

Duty Free extended to the EU from January 2021

This means that passengers will be able to buy duty-free alcohol and tobacco products, where available, in British ports, airports, and international train stations, and aboard ships, trains and planes.

This follows [a consultation](#) with industry on our approach to taxing goods carried across borders for personal use from January 2021, as the end of the transition period brings with it powers to set our own rules in this area.

The amount that passengers can bring back with them from non-EU Countries will also be significantly increased, and extended to EU countries, providing one of the most generous allowances anywhere in the world.

This means that passengers coming to Britain will be able to bring back, for example, three crates of beer, two case of still wine and one case of sparkling wine to GB without paying UK duties.

Tax-free sales

We are also ending tax-free sales in airports of goods such as electronics and clothing for passengers travelling to non-EU countries, following concerns that the tax-concession is not always passed on to consumers in the airport. In some instances these tax-free goods are brought back into the country by UK residents, putting high street retailers at a disadvantage.

VAT Retail Export Scheme

As part of these changes, VAT refunds for overseas visitors in British shops will be removed. Overseas visitors will still be able to buy items VAT-free in store and have them sent direct to their overseas addresses, while the costly system of claiming VAT refunds on items they take home in their luggage will be ended.

Further information

The post-transition passengers VAT and excise consultation was launched at Spring Budget 2020 and closed in May.

UK excise duty will no longer be due on alcohol and tobacco bought when leaving GB. For example, alcohol purchased duty-free on the way to the EU could be up to:

- £2.23 cheaper for a 75cl bottle of wine.
- £2.86 cheaper for a 75cl bottle of Champagne or Prosecco.
- £2.28 cheaper for six 50cl cans of 4% ABV beer.
- £11.50 cheaper for a 1l bottle of 40% ABV spirits.

New GB inbound personal allowances specified below. For example, someone will

be able to bring three crates of beer, two cases of still wine and one case of sparkling wine to GB without paying UK duties.

Alcohol

- 42 litres of beer
- 18 litres of still wine
- 4 litres of spirits OR 9 litres of sparkling wine, fortified wine or any alcoholic beverage less than 22% ABV

Tobacco

- 200 cigarettes OR
- 100 cigarillos OR
- 50 cigars OR
- 250g tobacco OR
- 200 sticks of tobacco for heating
- or any proportional combination of the above

Any other goods

- £390 or £270 if travelling by private plane or boat

The beer allowance of 42 litres will equate to three crates of 568ml (pint) cans, the maximum unit per can that beer is sold in. If passengers prefer to buy 330ml bottles of beer this would equate to five crates.

Duty free, personal allowance and the VAT Retail Export Scheme changes will apply in England, Wales and Scotland.

[Largest testing programme for coronavirus reinforces need for vigilance](#)

- Over 300,000 volunteers tested across England between 24 July and 7 September, as part of the country's largest study into coronavirus
- Findings from Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI show the virus is now doubling every 7 to 8 days
- Findings reinforce the need for the 'rule of 6' for social gatherings

The third report from the country's largest study on coronavirus rates of infection has been published today showing that cases are increasing steadily across the country.

The study examines levels of infection in the general population in England. The [latest findings for the period between 22 August and 7 September](#) –

testing more than 150,000 volunteers – indicate cases were doubling every 7 to 8 days. It is estimated 13 people per 10,000 were infected in England, compared with 4 people per 10,000 between 24 July and 11 August 2020.

These findings reinforce the need for continued vigilance from the public.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We've seen all across the world how a rise in cases, initially among younger people, leads to hospitalisations and fatalities. The pandemic is not over, and everyone has a role to play to keep the virus at bay and avoid another further restrictions.

It's so important that everyone abides by the law and socialise in groups up to 6, make space between you and those outside your household, get a test and self-isolate if you develop symptoms and wash your hands regularly. It is vital you engage with NHS Test and Trace service if contacted to provide details of your close contacts and self-isolate if you are asked to do so.

COVID-19 cases are shown as no longer clustering in healthcare or care home settings, as seen in May and June, suggesting the virus is now spread more widely in the community. Infections are increasing across all adult age groups below the age of 65 years and across all areas of the country, with higher rates seen in young people aged 18 to 24 years. Infection is highest in Yorkshire and the Humber, the North East and the North West.

