an armed forces medical treatment, will be covered by the scheme too.

This is not a novel approach. Currently, polio, rubella, meningococcal group C, HPV and meningococcal group W (up to age 26) are also exempt from the age requirement, as these vaccines were primarily offered to adults.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Jonathan Van-Tam said:

We are extremely confident in the effectiveness and safety of our immunisation programmes. We will not be rolling out a COVID-19 vaccine unless it has met robust standards of safety, effectiveness and quality and authorised for use by the medicines regulator, the MHRA.

The UK has one of the most comprehensive immunisation programmes in the world, and sensible routine precautions such as these form a huge part of our global-leading standards in safety.

The VDPS is a safety net to help ease the burden on individuals who have in extremely rare circumstances experienced harm due to receiving a government-recommended vaccine. It is not a compensation scheme. Rather, it provides a one-off, tax-free lump sum – currently £120,000 – for those suffering a severe disability as a result of a vaccine against a disease listed under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act.

Currently, in order to qualify for the payment, it must be accepted, on the balance of probability, that there is a causal link between the vaccine and the claimed disability and that the resulting disability amounts to severe (ie at least 60%) disablement.

Claims are assessed and paid where successful by the Department for Work and Pensions.

[Existing diseases included within VDPS eligibility](#)

Advocating for security sector governance and reform

Thank you, Madam President.

The United Kingdom very much welcomes this Open Debate. Security sector reform is not just a process focussed on building military and police institutions. It's an important part of a broader peacebuilding enterprise and supports states in their own constitutional and political development.

The United Kingdom has invested extensively in security sector governance and reform, at home and overseas. We do so because, as we see it, a democratic,

accountable and well-functioning security sector is an integral element in a broader system of government that provides protections for all citizens, based on the fundamental principles of universal human rights and respect for the rule of law.

This is what makes security sector reform relevant not just in post-conflict reconstruction, but also in conflict prevention. Because trust between citizens and the state is premised on the existence of institutions which serve and protect the needs of those citizens.

Where that trust is undermined, instability is rarely far behind. Police are often the first point of contact between a state and its citizens, but when corruption and abuse are allowed to flourish, that social contract begins to erode.

Madam President, we have seen all too often examples of security sector institutions harnessed as instruments of repression. Sadly, the world knows well the direction that leads.

Security sector reform is therefore of great importance for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. And it should be approached as part of a broader set of institutional safeguards – including law reform processes, work to strengthen accountability, judicial independence, and access to justice.

These are the building blocks of societies in which the rule of law provides protections for people, and peace can take root. But they also provide the enabling environment for sustainable development and investment.

The General Assembly recognised this in its articulation of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which is fundamentally about peace, justice, and accountable institutions.

The United Nations' work on security sector reform is key part of international efforts to support countries to strengthen the rule of law at the national level. This is why the UK supports the Organisation's global efforts in this field, including the UN Global Focal Point arrangement – the system's principal mechanism for system-wide assistance on rule of law, including security sector reform.

This mechanism, funded through UNDP's Global Rule of Law Programme, has enabled the UN to deliver critical results in support of national security sector reform efforts, through effective joint approaches between UN Peace Operations and UN Country Teams in countries from Somalia to Libya to the Central African Republic.

Meanwhile the UN Peacebuilding Fund – to which, I might say, the UK also remains a key donor – has worked hard to carve out an impressive portfolio of SSR work directly related to building and sustaining peace in countries affected by conflict.

Madam President, the United Kingdom will continue to be a staunch advocate for security sector governance and reform, and to work with UN and other partners to maximise the impact of our collective support by maximum work

together.

Thank you, Madam President.

300 British troops deploy to Mali on UN Peacekeeping Mission

300 UK troops have arrived in Mali as part of the UN's peacekeeping mission, primarily drawn from the Light Dragoons alongside the Royal Anglian Regiment and supported by specialist trades from across the Armed Forces.

The UK Task Force will provide a highly specialised reconnaissance capability, conducting patrols to gather intelligence and engage with the local population to help the UN respond to threats from violent extremism, and weak governance.

The UN Mission in Mali is made up of over 14,000 peacekeepers from 56 different countries and works to support peace efforts, encourage security sector reform, protect civilians and promote human rights.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council this deployment is a demonstration of our firm commitment to peacekeeping and the importance we place on improving security in the Sahel by protecting local communities.

Our land forces are the best in the world, and we are one of a small handful of nations able to provide this specialist capability in a challenging environment which will help prevent the spread of conflict across the region.

The main body of troops arrived on 2nd December, and all UK personnel will have arrived by 8th December to set up the UK Headquarters. They have flown from RAF Brize Norton by A400M aircraft to the UN camp in Gao. They will be based in the newly formed Camp Bagnold, which is named after Brigadier Ralph Alger Bagnold, the desert explorer and first Commanding Officer of the British Army's "Long Range Desert Group."

Lieutenant Colonel Tom Robinson, Commanding Officer of the Light Dragoons, said:

The 300 strong Light Dragoon task group is joining over 14,000 peacekeepers from 56 Nations as part of this challenging UN mission in Mali to help protect the people from violence and support political dialogue. We bring years of experience on operations, first class equipment and exceptional people.

We've trained hard for the last year to make sure that we are ready for this challenging mission. We're proud to be the first British soldiers to join in this team effort to help combat instability in the Sahel.

The Sahel is one of Africa's poorest and most fragile regions. It is marked by chronic poverty, instability, high levels of gender inequality, and is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Terrorist violence and conflict is sharply on the rise. It is in all our interests that we work together to protect civilians and help build a safer, healthier and more prosperous future for the region.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

This new deployment of 300 British troops to the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Mali is part of our ongoing work in the Sahel region to build stability, improve the humanitarian response and help protect innocent civilians from violence.

