

Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee 09 October 2020

News story

UK statement following the third meeting of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee between the UK Government and European Commission.



The third meeting of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee was held today via video conference and co-chaired by officials from the UK Government and the European Commission.

A representative from the Northern Ireland Executive also attended as part of the UK delegation in line with the commitment made in the New Decade, New Approach deal.

The UK and the EU exchanged updates on the implementation of the Protocol and discussed the decisions to be taken by the Joint Committee.

The UK reiterated the importance of commitment by both sides to protecting the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all respects and upholding Northern Ireland's place in the UK's customs territory.

Both the UK and the EU noted the intensification of technical discussions on the Protocol.

The UK remains committed to constructive engagement to resolve all outstanding issues as swiftly as possible.

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Minister for Africa announces closer UK-Southern Africa partnerships on visit to Malawi and Zambia

The UK Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, travelled to Malawi and Zambia this week (5 – 9 October) where he built on UK partnerships across Southern Africa to promote, support and reinforce our shared national interests – with a focus on boosting regional trade links and tackling the health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

He visited businesses in the two countries – including Zazu, a British-backed financial services start-up in Lusaka and 14Trees, a CDC investment in Lilongwe producing environmentally sustainable bricks.

In Zambia, the Minister announced UK funding to help small-and-medium-sized (SME) firms to access investment, innovate and improve productivity. This support will help create 50,000 jobs and facilitate over £100m of private sector investment into high-potential Zambian businesses.

James Duddridge, UK Minister for Africa, pictured meeting His Excellency Lazarus Chakwera, President of Malawi.

In Malawi, a major focus of discussions with the President, Vice President and Finance Minister was how to drive growth through improving the investment climate and reforming state-owned enterprises, building on the foundations of the UK-Africa Investment Summit in January.

He also met with the Zambian Minister for Finance and trade bodies to discuss a new UK-backed partnership between the Government of Zambia and Trademark East Africa (TMEA). The support will help improve trade flows at one of Southern Africa's busiest borders – the Nakonde border post between Zambia and Tanzania, through which 135,000 trucks pass every year.

Informal cross-border trade accounts for up to 30-40% of regional trade across Southern Africa, making it a vital source of income and food security for communities across the region. But with many borders closed to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic, traders are missing out on crucial earnings their families rely on.

To ensure key border posts in Zambia, South Africa and Malawi can remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minister announced that the UK is partnering with the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) to provide advice and training to traders, governments and border agencies – allowing traders to resume their business legally and safely.

James Duddridge, Minister for Africa said:

From farmers selling their crops at regional markets, to growing African businesses exporting to global markets, traders across Southern African are an important and growing driver of regional business, investment and prosperity.

UK support to help both formal and informal traders to move their goods quickly and safely will help Southern African trade to not just survive the economic consequences of COVID-19 but thrive in the future.

In both Malawi and Zambia, Minister Duddridge heard about the countries' responses to the global COVID-19 pandemic and announced:

- New UK aid support for the Malawi Ministry of Health's COVID-19 plan, to procure more supplies, deploy more front-line nurses and increase oxygen supplies for those seriously affected.
- UK-backed technical assistance to design and deliver a new emergency power solution for the Levy Mwanawasa Hospital in Lusaka, enabling the hospital to provide up to 800 more beds for critical COVID-19 care.

On a visit to 260 Brands/SEBA Foods – a Zambian food SME that has received UK support to invest in expanding their capacity to produce nutritious foods for the domestic market – the Minister announced UK funding to tackle childhood malnutrition in Zambia.

During the Minister's visit to Malawi, he also met with President Lazarus Chakwera and discussed additional UK support for the new President's commitment to fighting corruption. This will strengthen Malawi's anti-corruption environment and increase penalties for serious and organised corruption, building on existing UK support which recently helped retrieve MK782 million (around £806,000) in assets and convict 17 criminals of corruption.

As the UK assumes the COP26 Presidency Minister Duddridge welcomed Malawi and Zambia's international climate engagement, and reaffirmed the UK's commitment to bringing expertise, influence and ambition to our climate action partnerships across Africa ahead of COP26 in November 2021.

Notes to Editors

The Private Enterprise Programme Zambia 2

The Private Enterprise Programme Zambia 2 (PEPZ2) will strengthen Zambia's reputation as a finance and investment hub for the region.

It will be supported by UK funding of up to £55m over the coming years that will work to:

- support Zambian businesses in crucial sectors with finance and technical assistance to support innovation, growth, and inclusive job creation
- create and sustain over 50,000 jobs
- establish Zambia as a hub of investment in the region, supporting the

creation of new investment vehicles, and promoting linkages between businesses and investors to leverage over £100m of private finance.

