

Estonia and Latvia removed from travel corridor list of exempt countries

- Estonia and Latvia removed from of the UK's travel corridor list as data shows a significant increase in confirmed cases
- Pacific Islands, Bhutan, Timor-Leste, Mongolia and Aruba added to the list having been assessed by the Joint Biosecurity Centre as posing a lower infection risk
- following advice from the Chief Medical Officer, the travel ban on Denmark is lifted but the country stays off the government's travel corridor list meaning any passengers coming into the UK will need to self-isolate for 14 days

People arriving in the UK from Estonia and Latvia from 4am Saturday 28 November will need to [self-isolate](#) for 2 weeks as the countries are removed from the [travel corridor list](#).

Data from the Joint Biosecurity Centre and Public Health England (PHE) has indicated a significant change in both the level and pace of confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in those destinations, leading to ministers removing these from the current list of travel corridors.

The following Pacific Islands (Samoa, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Tonga, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands), Bhutan, Timor-Leste, Mongolia and Aruba have been added to the government's travel corridor list following a decrease in risk from coronavirus in these destinations. From 4am on Saturday 28 November, passengers arriving into the UK from these destinations will no longer need to self-isolate so long as they haven't been in or transited through any other non-exempt countries in the 14 days preceding their arrival.

Having reviewed the latest scientific evidence, the Chief Medical Officer has advised that the travel ban on Denmark introduced on 7 November is lifted. The COVID-19 mink variant in Denmark is receding with the Danish health authorities now considering it most likely extinct. However, Denmark will not be added to the Travel Corridors list to further mitigate any potential risk to the UK and ensure that the UK public is protected. Passengers arriving into the UK directly or indirectly from Denmark from 4am on Saturday 28 November will need to self-isolate for 14 days, before then following domestic rules.

A range of factors are taken into account when deciding to remove a country from the exemption list, including the continued increase of coronavirus within a country, the numbers of new cases, information on a country's testing capacity, testing regime and test positivity rate and potential trajectory of the disease in the coming weeks.

There has been a consistent increase in COVID-19 cases per 100,000 of the population in Estonia over the past week, with a 25% increase in total cases

over this time period. In Latvia, new cases per week have increased by 16% over the same time period.

At the same time, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has updated its [travel advice](#) to advise against all but essential travel to Estonia and Latvia, and to no longer advise against all but essential travel to Aruba and Bhutan. These changes reflect the latest assessments by PHE of the risk to travellers in these destinations. The FCDO continues to advise against all but essential travel to Denmark, Mongolia, Timor-Leste, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Tonga, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands.

The government has made consistently clear it will take decisive action if necessary, to contain the virus, including removing countries from the travel corridors list rapidly if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

[National restrictions](#) introduced on 5 November remain in place meaning everyone must stay at home unless travelling for a very limited set of reasons, including for work or education. This means people can no longer travel to take holidays or travel internationally unless for work or other legally permitted reasons. Those in breach of the rules face penalties starting at £200 and rising to a maximum of £6,400.

People currently in Estonia and Latvia are encouraged to follow the local rules and check the FCDO travel advice pages on GOV.UK for further information. The government is urging employers to be understanding of those returning from these destinations who now will need to self-isolate.

COVID-19 has profoundly changed the nature of international travel. Travellers should always check the latest advice from the FCDO, 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.

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.

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.

[BEIS in the Spending Review](#)

The government has committed billions of pounds through the [Spending Review](#) to continue supporting businesses through the pandemic and stimulate the

economic recovery, to cement the UK as a science superpower through R&D and innovation investment, and continue progress to kickstart a green industrial revolution and reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will have a key role to play delivering these pledges.

Continuing the UK's recovery from coronavirus

The UK has acted swiftly to put in place one of the most generous and comprehensive economic responses to coronavirus anywhere in the world, now totalling over £280 billion. The Spending Review has set out the government's intention to maintain this support to protect jobs, businesses and livelihoods, while stimulating the UK's economic recovery.