The latest findings from Imperial are published today at the same time as the government's official weekly R rate. The R rate published by Imperial has been estimated based on a cohort of 150,000 volunteers within a specific timeframe. The weekly official government R rate is produced by SAGE and uses many data sources and models to produce a consensus view in the scientific community of the likely R number over a longer timeframe.

This is one of several studies that feed into government decision-making and policies on tackling the spread of COVID-19 in England. The Prime Minister this week announced further measures to keep coronavirus cases low. From Monday we are introducing the rule of 6 in law. Individuals must only meet socially in groups of up to 6 people in any settings indoors or outdoors, including your home, restaurants and pubs. There are some exemptions including organised sports, weddings and funerals. It is important to continue to keep your distance from others outside your household.

Professor Paul Elliott, director of the programme at Imperial from the School of Public Health, said:

Our large and robust dataset clearly shows a concerning trend in coronavirus infections, where cases are growing quickly across England and are no longer concentrated in key workers. What we are seeing is evidence of an epidemic in the community and not a result

of increased testing capacity. This is a critical time and it's vital that the public, our health system and policymakers are aware of the situation as we cannot afford complacency.

Kelly Beaver, Managing Director of Public Affairs at Ipsos MORI said:

Each and every participant in our study has contributed immensely to the national effort in tracking COVID-19 across England. I would like to thank all those who have taken part for their invaluable contribution. By participating in the study they have helped to provide timely data to government on the rise in case numbers and allowed ministers to adopt measures to combat that rise.

The Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) programme is the largest, most significant piece of research looking at how the virus is spreading across the country.

The study was commissioned by DHSC and carried out by a world-class team of scientists, clinicians and researchers at Imperial College London, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and Ipsos MORI. It is one of many pieces of research that feeds into government decision making on keeping the country safe from COVID-19.

The latest findings cover the period between 22 August and 7 September 2020, testing over 150,000 people.

Overall prevalence of infection in the community was 0.13%, or 13 people per 10,000.

Out of 152,909 swab results, 136 were positive.

Prevalence doubled every 7.7 days.

Reproduction number R was estimated to be 1.7.

Prevalence of infection was highest in Yorkshire and the Humber and the North West at 0.17% followed by 0.16% in the North East.

There were no significant differences between the prevalence of infection for key workers and non-key workers.

Recent contact with a known COVID-19 case (confirmed or tested) was associated with a higher prevalence at 2.74% than for no contact with a COVID-19 case at 0.08%.

Black, Asian, mixed and other ethnicity was associated with higher prevalence of infection at 0.20%, 0.20%, 0.16% and 0.23% respectively compared with white ethnicity at 0.08%.

The highest rates of infection were at 0.25% in young adults aged 18 to 24 years, up from 0.08% from 24 July to 11 August. However, the prevalence of

infection increased at all ages from 18 to 64 years between July and August 2020.

65% of participants who tested positive did not report any symptoms at the time of swabbing or in the previous 7 days.

The prevalence was highest among those who reported classic COVID-19 symptoms (high temperature, new continuous cough, loss of smell or taste) at 0.68%.

Randomly selected people over the age of 5 from across England volunteered to provide nose and throat swabs. These were tested for antigens indicating the presence of the virus to show whether someone is currently infected with COVID-19.

In line with government guidance those with positive test results and their household were asked to self-isolate and they were contacted by NHS Test and Trace to provide details of their contacts.

The report was commissioned by DHSC and carried out by a world-class team of scientists, clinicians and researchers at Imperial College London, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and Ipsos MORI.

Read [more information on the REal-time Assessment of Community Transmission \(REACT\) programme of work](#).

This study falls under pillar 4 of the COVID-19 National Testing Programme, which focuses on mass surveillance in the general population. This is the second study which looks at a representative cross section of the whole population.

[UK Government invests in Covid research at St Andrews University](#)

The UK Government is investing £270,000 in research at the University of St Andrews. A team of physicists and virologists at the university are testing different surfaces and coatings for their effectiveness in killing the Covid-19 virus.

Covid-19 can be transmitted through contact with surfaces in public spaces that are touched by lots of people – for example, door handles in schools and holding rails on public transport.

Previous research has shown that Covid-19 survives for a significant amount of time on materials commonly used for touch surfaces, such as stainless steel and plastic.