British troops will reinforce our development and diplomatic work, to maximise our impact on the ground.

The UK is one of the largest humanitarian donors to the Sahel – in 2020 the UK gave £14.65m in humanitarian aid to Mali and is currently in the process of increasing the size of the UK embassy to reinforce our diplomatic strength in the country.

Alongside this, the MoD currently has 3 Chinook helicopters and 100 personnel in a logistics role supporting the French-led Counter-Terrorist mission, Operation BARKHANE. This is entirely separate from the UN mission, but they will be operating in the same region.

[**Grimsby and Cleethorpes flood sirens**](#)

to be decommissioned

More than 80% of the 33,000 properties at risk of flooding in the area now receive advanced warnings through the direct-messaging service, making the old sirens redundant.

The towns' 18 flood sirens were installed in 2006 to help warn the vast majority of at-risk properties that – at the time – were not yet signed up to the then-fledgling [Flood Warning Service](#).

Sirens now redundant

Now, 14 years later, that service's advanced-warning messages are delivered to around 3,750 more properties than the sirens were ever able to reach, with more accurate, tailored and reliable messages than the sirens could.

Using the latest forecasting and modelling techniques, the Flood Warning Service alerts people to the possibility of flooding many hours – and sometimes days – in advance.

It sends timely, tailored, location-specific messages with exact details of what to expect, when, and how to react.

Sign up to stay alert

Those messages can be sent via a choice of text, landline, mobile and email – or any combination of those methods up to a maximum selection of five. For example, text messages to two mobiles, emails to two addresses, and an automated call to a landline.

It is a far cry from a short-notice, potentially confusing siren containing no specifics and no advice, and with no guarantee of being heard.

Since the Flood Warning Service launched in 2006, the [Environment Agency](#) and its partners have been continuously transforming it, making the best use of the latest technology to better reach people living, working and travelling through flood-risk areas.

World-class warning service

Innovations include automated warning messages to mobile phones registered with certain providers, and becoming one of the first European countries to use Google Public Alerts to display live flood warnings on Google searches and Google Maps, just seconds after they have been issued.

The advances combine to make England's Flood Warning Service among the best in the world – and the sirens out-dated.

Ben Thornely, flood risk manager at the Environment Agency, said:

We know how devastating flooding can be, and we want people to have the most accurate and timely information when flooding is expected.

The best way of doing that is via our free, reliable Flood Warning Service, which gives people clear, specific advice on how to protect themselves, their loved ones and their homes. This just isn't possible with sirens.

It takes just a minute to check online if you're at risk of flooding and to sign up for warnings. We urge people to do that now via [GOV.UK/Flood](https://www.gov.uk/flood) or by calling 0345 988 1188.

Doing so can reduce the impact of flooding – saving you thousands of pounds.

Cllr Stewart Swinburn, [North East Lincolnshire Council's](#) cabinet member for the environment, said:

We've been kept up-to-date with the Environment Agency's plans for the flood sirens and they've also held two virtual sessions with councillors to explain their proposals. Those sessions have allowed us to inform the Environment Agency's approach and we've stressed the need for local people to be given all the information they require to adapt to the changes with the sirens.

We're aware similar system updates have worked well in other areas and we share the Environment Agency's expectation that advances in technology will make it easier for people to get any flood messages as quickly as possible should the need arise.

To give the best service, the Flood Warning Service relies on people choosing to sign up. It takes around a minute to do so, and can help reduce flooding's impact and damage – saving potentially thousands of pounds.

People are urged to sign up now via 0345 988 1188 or [GOV.UK/Flood](https://www.gov.uk/flood), where there is also information on the [practical things](#) people can do to protect their businesses, homes and valuables.

Prepare for flooding

Checking if you live in an area at high risk of flooding, preparing a bag with medication and important documents, and moving valuable and sentimental items upstairs or to a safe place can [reduce the damage](#) caused by a flood by around 40%.

Since the sirens were installed in 2006, the Environment Agency has invested around £20m into the area's flood defences. That includes a £19m upgrade along the Humber and at the port of Grimsby, and improvements along the River

Freshney. Further work between Immingham and Grimsby is expected to begin in 2022.

The Environment Agency plans to stop using the flood sirens from 31 December 2020.

Background

- The Flood Warning Service currently reaches 83% of at-risk properties in the area, compared to the 72% of at-risk properties within audible range of a siren. Even those in range of a siren may not hear them because of things like wind direction and double glazing.
- The average cost of repairing a flood-damaged home is around £32,000.
- 33,235 homes are at risk of flooding across the area. – 27,735 (around 83%) are reached by the Flood Warning Service. 5,500 (around 17%) are not reached by the Flood Warning Service and need to sign up. 23,997 (72%) are in range of a siren but not guaranteed to hear it or know how to react.
- 5.2 million properties are at risk of flooding in England. People are urged to visit [GOV.UK/Flood](https://gov.uk/flood), check if they're at risk, and make sure they know what to do if it floods.
- In many flood risk areas, people can sign up for [flood warnings](#). These warn of the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea and groundwater. They'll alert people by phone, email or text when flooding is expected.
- The best way for people to protect themselves from flooding is to know what to do in advance – they can download and save a simple [Prepare, Act, Survive plan](#) so they know what to do when there's a flood warning in their area.
- The [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy](#) was adopted in Autumn 2020 and sets the blueprint for how the Environment Agency and other organisations will manage flood and coastal change from now until 2100.