In the Spending Review the government has committed to invest:

- an additional £733 million in the government's Vaccines Taskforce for the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines; £128 million to support vaccines research and manufacturing, including funding for the Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre which will be capable of producing enough vaccine doses for the entire UK population in 6 months;
- more than £500 million to support the continued delivery of vital Covid-19 loans, including paying for the 12 month interest free period on the Bounce Back Loans and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Schemes; and
- £557.5 million for the British Business Bank to continue supporting SMEs across the UK to access the finance they need to grow and stimulate the economic recovery post-Covid.

Growing the UK's reputation as a science superpower

The UK has a proud record of innovation and discovery. We are the country that gave the world penicillin, the World Wide Web, the theories of gravity and evolution, that unravelled the structure of DNA. That spirit of discovery is still alive in this country today. The UK remains a science superpower, with a world leading research and development environment. To grow this reputation, the government has committed to investing £14.6 billion in research and development in 2021/22.

In the Spending Review the government has committed to invest in 2021/22:

- at least £490 million in core Innovate UK programmes and infrastructure to support ground-breaking technologies and businesses;
- £79 million in innovation loans to help cutting-edge UK businesses to access capital;
- £200 million for the Net Zero Innovation Portfolio to develop new decarbonisation solutions and accelerate near-to-market low-carbon energy innovations; and
- £450 million to support strategic government priorities, build new science capability and support the whole research and innovation ecosystem. This includes £350m for BEIS, including the first £50 million of an £800 million investment by 2024/25 towards a new agency for high-

risk high-payoff research.

Spurring a green industrial revolution and achieving net zero by 2050

The UK is a world leader in the fight against climate change, cutting emissions by 43% since 1990/ The Prime Minister recently outlined a 10 point plan which will mobilise £12 billion to enable the UK to forge ahead with achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, while spurring a green industrial revolution that will create and support up to 250,000 jobs.

In the Spending Review the government has committed to invest:

- at least £125 million in 2020/21 in nuclear technologies, as part of up to £525 million set out in the PM's 10 point plan, supporting the development of large-scale nuclear, and including up to £385 million in an Advanced Nuclear Fund for advanced nuclear R&D
- to increase the Carbon Capture and Storage Infrastructure Fund to support the construction of four new Carbon Capture and Storage clusters by 2030;
- £240 million to create a Net Zero Hydrogen Production fund to support the production of low-carbon hydrogen;
- £160 million upgrading ports and infrastructure to support the expansion of offshore wind;
- over £1 billion next year to decarbonise homes and buildings, extending the package for low carbon heat and energy efficiency announced earlier in the year;
- £122 million to support the creation of clean heat networks; and
- £500 million over next four years on the development and mass-scale production of electric vehicle batteries.

Supporting our lowest-paid workers

Millions of workers across the country are expected to receive a rise in their pay, following the government's announcement of an increase in the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage from April 2021. Rate rises include a 2.2% increase in the National Living Wage to £8.91, the equivalent of £345 extra per year for a full-time worker.

For the first time, the age of eligibility for the National Living Wage will be lowered from 25 to 23. Some of the UK's youngest workers will also benefit from a 3.6% increase to the National Minimum Wage for apprentices.

The rises mean that the annual earnings of a full-time worker on the NLW will have increased by around £4,030 since its introduction in April 2016.

Securing the future of the Post Office network

A total of £227m of funding has been provided to extend the network subsidy by £50 million and provide the Post Office with £177 million to invest in the future of the network. This will ensure that post offices in every corner of the country, including our vital rural branches, can keep providing essential

services for the people that rely on them – now and in the future.

400th Anniversary of the Mayflower

Mr Speaker, Madam Speaker, Lord Mayor, Your Excellencies, Congressman King, Congressman Holding, parliamentary colleagues, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great pleasure to close today's proceedings on this auspicious occasion.

I am reassured by the fact that not even a global pandemic could stand in the way of two old friends, ensuring an anniversary is marked properly!

