

Marking 75 years since VE Day

Today, the nation will unite to mark 75 years since the end of the Second World War in Europe, and the thoughts of people across Scotland will be with our wartime generation.

Victory in Europe is one of the most significant moments in Britain's long history, a crucial milestone on the road to peace.

By 8 May 1945, Britain had lived through six years of global conflict. We had seen terrible losses, and huge sacrifices made at home and abroad. So many lives lost, so much suffering, so many families torn apart.

But we also saw huge courage and unbelievable fortitude. People made enormous sacrifices – that to most of us today seem unimaginable – all to put King and country first.

Those years of courage, pain and loss secured the freedoms and way of life we enjoy today. We would be living very different lives if we had not liberated Europe from fascism.

It is only right that today we take time to honour those who served, including those who continued to fight in the Far East until the August of 1945. In due course we will mark VJ day, of course, and thank them again for their service.

We must also remember those – including so many from Scottish regiments – who continued to fight in the Far East until the August of 1945. In due course we will mark VJ day, and thank them again for their service.

Scottish regiments fought bravely throughout the conflict, including in the D-Day landings. We must also thank all those who fought on the home front. Communities faced onslaughts by the Luftwaffe as they tried to destroy our shipbuilding and munitions capacity. Clydebank was almost destroyed, and thousands of its citizens killed. But the Scottish people refused to be bowed, instead strengthening their resolve to defeat the enemy and fight for our country's freedom.

Hundreds of Scottish children were evacuated to live with families in the countryside. They were kept safe, and many made lifelong attachments to their foster families. But they dearly missed, and were dearly missed by, their own families.

We are, of course, in the middle of a current, unprecedented, battle to control coronavirus. NHS staff, care teams and a vast army of key workers and volunteers have gone above and beyond for the common good. , and I believe we now feel a greater empathy than ever with the generations who witnessed VE Day in May 1945.

Unfortunately, due to the current emergency, communities across the UK will no longer be able to mark this important anniversary in quite the same way as

we initially planned.

I know the British people will mark this historic occasion in new ways, to show our deepest gratitude and respect for those that gave so much to bring peace, freedom and prosperity to Europe. So, throughout today, there will be a thoughtful programme of events in which people can safely become involved while staying at home.

The official commemorations will begin at 11am when His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales will lead the nation in a two minute silence. We will remember the fallen, and give thanks for those who came home to friends and family. People can join this national moment of reflection in whatever way is right for them – that might be sitting quietly inside, standing at your window or stepping outside your front door.

At 3pm, extracts from Sir Winston Churchill's victory speech will be broadcast across national television and radio, to recreate the moment the end of the war in Europe officially was announced on 8 May 1945.

The Prime Minister will read the recently discovered Edmund Blunden poem 'VE Day'.

Later in the day, there will be a broadcast of The Prince of Wales reading extracts from King George VI's diary, relating the experiences of his grandfather on VE Day in 1945, including the King's relief that the war in Europe was over.

In an uplifting aerial display, the Royal Air Force will provide breathtaking flypasts across the UK's capital cities – modern RAF Typhoon jets fly over Edinburgh. People are encouraged not to gather to watch the flypast but continue to follow public health guidelines and enjoy the coverage from home.

We are all encouraged to join in a nationwide rendition of Dame Vera Lynn's 'We'll Meet Again'. Open your windows or front doors and sing along with your neighbours.

Then, as a fitting finale, Her Majesty The Queen will send a special message to the nation at 9pm, the exact moment her father, King George VI, gave a radio address in 1945.

We are living through difficult times just now, of course we are. But we will get through them. We will get through them together. Now, more than ever, we can all learn from the bravery, the resilience and the optimism of our wartime generation.

Nation falls silent to mark VE 75

- His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, accompanied by HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, will lead the nation in a two minute silence at 11 o'clock ☐
- The Royal Air Force will carry out flypasts across the UK, including the Red Arrows.☐

Today, the nation will unite to mark 75 years since the end of the Second World War in Europe.

Government has now announced further plans for the day, building on a programme of activity and celebrations announced last week.

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, accompanied by Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall, will lead the nation in a two minute silence from Scotland, broadcast across national television and radio stations at 11am.

Yesterday the Prime Minister visited Westminster Abbey to pay his respects, and today from Downing Street he will be observing the two minute silence and speaking with a Second World War veteran via a video call.

