

1000s of seafarers to receive fair pay as UK changes law on national minimum wage

- government extends protection to guarantee National Minimum Wage for maritime workers
- new wage law to ensure fair pay for over 10,000 maritime workers across the country
- latest move in government's long-standing work to support seafarers, ensuring UK leads the way with highest standards on pay

From today (1 October 2020) a change to the law will mean seafarers will receive pay protection equal to every other sector.

Until now, maritime has been the only sector in the UK that does not apply [National Minimum Wage](#) protection for workers. This change means that more than 10,000 seafarers across the UK will no longer be undercut, and puts the UK ahead of any other EU state in its protection on pay.

The move further enhances the UK's maritime sector, which is recognised as having some of the highest standards in the world.

Maritime Minister Robert Courts said:

This country's rich maritime history is built upon its extraordinary workers. Ensuring a fair wage for our seafarers, especially the hundreds of thousands who have kept this country going through the pandemic, means that UK workers are not priced out of jobs by employers.

This is just the start – our [Maritime 2050 strategy](#) clearly sets the vision to see a fairer global maritime industry and the UK is determined to lead by example.

British seafarers are recognised as some of the most highly skilled worldwide. Buoyed by the highest number of maritime training providers out of any country, mariners can train and qualify on apprenticeships or seafarer training courses at over 25 universities and colleges across the UK.

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) Workers' General Secretary Mick Cash said:

This is a welcome development at a tough time for seafarers in the UK and around the world. Entitlement to National Minimum Wage pay rates on domestic routes puts seafarers on a par with land-based workers and represents a victory for RMT's campaigning on

seafarers' rights.

Enforcement of this improved protection for seafarers is key to it increasing employment for UK ratings across the shipping industry, from the ferries sector to growth areas like offshore wind, decommissioning and coastal freight.

This is a first step in improving seafarers' rights and RMT remains committed to working with government and regulators in support of successful enforcement of this legislation for seafarers.

Today's announcement builds on the UK government's longstanding work to safeguard British maritime workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and follows the successful repatriation of 13,000 seafarers from UK shores whose movement was restricted due to closed borders.

To ensure their swift protection, the UK held the world's first maritime summit with the UN and secured international recognition for seafarers as key-workers to enable free movement and quicker repatriation for those struggling to get home as a result of the pandemic.

Business Minister Paul Scully said:

The National Minimum Wage has put millions of pounds into the pockets of workers across the UK, and we want to ensure that as many workers as possible are entitled to receive it.

This law change will ensure tens of thousands of seafarers in UK waters get paid fairly for their work – bringing the maritime sector in line with every other industry.

To ensure their swift repatriation, the Maritime Minister wrote to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) at the start of the outbreak on 23 March 2020, pressing that all states follow the UK's work in repatriating workers regardless of their nationality or employment.

To help support their wellbeing here in the UK, working in partnership with the Merchant Navy Welfare Board and Seafarers UK, the government is supporting seafarers in UK shores with mobile internet routers (MiFi units) – onboard ships where 100s of seafarers are still waiting to return home – giving them free internet access so that they can stay in contact with friends and family.

Public love for nature during Covid-19 highlighted by new survey

Natural England's new People and Nature Survey has revealed that during April-June 2020, almost nine in 10 adults in England reported that protection of the environment is important to them personally. Nearly three quarters of adults were concerned about biodiversity loss in England.

The nation's gardens, parks, woodlands and rivers have played a huge part in helping us all through the coronavirus pandemic, with almost nine in 10 of adults in England reporting that being in nature makes them very happy. Four in 10 adults reported spending more time in nature than before the coronavirus pandemic, with health and wellbeing being amongst the main reasons for getting outside.

However, the research indicates clear inequalities in opportunity for engagement with nature. Some adults were not getting outside very often (if at all) with one in three not visiting a natural space in a two-week period, and one in five adults not having visited nature in a month.