But as we do so, some watching our proceedings, may regard these commemorations as a nostalgic, or a sentimental backward look at the past – but I believe this would be a mistake.

Because while our commemorations certainly acknowledge the past, they also represent the opportunity to celebrate the enduring friendship between our two countries and importantly, allow us to look forward with confidence to what more we can achieve together.

Current UK-US partnership

Today's commemorations remind us of our two nations' inextricable links to each other. Indeed, the Mayflower story is as much about Plymouth in Devon as it is Plymouth, Massachusetts; as much about Billerica in Essex as it is Billerica, Massachusetts.

And this shared history has shaped our values, and our values have set the basis for our global outlook, which explains why we see the world, with both its challenges and opportunities, so similarly.

It is therefore no surprise that no other countries do more together than the United Kingdom and the United States. Indeed, as a joint citizen myself, born in the Empire State of New York, I can attest to that in person.

We are each other's closest allies and our shared understanding means we are able to offer the world truly global leadership on the big questions and significant challenges which we face today.

Next year the UK will chair the G7, as Speaker Pelosi said, and host the COP26 summit, providing us both with an ideal opportunity to demonstrate global leadership in action by boldly shaping the solutions to ongoing global challenges. We will work with our partners to ensure that the global free trading system on which our economies are based remains fair, competitive and secure.

As part of the UK's wider leadership, we will also continue to push for an end to disputes and tit-for-tat tariffs between trading partners. Instead of escalating, we need to work together towards swift negotiated settlement.

Whether this be the climate crisis, terrorism, or rising trade tensions, the lessons of history could not be clearer – the answers to the big questions, however complex or difficult, are always found when the UK and US stand to shoulder-shoulder.

Northern Ireland

Within that context, we are reminded of the pivotal and constructive role played by the United States in the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

Securing the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement, and the consent of both communities in Northern Ireland, should never be taken for granted, and the UK looks forward to continuing to build on the momentous developments of this process, all well as protecting Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom.

And it is these commitments which explain why in no circumstances could we ever allow a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

UK-US Trade

With today's anniversary in mind, we should not forget that aside from those seeking to escape religious persecution, passengers onboard the Mayflower also included tradesman, clearly aware of the commercial opportunities between the Old World and the New.

400 years later, we can clearly see the fruits of this early entrepreneurial spirit – today the US is the UK's largest single trading partner, with total trade in 2019 reaching over £232bn, approximately \$300 billion.

Every day, a million Britons turn up to work for American-owned companies; and, every day, a million Americans turn up to work for British-owned companies.

We have more than \$1 trillion invested in each other's economies creating high-skilled jobs and economic growth.

And before the onset of the pandemic, this was an economic picture that was booming with total trade between us growing 11.3% in 2019.

With both our countries now committing to 'build back better', we are confident these figures can return to pre-pandemic levels and reach new heights.

UK-US FTA

It remains the case however, that despite our historical and cultural ties, and ever-growing trading relationship, our two countries do not have a formal

trade agreement.

The UK would be the largest economy with which the US has ever signed a comprehensive bilateral free trade agreement.

Our analysis shows that an ambitious FTA could increase GDP in the US alone by approximately \$10 billion.

And as impressive as that figure is, we should not forget it would represent the cumulative product of the expertise and enterprise of citizens on both sides of the Atlantic.

Indeed, this deal would unlock the potential of our small and medium size businesses who stand to gain the most from this FTA.

It would be a win for the High Street as well as Main Street...

A win for consumers, with a wider range of affordable products potentially meaning more 'bang for their buck' or being 'quids in' depending on which side of the Atlantic they shop!

An FTA between us would not only enhance our partnership but also send a powerful signal that free trade and open supply chains lie at the heart of the global economic recovery from COVID-19.

We could set international standards on labour, make further strides on women's economic empowerment while ensuring we lead the world in the future of digital trade and the protection of intellectual property. It can also support our climate change objectives by promoting new job and business growth opportunities in low carbon technologies, services and systems.