Later in the day, there will be a broadcast of The Prince of Wales reading extracts from King George VI's diary, relating the experiences of his grandfather on VE Day in 1945. This will include the King's relief that the war in Europe was over, the family's iconic appearances on the Buckingham Palace balcony, and having lunch with Sir Winston Churchill.

And in an uplifting aerial display, the Royal Air Force will provide breathtaking flypasts in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland's capitals. The Red Arrows will fly over London, and modern RAF Typhoon jets will appear overhead in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. The British public is encouraged not to gather to watch any flypast but continue to follow public health guidelines on social distancing and enjoy the coverage from their homes and gardens. ### Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Seventy-five years ago today, the people of this country celebrated victory against Hitler's aggression. On the frontline, they fought with courage, ingenuity and endurance, and on the Home Front, women defended our cities against air raids, worked the factories and ran the hospitals. This country triumphed thanks to the heroism of countless ordinary people, and because of this, hundreds of millions of people now live in peace and freedom today.

Today we must celebrate their achievement, and we remember their sacrifice. We are a free people because of everything our veterans did – we offer our gratitude, our heartfelt thanks and our solemn pledge: you will always be remembered.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Victory in Europe was a defining moment in Britain's long history, so today we pause to remember all those who fought overseas and battled hard on the Home Front.

As we stay home to protect the NHS and save lives, I know the British people will mark this historic occasion in new ways to show our deepest gratitude and respect for those that gave so much to bring peace, freedom and prosperity to Europe.

Across the UK, people will be decorating their homes with bunting, researching their family history on Ancestry.co.uk, tuning into the national commemorations on television and radio, and throwing a 1940's themed afternoon tea in the safety of their own homes.

Museums and libraries are among those organisations across the country who have also come up with creative and innovative ways for families to celebrate and learn more about the history of the day, including:[]

- The National Army Museum, the Royal Air Force Museum and the National Museum of the Royal Navy will be hosting their first tri-services celebration with the Virtual VE Day 75 Festival taking place online from Thursday to Saturday, including a live Swing Dance Class a sing-along concert with the Bluebird Belles and highlighting objects and stories from the their Collections.[][]
- The #LibrariesFromHome initiative from Libraries Connected brings together a huge array of local offerings from libraries across the UK. These include recordings of 1940s songs from a local band in Windsor, a Facebook Book Chat discussion in Staffordshire on war novels, and a "bake along" with wartime recipes being posted throughout May organised by Wokingham library.[][]
- The Imperial War Museum's four-minute soundscape "Voices of War" brings together first-hand accounts of VE Day from IWM's vast sound archives. Examples include a Jamaican aircraftman who emigrated to the UK aboard the Empire Windrush in 1948 and a Jewish man from Berlin who spent six weeks in Sachsenhausen concentration camp.[]

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The UK Armed Forces will start the 75th anniversary of VE Day with sunrise commemorations and will continue to honour their predecessors throughout the day and across the country.

Although we cannot celebrate that precious connection with our veterans on the scale we had planned, we should all pause and

reflect on their inspirational achievement. As Churchill said, 'god bless you all, this is your victory'.

The full plans for the day are as follows:

- The Red Arrows will fly over London, and modern RAF Typhoon jets will fly over Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast.
- A national two minute silence will take place at 11am, led by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury has recorded a message of reflection which will form part of the programming around the two minute silence.
- At 3pm, extracts from Sir Winston Churchill's victory speech will be broadcast across national television and radio to recreate the moment the end of the war in Europe officially was announced on 8 May 1945.□
- The Prime Minister will read the recently discovered Edmund Blunden poem 'VE Day'.□
- Extracts from the diary of King George VI will be read by His Royal Highness The Prince Of Wales, as part of the afternoon's commemorative activity.
- At 4pm, historian Dan Snow will broadcast the last of his special VE Day inspired history lessons live on YouTube's Timeline channel.
- At 9pm, Her Majesty The Queen's message to the nation will air.□
- This will be followed by a national singalong of Dame Vera Lynn's 'We'll Meet Again' where the public are encouraged to open their front doors and sing along in their front gardens.
- The public are invited to host an afternoon tea from the comfort of their living rooms. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has produced a template pack so that the public can hold a 1940s style afternoon tea party at home complete with homemade VE Day bunting, original recipes, games, and educational and creative activities for children.
- As part of a partnership between the Government and Ancestry, the platform will be free throughout the Bank Holiday weekend to give people the opportunity to uncover personal stories of the Second World War.□

[Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 7 May 2020](#)

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Downing Street Press Conference.