The St Andrews team will build upon existing knowledge about the antiviral

properties of materials such as copper. They will also explore the surfaces of more complex materials created within the university's world-leading Centre for Designer Quantum Materials using surfaces of advanced materials as well as nanostructured surfaces to increase the efficiency in deactivating the virus.

The findings could be used for surface treatments that can be applied retrospectively to actively inhibit and delay transmission of the virus via surfaces in public areas, helping to prevent further spread of infection and future outbreaks.

The cross-disciplinary St Andrews research team consists of Professor Peter Wahl, Professor Philip King, and Professor Andrea Di Falco from the School of Physics & Astronomy and Dr Catherine Adamson and Professor Terry Smith from the School of Biology.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

Scotland's research sector is world-leading and the £270,000 funding from the UK Government will help to support and increase the talent and skills we have.

It's fantastic that Scottish researchers are responding to the pandemic and exploring one of the key issues – Covid-19 transmission through contact with surfaces in public spaces. The more we know about this virus the better we will be at fighting it.

This funding is well deserved and an important contribution to tackling Covid-19.

Professor Wahl said:

The exploration of different ways in which the current Covid-19 pandemic can be kept under control is crucial to enable reopening the society and ensure a flourishing economy.

Apart from airborne direct transmission, indirect transmission via surfaces, in particular in public spaces, can play an important role in spreading the disease.

Professor Di Falco said:

We propose the development and easy deployment of surface materials and coatings that can actively inhibit and retard the spread of the virus from an infected person to others via touch surfaces, by deactivating it.

Dr Catherine Adamson said:

This would potentially be a game changer for high-traffic surfaces in public spaces. We will build on existing knowledge about the antiviral properties of copper, and seek to optimize them.

[UK-Japan trade deal offers boost to Scottish businesses](#)

The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was agreed in principle by International Trade Secretary Liz Truss and Japan Foreign Minister on a video call this morning (Friday 11 September). It is the UK's first major trade deal outside the EU.

The deal secures additional benefits beyond the EU-Japan trade deal, including a way for Scottish products to be officially recognised. By increasing geographical indications (GIs) from just seven under the terms of the EU-Japan deal to potentially over 70 under the UK-Japan agreement, this would lead to improved recognition of key UK brands in the Japanese market.

Products that could benefit from the new arrangements are: Arbroath smokies, Ayrshire New Potatoes/ Ayrshire Earlies, Bonchester cheese, native Shetland wool, Orkney beef, Orkney lamb, Orkney Scottish island cheddar, Pembrokeshire early potatoes/ Pembrokeshire earlies, Scotch beef, Scotch lamb, Scottish wild salmon, Shetland lamb, Stornoway black pudding, Teviotdale cheese and traditional Ayrshire Dunlop cheese.

Scottish wild salmon could now be recognised in Japan for the first time ever, with the potential reduction of tariffs keeping British produce competitive and supporting jobs.

The Scottish Salmon Company's Communications and New Business Development Director Su Cox said:

Japan is a key growth market for our business and demand for our salmon has helped drive greater export sales to the region.

While we expect this to continue as consumers discover the great taste and provenance of quality Scottish products like our 'Tartan Salmon', good trading relations are critical in supporting our export ambitions.

We take great pride in our Scottish heritage and the continuation of the Protected Geographical Indication status is very welcome news. PGI acts as a guarantee of the Scottish provenance that is so in demand in worldwide markets.

A deal with Japan could increase UK trade by £15.2 billion, giving a £1.5 billion boost to economy and increasing UK workers' wages by £800 million in the long run. This will benefit the 574 Scottish businesses that exported to Japan last year and help even more businesses to sell their goods to Japan for the first time.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

This is a historic moment for the UK and Japan. This is our first major post-Brexit trade deal and it goes far beyond the existing EU deal by securing new wins for British businesses including in our great manufacturing, food and drink, and tech industries.

From our Scotch beef and lamb farmers to our Scottish wild salmon and Orkney Scottish island cheddar, this deal will create new opportunities for people throughout the whole of the UK and help level up our country.

Strategically, the deal is an important step towards joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership and placing Britain at the centre of a network of modern free trade agreements with like-minded friends and allies.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, David Duguid said:

It's great news that the UK Government has agreed a trade deal with Japan. This will be a real boost for businesses in Scotland. Last year, businesses in Scotland exported goods worth more than £503 million to Japan.