The research also shows how important local parks and green spaces are to the nation's mental and physical wellbeing, with urban green space (such as a park, field or playground) being the most frequently visited natural environments.

Marian Spain, Chief Executive of Natural England, said:

These new official statistics show just how crucial it is to invest in a green recovery. There's huge public concern about the well documented threats to wildlife and a clear case to invest in nature-rich spaces close to where people live and work to help the nation recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

This wealth of evidence leaves no doubt about the importance of connecting with nature is for our physical health and our mental wellbeing. It's vital that the whole of our society has access to these benefits. If we don't tackle this we cannot claim to have an equitable green recovery.

We look forward to working with the government to reverse nature's decline and ensure that everyone – no matter their background or life experience – can benefit from a better natural environment.

The official statistics show that socio-economic status is related to access to natural spaces – you are less likely to have visited a natural space if you are living in an area of high deprivation, have a low income, have a low level of education, or are not working. Older people, people from minority ethnic groups and those with a long-term illness or condition were less

likely to have visited a natural space.

There are also regional differences, with 66% of adults who live in the South East visiting nature in a 14 days period (highest) compared with 52% who live in the West Midlands (lowest). There is also some evidence that COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in access to natural space.

Natural England is committed to promoting health and wellbeing through the natural environment, helping more people from a wider cross-section of society benefit directly from the environment. It is currently delivering the government's Children And Nature programme to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This includes delivering green school grounds, supporting pupil visits to green spaces and improving woodland outreach activities. It is also supporting the government's new two-year pilot to bring green prescribing to four urban and rural areas that have been hit the hardest by coronavirus.

Prime Minister: World must unite to defeat COVID and prevent future pandemics

- The Prime Minister will address the UN General Assembly today [Saturday]
- He will call on world leaders to overcome growing divisions and set out a five-point plan to prevent future pandemics
- The PM will also announce significant new funding to the COVAX vaccines procurement pool and the WHO

The world must overcome the extraordinary divisions created by coronavirus and unite to defeat the pandemic, the Prime Minister will tell the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) today [Saturday].

In his virtual address to the Assembly, Boris Johnson will announce a series of new measures to help lead the world out of the crisis and set out an ambitious five-point plan to prevent future pandemics.

The plan, developed in consultation with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and The Wellcome Trust, starts with a proposal to develop a worldwide network of 'zoonotic hubs' to identify dangerous pathogens before they leap from animals to humans, as COVID-19 is believed to have done.

Other measures include boosting manufacturing capacity for treatments and vaccines, improving pandemic early warning systems, agreeing global protocols for health crises and removing trade barriers.

The Prime Minister will also announce significant new investment in COVAX,

the international COVID-19 vaccines procurement pool. The UK will contribute an initial £71 million to secure purchase rights for up to 27 million vaccine doses for the UK population. This complements other initiatives by the Government to procure any coronavirus vaccine that proves to be safe and effective.

Alongside the domestic investment the UK will commit £500 million in aid funding for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, a facility to help 92 of the world's poorest countries access a coronavirus vaccine. The funding will support developing countries in tackling the virus and help to halt the global spread of the pandemic, keeping us all safer.

As he addresses the UN General Assembly, the Prime Minister will say:

"After nine months of fighting Covid, the very notion of the international community looks tattered.

"We know that we cannot continue in this way. Unless we unite and turn our fire against our common foe, we know that everyone will lose.

"Now is the time therefore – here at what I devoutly hope will be the first and last ever Zoom UNGA – for humanity to reach across borders and repair these ugly rifts."

"Here in the UK, the birthplace of Edward Jenner who pioneered the world's first vaccine, we are determined to do everything in our power to work with our friends across the UN to heal those divisions and to heal the world."

To ensure we are match-fit for other global health crises, the Prime Minister will also announce the UK's pledge of £340 million over the next four years to the World Health Organization – an increase of 30 per cent from the previous four-year period, making Britain one of the largest donors.