And as Minister for Trade Policy, I have spoken to countless business men and women in many parts of the UK and the US, who are buoyed by the exciting opportunities of an Agreement.

I firmly believe that a UK-US FTA can be part of our work together to reassert global leadership and cooperation based around open economies and vibrant democracies.

Conclusion

As I conclude, I would like to return to the experience of those Pilgrims onboard the Mayflower 400 years ago.

It took considerable courage and fortitude for those pilgrims to board that ship, undertaking a perilous journey across the Atlantic to an unfamiliar land.

Plagued by disease and material hardship, it was only with the assistance, knowledge and experience of the Native Americans, that the Colony was able to survive.

While we regret the often painful history of relations between European

settlers and Indigenous Americans, this experience serves as an important lesson for us – that through cooperation and the building of trusting relationships, combined with resilience and resourcefulness, we can achieve the most together, and with that, offer the most to the world. And I am delighted that so many of the commemorations taking place on both sides of the Atlantic this year and next involve at their heart participation from the indigenous communities so impacted by the arrival of the Mayflower.

My sincere hope is that when generations to come commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Mayflower's voyage, they will recognise our generation as one which immeasurably strengthened the partnership between United Kingdom and United States, for the benefit and prosperity of our all peoples.

Flu vaccine uptake among people aged 65+ on track to be highest on record

From 1 December, 50 to 64 years olds will also be eligible for a free vaccine.

Uptake is also the highest it has ever been in 2 and 3 year olds, at 47.6% and 49.4%, [data published by Public Health England](#) shows.

As part of this year's expanded NHS flu vaccination programme, children in Year 7 have been offered the vaccine for the first time this year. Uptake in this year is higher than all other school groups, with more than a quarter (158,748) of Year 7 children vaccinated by the end of October.

As well as protecting them from flu, vaccinating children – who are known to be 'super spreaders' of the flu – also prevents them from passing the virus on to family members and others at greater risk of serious complications and death.

Uptake in healthcare workers is also ahead of this time last year. By the end of October, more than half (51.6%) of healthcare workers had already been vaccinated – over 100,000 more compared to the same period last year.

England achieves some of the highest flu vaccine uptake rates in Europe for healthcare workers. Vaccination protects frontline staff – who are more likely to be exposed to flu at work – while also providing indirect protection to vulnerable patients.

This is a promising start to the season, and anyone who is eligible but has not yet been vaccinated is encouraged to take up the offer before flu starts circulating in the community – especially for pregnant women and those with long-term health conditions, where uptake is currently 32.2% and 41.2%.

Dr Vanessa Saliba, Head of Flu at Public Health England, said:

We have had an incredible start to the flu vaccination programme, with record uptake in 2 to 3 year olds and rates in over 65s – the highest since the 2005 to 2006 season. With over 30 million doses available this season, more people than ever are being offered a free flu vaccine.

There is still time to get vaccinated against flu before it starts circulating in the community. We are urging anyone who is eligible to take up the offer. By getting the jab, you can help protect yourself, your family and the NHS – it will help save lives.

The vaccine is the best defence against flu and it is more important than ever this year as COVID-19 will be circulating during the flu season.

Flu can develop into a serious illness that requires hospitalisation, adding pressure on the NHS and social care when they will also be dealing with cases of COVID-19.

Background information

Flu activity, including GP consultations and hospital admissions, remains low.

Flu vaccine uptake is higher in all groups except pregnant women compared to this time last year. Provisional data suggests uptake rates are:

- 75.0% in 65+ year olds
- 41.2% in under 65 years in a clinical risk group
- 32.2% in pregnant women
- 47.6% in 2 year olds
- 49.4% in 3 year olds
- 19.8% in school age children
- 51.6% in healthcare workers

[Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 26 November 2020](#)

[Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 26 November 2020](#)

We now have reason to hope that by Spring, community testing and vaccines will combine to end this era of restrictions.