I'm very pleased to be joined by Sir Ian Diamond the UK's National Statistician from the ONS, And also by Dr Jenny Harries, Deputy CMO.

The latest data from our COBR coronavirus data file shows that, as of today:

- there have now been 1,534,533 tests for coronavirus across the UK
- that includes 86,583 tests carried out yesterday
- 206,715 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 5,614 cases since yesterday

And those who tested positive, very sadly, 30,615 people have now died, and my deepest condolences go out to anyone who has lost a loved one throughout this pandemic.

Three weeks ago, before the Easter bank holiday weekend, I set out five tests for the UK to move on to the next phase in this pandemic. Then, just as now, there were calls to ease up on the restrictions. But as the science made clear, we couldn't responsibly do that. In fact, the advice from the group of scientific experts, SAGE, who advise the government made it very clear that there weren't any changes at all that we could confidently take, Without risking a second peak of the virus.

That's why we asked the public to keep going. We weren't done yet.

We said 'stick to the plan', and the British public kept going. People stuck to the rules. That meant working from home, it meant worries about money it meant adjusting to home schooling, time apart from family and friends, and just not doing many of the things which we all enjoy in life.

At the same time, there's been a lot of people who, despite their own personal sacrifices, have gone the extra mile. They volunteered to support the elderly and the vulnerable in their community, who have been shielded themselves away from the virus.

And each Thursday, of course, we now come together to applaud the NHS staff, and the carers, the people who just kept going to keep our country going.

And because of that monumental effort we have now passed the peak of the virus. The NHS hasn't been overwhelmed. We haven't seen hospital wards overwhelmed with patients, people left without hospital beds, people left without the ventilators that can mean the difference between life and death.

Now I know the tragic death toll in this country and around the world has been sobering for all of us, and there have been real challenges in this country – with PPE, and with care homes.

But, in this first stage of the fight against COVID-19, through this national team effort, we've prevented the number of deaths rising to even higher levels, and we've ensured critically that the NHS had the capacity to cope.

Today the Cabinet was updated on SAGE's advice on the progress that we've made to date. And as a result of the social distancing measures that we've put in place the R level, which signifies the rate of infection, is now between 0.5 and 0.9. The overall number of new cases has been steadily falling and the rate of deaths is also steadily falling.

Now, just to be clear about what all of this means in practice. The virus is not beaten yet.

It remains deadly and infectious, and we are working very hard right across government and with local government to bring it down in areas of concern, like in care homes, and I'm confident we can do it and we will do it.

But, because we held firm three weeks ago, we are now in a position to start to think about the next phase in this pandemic.

So, this weekend, the Prime Minister will set out the next steps which we can responsibly take over the following weeks, guided by the scientific advice and mindful, as we've said right from the word go, of taking the right decisions at the right time.

Now, we can start setting out how we will live and work, whilst maintaining the necessary social distancing rules, we can also be clearer about those measures which are still necessary to prevent a second peak.

The Prime Minister has been directing Ministers and our teams of officials right across government to carefully develop a road-map for the next phase.

It contains appropriate measures to be taken at appropriate milestones, subject to very clear conditions.

And there be detailed guidance to help inform, advise and reassure the public, businesses and other organisations.

To get this right, we have set milestones. Some changes can confidently be introduced more quickly than others, and some of those other ones will take longer to introduce.

And, it's important to say this, at each point along the way when we take these decisions, they will be based on the five tests and the scientific advice that we receive.

And as I set out in the fifth of our five tests when I spoke here at this lectern, on 16 April, the point at which we make even the smallest of changes to the current guidance will be a point of maximum risk.

If people abandon the social distancing, if we forget the sacrifices that were made to get us through the peak, to get us to this point, the virus will grow again at an exponential rate.

That would lead to a second peak which would threaten the NHS. It would trigger another lockdown, which prolong the economic pain, and we we're determined to keep it temporary, to keep it as short as possible.

So, we've kept the current measures in place for this long, precisely so that we can bounce back with vigour and energy as soon as possible, as soon as it is responsible to start looking at the second phase.