Funding for the WHO will support its vital work in fighting threats to our health worldwide. It will also help to fund an in-depth review into the origins of coronavirus and the implementation of necessary reforms to ensure the WHO is flexible and responsive in future emergencies.

Boris Johnson will pledge to use the UK's G7 presidency next year to work with our global partners to implement the five-point plan, which represents an innovative new approach to preventing global health crises. The proposals he will make today are:

1) Set up a worldwide network of zoonotic research hubs to spot a new pandemic before it starts. About 60 percent of the pathogens circulating in the human population originated in animals and leapt from one species to the other in a "zoonotic" transmission. Zoonotic research centres would be charged with spotting dangerous animal pathogens before they cross the species barrier and infect human beings.

2) Develop manufacturing capacity for treatments and vaccines. A strong

manufacturing capability, in the UK and around the world, will mean tried and tested treatments and vaccines can be held ready to deploy against emerging threats.

3) Design a global pandemic early warning system to predict a coming health crisis. This would require a vast expansion of our ability to collect and analyse samples and distribute the findings, using health data-sharing agreements covering every country.

4) Agree global protocols ready for a future health emergency. In the coronavirus pandemic, countries have fought 193 different campaigns against the same enemy. A common set of protocols, covering everything from information sharing to PPE supplies, would allow us to respond more cohesively and effectively.

5) Reduce the trade barriers which have impeded the coronavirus response. Many countries imposed export controls at the outset of the pandemic, about two thirds of which remain in force. Tariffs on key goods like soap can exceed 30 percent. The UK has committed to lifting tariffs on many COVID-critical products from January 1st.

In addition to addressing global health issues at UNGA, the Prime Minister is urging international action on climate change and biodiversity. He will address two UNGA events on biodiversity next week.

Notes to editors:

- The Business Secretary Alok Sharma announced we would be joining COVAX on the 18th September
- £500m COVAX AMC funding is in addition to £48m committed during the UK-hosted Global Vaccine Summit, on 4 June 2020.
- With this new funding, the UK is the third largest donor to the WHO – after the US and the Gates Foundation.
- The PM's UNGA speech was pre-recorded in line with other leaders, and will play out at the UN General Assembly at approximately 1500 BST on Saturday 24th September. The transcript and video will be released after broadcast, and broadcasters will be able to take the UN feed live.

Preserving global biodiversity

From the tiniest of plants to the mightiest, most majestic megafauna, the natural life that so enriches our planet today is declining at a pace that is truly terrifying.

Almost 70 per cent of the world's wildlife has been lost in the past half century – a lifetime to many of us but the blink of an eye in the grand sweep of planetary evolution.

As many as one million species of plants and animals are threatened with extinction.

We are on the brink of a world in which the orang-utan and the black rhino can be found not in the jungles of Borneo or the savannahs of Africa, but confined to the pages of a history book.

And consider the pangolin – that scaly mammalian miracle of evolution boasting a prehensile tongue that is somehow attached to its pelvis.

I don't believe any of us would choose to bequeath a planet on which such a wonderfully bizarre little creature is as unfamiliar to future generations as dinosaurs and dodos are to us today.

Yet that is what awaits us if we continue down this road.

And that's not just bad news for the pangolins, though it is a tragedy – it is bad news for all of us.

Upset the delicate balance nature has achieved over tens of millions of years and the consequences could be catastrophic – for the economy, for the climate, for food security, for public health, for all the Sustainable Development Goals.

Yet alongside the growing evidence of looming disaster I see growing evidence of a desire to avert it.

There is the very fact of this summit, the first of its kind.

The Leaders' Pledge for Nature has been signed by the heads of many nations, including, I am proud to say, myself.

And that's not all the UK has been doing.

At home we're putting biodiversity targets into law; removing deforestation from our own supply chains; shifting our land use subsidies to support rather than damage nature.