But to get there we must first navigate a hard winter when the burden on our NHS is heaviest and the cold weather favours the virus.

The data already suggests national measures in England have slowed – and in some places reversed – the growth of new cases.

As more data comes in, we hope and expect to see those trends continue.

Together we have prevented our NHS from being overwhelmed,
but those dangers have not gone away.

If we ease off now, we risk losing control of this virus all over again,
casting aside our hard won gains,

and forcing us back into a New Year national lockdown with all the damage
that would mean.

The tough measures in our Winter Plan are the best way to avoid this outcome.

All our friends around the world are grappling with the same question of how
to keep people safe without retreating into a winter of hibernation.

In Italy there is a nightly curfew,

in Germany, hospitality will remain closed until 20th December,

and in France, until 20 January.

Across the whole of the UK, measures remain in place to control the virus.

Under our Winter Plan, England will return to a tiered system of local
restrictions.

Our decisions on which area enters which tier are based on public health
advice according to five indicators:

cases across all ages,

especially the over 60s,

the rate by which cases are rising or falling

the percentage of those tested in a local population who have Covid

and the pressure on the NHS.

We are publishing data packs setting out the reasons behind decisions in each
area.

To find out how this affects you, log on to [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) where all the information
is available.

I'm sorry to confirm that, from Wednesday, most of England will be in the top

two tiers with the toughest measures.

I know this will bring a great deal of heartache and frustration, especially for our vital hospitality sector,

our pubs, our restaurants, our hotels, in so many ways the soul of our communities –

which continue to bear a disproportionate share of the burden.

I really wish it were otherwise, but if we are to keep schools open – as we must – then our options in bearing down on the disease are necessarily limited.

What we will do is continue taking every possible step to protect jobs and livelihoods across the UK.

These tougher tiers strike a balance – they are sufficient to continue driving the virus downwards but it's important to recognise they are less intrusive than the current national measures.

In all tiers, shops, gyms and the leisure sector, hairdressers, other forms of personal care, places of worship will reopen.

You will no longer be instructed to stay at home, though you should continue to work from home if you can.

The rule of 6 will once again apply in public outdoor spaces and organised outdoor sport can begin again.

But there is no doubt that the restrictions in all tiers are tough – and I am sorry about that.

While the data is beginning to improve, the virus is still prevalent, and the faster we drive it down the faster we can lift restrictions.

And that is exactly what these new tiers are designed to achieve.

While the previous tiers slowed the spread of the virus,

they were never quite enough to cut the R below 1 and keep it there,

so areas did not escape whatever level they were placed in.

Our new approach is designed to reduce R below 1,

opening a path for areas to move down the scale, as soon as the situation improves.

And crucially, we now have the means to accelerate that moment of escape with rapid community testing,

allowing anyone carrying the disease – including those without symptoms – to isolate

thereby reducing the R.

And the truth is that at least one in three people with Covid have no symptoms at all and may be spreading the disease without even knowing that they've got it.

The only way to identify them and protect everyone is through mass testing.

Liverpool shows what can be achieved.

In Liverpool, in the space of two and a half weeks, over 240,000 tests have been conducted

and together with the effect of national restrictions,

this has helped to reduce the number of cases in Liverpool City Region by more than two thirds.

So having previously been in tier 3, Liverpool City Region and Warrington will now be in tier 2.

This is a success story which we want other parts of the country to replicate

so we will work with local government, public health leaders and our fantastic Armed Forces,

to offer community testing to tier 3 areas as quickly as possible,

opening the way for them to follow Liverpool's example.

Testing on this scale is untried, but in due course, if it works, where people test negative, it may also be possible for families and communities to be released from certain restrictions

even if their home area stays in tier 3.

The allocation of tiers will be reviewed every fourteen days, starting on 16 December.

So your tier is not your destiny.

Every area has the means of escape.

And I have no doubt that together we can get through this Winter,

suppress the virus until vaccines come to our aid,

and then reclaim our lives and all the things that we love.