And because of that, our next steps will be surefooted and sustainable. Any changes we make will be carefully monitored. If people don't follow the new rules, or if we see that the R-level goes back up, we will tighten the restrictions again, we will always retain the option to do so. That way we

can safeguard public health and we can also safeguard the economy in a sustainable way.

So having prepared carefully, and based on the updated advice from SAGE, this weekend, the Prime Minister will set out the roadmap for the next phase, along with the conditions for reaching each milestone.

That way we can provide the country with a better understanding of what lies ahead, we can offer reassurance that we will adjust the restrictions to the minimum necessary to prevent a second spike in the virus, and we can give people the confidence that we're doing it in a way that will protect life and preserve our way of life.

[Coronavirus press conference 7 May 2020](#)

UK Armed Forces Maintaining Critical Defence Activities

While some basic training and exercises were paused as a result of Covid-19, including the NATO exercises 'Cold Response' and 'Defender 2020', the Armed Forces have continued to fulfil non-discretionary activities:

- Deployed roughly 4,000 troops, with a further 16,000 held at high readiness, as part of the Covid Support Force, which has helped with a significant number of tasks in the UK. (More information can be found [here](#).)
- Provided specialist support to the UK's Overseas Territories, including the deployment of RFA ARGUS to the Caribbean.
- Conducted air strikes against Daesh terrorists in Iraq, on April 10 and April 28, in addition to routine armed reconnaissance flights.
- Deployed RAF Typhoons jets to the NATO air policing operation in Lithuania.
- Maintained the 24-7 Continuous At-sea Nuclear Deterrent.
- Patrolled UK and international airspace and waters monitoring Russian military activity.
- Continued critical operations in the Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan and across Africa and Europe, alongside our international partners, NATO and the UN.

Maintaining all these operations requires a level of training to continue, ensuring both personnel and equipment remain ready to be deployed, both for scheduled operations and in case of unexpected tasks needed to guarantee national security.

In order to continue defending the nation over the longer term, the UK Armed Forces must also conduct routine force-generation, and is doing so in line

with government guidelines.

This activity includes all types of training, including sea training for HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH, the UK's future flagship aircraft carrier; basic and advanced flying training by the RAF; Royal Marine Commando training; Basic Training for Army recruits and Officer Cadet Training at the Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst.

Our Armed Forces are rightly classed as 'key workers' because they are tasked with keeping the nation safe. The health of our personnel and their families are also important, so this is being conducted in accordance with official guidance, and full activity will only resume following Government direction.

For the ongoing training, stringent protective measures are in place after specific planning processes and full risk assessments have been conducted, in accordance with Government and health guidance. The training is being configured and scaled in a deliberate and disciplined manner, enabling the military to continue its routine activities safely and while maintaining an infection rate below the national average.

Examples of steps taken to enable safe training include social distancing during roll calls and physical training, isolating at the beginning of courses and reconfiguring communal spaces such as canteens, sleeping quarters and classrooms.

Minister for the Armed Forces, James Heappey said:

It has been an enormous effort from people across the UK Armed Forces to reconfigure the training activity that simply cannot be stopped without impacting our national security in the months ahead. I am grateful to all of them for their hard work and ensuring essential training continues to happen safely.

There is a great deal of Defence activity that will remain paused, which is entirely right, as we will always ensure the safety of our service personnel, their families and the communities that support them.

**[Search for new Independent Chief
Inspector of Borders and Immigration](#)**

begins

News story

The recruitment process for the new Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration has opened.



The recruitment process for a new Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) has been launched.

This is an important role providing independent scrutiny of the Home Office's border and immigration functions, helping to drive improvements so it works as effectively as possible.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I would like to thank David Bolt for his time in office and all the work he has done to monitor and drive efficiency in the immigration systems.

I am certain that the next appointment will continue to constructively challenge and scrutinise the department's immigration functions so that they are as effective and efficient as they can be.

The appointment of the Independent Chief Inspector will be through a full and open competition, and will be run in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

This will involve an advisory assessment panel, with an independent chair, that will review the applications and interview shortlisted candidates. The appointment will also be subject to pre-appointment scrutiny.

Applications for this post will be open until 11:00pm on 4 June. You can find out how to apply on the [HM Government Public Appointments website](#)

The government has adapted the recruitment process around the UK's

coronavirus restrictions while ensuring a fair and open competition. This includes planning for remote interviews.

David Bolt has been the Independent Chief Inspector since May 2015 and will remain in post until October 2020.

Find out more about the [Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration](#).

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