Internationally, we spearheaded the ambitious Global Ocean Alliance, committed to protecting at least 30 per cent of the world's oceans by 2030.

We've doubled our funding for International Climate Finance.

We are launching a £500 million Blue Planet Fund to protect and restore marine ecosystems, and our Blue Belt programme is on track to protect marine areas the size of India.

And of course as co-host of COP26 and president of next year's G7 we are going to make sure the natural world stays right at the top of the global agenda.

Because the rhinos and the pangolins and all the other threatened species and everyone who relies on that diversity of life, they need more than good

intentions.

They need concerted, co-ordinated, global action.

Let this be the day that action begins.

And let us leave the next generation a world every bit as diverse and wondrous as the one we inherited.

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 30 September 2020

When I spoke to you all last week I explained that the number of Covid patients going into hospital had doubled in a fortnight

and I explained that the rate of infections was climbing steeply.

I said that we faced the sad reality that on these figures we could expect many more daily deaths.

And so that's why we announced the package of restrictions and stronger enforcement last week.

At the same time we've been intensifying the local lockdowns in areas where the disease has been flaring up.

I want to say – I know how tough it is and has been for these communities

and I want to pay a particular tribute to the students who are experiencing a first term back at university unlike anything they could have imagined.

I can assure you, assure everybody at university, that plans are being put in place to allow students home safely for Christmas.

I wish I could tell you tonight that the impact of this package has already begun to appear but it will take time to feed through.

And yesterday we saw the biggest rise in daily cases since the pandemic began, today a further 7,108.

We've also had a tragic increase in the number of daily deaths – with 71 yesterday and again today.

And these figures show why our plan is so essential

We now have to stick to it together – and we should stick to it with confidence,

because there are many ways in which we are far better prepared than we were in March.

We are on track to hit our target of being able to conduct 500,000 tests a day by the end of October,

We're already exceeding the number of tests per capita that are conducted in Germany, France and Spain.

We have over 2,000 beds that could be available across seven Nightingale hospitals, and we will be able to go further if needed.

We've ordered 32 billion items of PPE, and we'll have a four month stockpile of masks, visors, gowns and other essentials for winter.

By December, by the way, we expect UK manufacturers will meet 70 per cent of the demand for PPE compared with just one per cent before the pandemic.

And in the last six months we have more than trebled the availability of mechanical ventilators to our NHS across the UK to 31,500.

But the best way forwards, to protect the NHS, save lives,

to keep our children in school and the economy moving,

is to follow the rules wherever we live.

So I want to thank everyone for the fantastic national effort that we are seeing, continuing to see

And no matter how impatient we may be, how fed up we may become

there is only one way of doing this,

and that's by showing a collective forbearance, common sense and willingness to make sacrifices for the safety of others.

At this critical moment, when I know people will be wanting to know the details, I will be providing regular updates through these press conferences.

And I have to be clear, that if the evidence requires it, we will not hesitate to take further measures that would, I'm afraid, be more costly than the ones we have put into effect now

But if we put in the work together now, then we give ourselves the best possible chance of avoiding that outcome and avoiding further measures

I know some people will think we should give up and let the virus take its course, despite the huge loss of life that would potentially entail.

I have to say, I profoundly disagree.

And I don't think it's what the British people want, I don't think they want to throw in the sponge, they want to fight and defeat this virus and that is what we are going to do.

Even as we fight Covid, it is vital that people get all the treatment they need for other conditions.

But I must be clear, if the NHS were to be overwhelmed by covid, then no-one could get any such care.

That's why we must bear down on the virus now, so that we never reach that point,

and I am absolutely confident that with ever increased testing, with better treatments and of course with the prospect of a vaccine,

we will get through this.

So let's follow the rules,

wash our hands, cover our faces, observe social distancing,

download the app, as 14 million of you have already done,

and together we will fight back against this virus,

protect our NHS and save many more lives.