Scotland's world-famous products, including Scottish wild salmon, Scotch beef and lamb – and of course, Scotch Whisky – are set to get a significant export boost from this agreement.

This is further evidence of the huge opportunities of Britain leaving the EU, which will benefit all parts of the United Kingdom.

The removal of several trade barriers aims to assist the UK's 8,000 SMEs already exporting goods to Japan, by offering tariff-free trade on 99% UK exports to Japan. Scottish food producers like Walkers Shortbread will benefit from lower tariffs.

Jim Walker, Managing Director of Walkers Shortbread said:

We welcome the news that a UK-Japan agreement has been agreed today. Japan remains one of Walkers most important markets and sales have grown steadily there since first launching in Japan over

40 years ago.

This deal will help provide certainty and create more opportunities to continue building sales in the future in a market where our products already enjoy success.

One business already experiencing success in the Japanese market is the manufacturer of luxury wool fabrics, Harris Tweed Hebrides. Supported by the Department for International Trade (DIT), Harris Tweed Hebrides already exports 25% of its overall business to Japan.

Founded in 2007, Harris Tweed Hebrides plays an integral part in the Lewis & Harris community, by providing sustainable, rural employment.

Harris Tweed has been woven in the Outer Hebrides for centuries, representing a vital thread in Scotland's history. We use wool from Scottish and traditional textile manufacturing skills which have been passed from generation to generation.

Japan is a key destination for us and we have always found Japanese consumers to be receptive and well informed about Harris Tweed. They look for high quality, authentic goods that British textile brands like us can offer.

The UK Government and the Scottish Government have been invaluable in assisting us with attending and setting up events at British Embassies, both in Japan and at international trade shows attended by Japanese trade buyers.

Other key benefits of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement include:

- Cutting-edge digital & data provisions that go far beyond the EU-Japan deal, including enabling free flow of data, a commitment to uphold the principles of net neutrality and a ban on data localisation that will prevent British businesses from having the extra cost of setting up servers in Japan.
- New protections for UK creative industries – British businesses can now be confident that their brands and innovations will be protected. We have gone beyond the EU on provisions that tackle online infringement of IP rights, such as film and music piracy.
- Strong tariff reductions for pork and beef exports – we have negotiated a deal that sees tariffs fall on pork, beef, salmon and a range of other agricultural exports. We will continue to benefit from access to the low tariffs for key food and drink products covered by quotas, such as Stilton cheese, tea extracts and bread mixes. This forms a pathway to further market access under CPTPP, which has been committed to by Japan as part of our agreement.
- Improved mobility for business people – securing more flexibility for Japanese and British companies to move talent into each country,

covering a range of UK skilled workers to enter Japan, from computer services to construction.

This is the first step towards the UK's aim to become a member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which will open up 11 key pacific markets for exporters, reducing tariffs for UK business (95% of goods traded between members are tariff-free).

Government to help pension schemes seize long-term opportunities

News story

The draft measures are aimed at improving saver outcomes, and supporting the economy by promoting investment in green tech and infrastructure by pension schemes.



Measures to encourage pension schemes to invest in a more diverse range of long-term assets, including illiquid products such as venture capital and green infrastructure, were outlined by the Government today.

Additional steps to encourage the consolidation of smaller pension schemes into larger schemes are also included in the consultation.

Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion, Guy Opperman, said:

We want all pension scheme members to benefit from efficient administration, first class investment governance, and access to diversified investment strategies.

The UK has a world-class occupational pension system. We want to encourage scale and innovation by pension schemes, and help drive new investment in important sectors of the economy as we build back

better.

The UK is committed to leading the way in the provision of green technology and infrastructure, and we want pension funds to be at the forefront of taking advantage of these long-term opportunities.

Consolidation helps provide the necessary scale to bring the benefits of investing in a broader range of assets to members.

- The seven-week consultation was published along today (11 September 2020) with the Government's response to a February 2019 consultation 'Investment Innovation and Future Consolidation'.
- The consultation period begins on 11 September 2020 and runs until 30 October 2020.
- The full consultation for 'Improving outcomes for members of defined contribution pension schemes' can be found on the [open consultation](#) page.

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Published 11 September 2020