International Organization of Migration

The UK will provide £1 million funding to implement a programme with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support informal traders in Malawi, South Africa and Zambia – who rely on trading across the borders around Southern Africa for their livelihoods and income – to trade safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

TradeMark East Africa

The UK will provide £500,000 support to boost Zambia's regional trade links during the COVID-19 pandemic, through backing for a new partnership between the Government of Zambia and Trademark East Africa (TMEA). TMEA's activity at Nakonde will build on existing work the UK is supporting at Zambia's Chriundu border post with Zimbabwe.

The Tackling Serious and Organised Corruption (TSOC) Programme

The UK has committed an additional £10.8m to the Tackling Serious and Organised Corruption (TSOC) Programme to reduce the opportunity for corrupt activity by strengthening the systems regulating how money and services move through the economy; and increase the risks of engaging in corruption, by publicly exposing corrupt individuals and corporations, seizing assets, and improving strategic casework and conviction rates.

UNICEF Malawi

Since the onset of Covid19, UK aid provided £1.8 million for the response in Malawi. The new UK aid funding of £6 million, through UNICEF Malawi, will support the Malawi Government's COVID-19 preparedness and response by:

- Expanding surveillance to 12 additional districts (21 total)
- Equipping two more Emergency Treatment Units (eight in total)
- Deploying 40 nurses and frontline health workers in hard-hit maternal and neonatal mortality districts to protect basic services
- Supporting trials of pharmaceuticals to treat ambulatory COVID-19 cases and avert hospitalisation
- Scaling up use of face-coverings to reduce contagion risk in public settings
- Completing a new oxygen plant at the Kamuzu Central Hospital; and procuring vital equipment (700,000 gloves, 140 Oxygen Concentrators, 50,000 masks, and other medical supplies) to treat 2,500 patients
- Improving national awareness, reaching 2 million more people
- Strengthening the Emergency Operation Centre of the Ministry of Health and supporting coordination in 12 more districts.

Strengthening health resilience in Zambia

The UK is committing an extra ZMK4.1million (£180,000) and expert technical

assistance to design and deliver a new emergency power solution for the Levy Mwanawasa Hospital in Lusaka.

Tackling child malnutrition in Zambia

The UK is committing an additional £12m of funding to the Tackling Child and Maternal Undernutrition programme in Zambia. This supports builds on UK support to scaling up nutrition efforts in Zambia since 2011.

[Pubs Code Adjudicator \(PCA\) Bulletin](#) [October 2020](#)

News story

Latest information from the PCA.



The [PCA bulletin – October 2020](#) (PDF, 205KB, 2 pages) covers:

- The revised and reissued Regulatory Compliance Handbook
- New 'What Tied Tenants Need to Know' factsheets
- Pubs Code communications research project
- Information about how to keep up to date with the latest Pubs Code news

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[Job Support Scheme expanded to firms](#)

required to close due to Covid Restrictions

- Job Support Scheme will be expanded to support businesses across the UK required to close their premises due to coronavirus restrictions
- government will pay two thirds of employees' salaries to protect jobs over the coming months
- cash grants for businesses required to close in local lockdowns also increased to up to £3,000 per month

Under the expansion, firms whose premises are legally required to shut for some period over winter as part of local or national restrictions will receive grants to pay the wages of staff who cannot work – protecting jobs and enabling businesses to reopen quickly once restrictions are lifted.

The government will support eligible businesses by paying two thirds of each employees' salary (or 67%), up to a maximum of £2,100 a month.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

Throughout the crisis the driving force of our economic policy has not changed.

I have always said that we will do whatever is necessary to protect jobs and livelihoods as the situation evolves.

The expansion of the Job Support Scheme will provide a safety net for businesses across the UK who are required to temporarily close their doors, giving them the right support at the right time.

Under the scheme, employers will not be required to contribute towards wages and only asked to cover NICs and pension contributions, a very small proportion of overall employment costs. It is estimated that around half of potential claims are likely not to incur employer NICs or auto-enrolment pension contributions and so face no employer contribution.

Businesses will only be eligible to claim the grant while they are subject to restrictions and employees must be off work for a minimum of seven consecutive days.

The scheme will begin on 1 November and will be available for six months, with a review point in January. In line with the rest of the JSS, payments to businesses will be made in arrears, via a HMRC claims service that will be available from early December. Employees of firms that have been legally closed in the period before 1 November are eligible for the CJRS.

The scheme is UK wide and the UK Government will work with the devolved administrations to ensure the scheme operates effectively across all four

nations.

This comes alongside intensive engagement with local leaders today on potential measures are coming in their areas.

In addition to the expansion of the JSS, the government is making the Local Restrictions Support Grant scheme more generous so that businesses in England can receive up to £3,000 per month, and are eligible for payment sooner, after only two weeks of closure rather than three. This could benefit hundreds of thousands of businesses, including restaurants, pubs, nightclubs, bowling alleys and many more.

The devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will benefit from a £1.3 billion increase to their guaranteed funding for 2020-21 – allowing them to continue their response to Covid-19 including through similar measures if they wish.

These measures will sit alongside the original JSS – which is designed to support businesses that are facing low demand over the winter months – and the £1,000 Job Retention Bonus (JRB) which encourages employers to keep staff on payroll.

They build on the government's wider package of unprecedented measures to help protect, create and support jobs through the pandemic, to ensure that nobody is left without hope or opportunity.

Further information

- Further details on the expanded JSS can be found on this factsheet: [Job Support Scheme Expansion for Closed Business Premises](#) (PDF, 72.1KB, 3 pages)
- For photos please [see our Flickr](#).
- Further guidance on the scheme will be set out by HMRC in due course.
- This scheme will cover businesses that, as a result of restrictions set by one or more of the four governments in the UK, are legally required to close their premises. This includes businesses that are required to provide only delivery and collection services from their premises. To be eligible employees must be employed and an RTI submission notifying payment in respect of that employee to HMRC must have been made on or before 23 September.
- Under the scheme, employees will need to be furloughed for a minimum of seven consecutive days at any given time and the payments to employers will be made monthly in arrears.
- The government is now making this scheme more generous so that businesses receive up to £3,000 per month, rather than up to £1,500 per three weeks, and they are eligible for payment sooner, after only two weeks of closure rather than three.
- Properties with a rateable value of £15,000 or under will receive grants of £667 per two weeks of closure (£1,334 per month).
- Properties with a rateable value of over £15,000 and less than £51,000 will receive grants of £1,000 per two weeks of closure (£2,000 per month).

- Properties with an rateable value of £51,000 or over will receive grants of £1500 per two weeks of closure (£3,000 per month).
- The government is also extending the scheme to include businesses which have been forced to close on a national rather than a local basis.
- In July we announced an unprecedented guarantee that the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would receive a minimum of £12.7 billion in additional resource funding this year.
- Today the UK government is uplifting that by £1.3 billion, to at least £14 billion. This means at least £7.2 billion for the Scottish Government, £4.4 billion for the Welsh Government and £2.4 billion for the Northern Ireland Executive, on top of their Spring Budget 20 funding.
- We will also continue to help local authorities. Those at the highest levels of incidence will continue to receive targeted funding based on population size to support test, trace and contain activities at this stage of the national Covid-19 response. This is on top of £3.7 billion in grants to address Covid-related pressures, and £300 million for local authorities to develop outbreak plans, already allocated across England.
- The government has previously committed £400 million to support local authorities' Test, Trace and Contain Activities in England:
 - £300 million has already been allocated for local authorities to develop local outbreak plans
 - the remaining £100 million is being allocated to local authorities as 'surge funding' in areas of local restriction
 - £20 million of this £100 million has already been allocated based on population size, including to local authorities in Leicester, Lancashire, the North East, Merseyside, and the West Midlands
- Broader government support to local authorities in England due to Covid-19 includes:
 - over £3.7 billion of un-ringfenced grant funding to help them respond to pressure across all their services
 - over £1.1 billion ringfenced to support social care providers, helping to tackle the spread of the virus
 - a down payment of £50 million to set up and run the Test and Trace Support Payment – £500 for low-income workers who can't work from home and are told to self-isolate – and we will fully fund the costs of this scheme, including £15 million in discretionary funds
 - we're providing a further £30 million to LAs improve compliance with and enforcement of non-pharmaceutical interventions (such as self-isolation and business closures) over the next four months, including through COVID Marshalls

[Companies House to resume compulsory](#)

strike off process

News story

From tomorrow, we'll begin striking off companies that we believe are no longer in business or operation.



Temporary easement measures taken in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) have been kept under monthly review.

From tomorrow (10 October) the measure to suspend compulsory strike off action will be lifted.

This means we'll resume the process to remove a company from the register if there's reasonable cause to believe it's no longer carrying on business or in operation.

For example, if:

- company documents are outstanding, and we've had no response to our letters
- letters sent by Companies House are returned undelivered
- the company has no directors

Companies that do not file their annual accounts or confirmation statement will normally receive 2 letters from Companies House. A notice is then published in the Gazette to tell the public that the registrar intends to [strike off the company](#).

Any person with an interest in a company which is nearing strike off should [register an objection to dissolution](#) at Companies House.

Stuart Morgan, Intelligence and Enforcement Service Owner at Companies House, said:

Companies House is committed to supporting businesses who may be struggling during these unprecedented times, and we have introduced a number of legislative and non-legislative easements

since April to provide support.

However, it's important that we have the right balance between supporting businesses, maintaining the integrity of the data on our register, and making sure that directors are complying with their legal requirements.

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