

PM call with Prime Minister of Sri Lanka: 30 May 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe this afternoon.



The Prime Minister spoke to Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe this afternoon.

He began by congratulating him on his recent re-appointment as Prime Minister and underlining the UK's continuing support for the people of Sri Lanka during their current economic difficulties.

The Prime Minister stressed the role Putin's barbaric invasion and senseless blockade of the Black Sea has played in exacerbating global food supply issues. He emphasised the need for the entire international community to take action against the horrors Putin is inflicting on the Ukrainian people.

The Prime Minister and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe also discussed the potential for further UK-Sri Lanka cooperation in areas including clean energy. They looked forward to working closely together in the coming years.

Published 30 May 2022

Sellafield staff thanked for Ukraine relief effort

The President of the Association of Ukrainians in Poland sent a letter of

thanks in recognition of aid convoys delivered from west Cumbria.

Current and former Sellafield Ltd staff supported a community effort which sent essentials like medicines, sanitary products, and nappies.

These were supplemented with items from Sellafield's stores including: sleeping bags, camp mats, bio wipes, dried food, torches and batteries, hand sanitiser, marigold gloves, goggles, paper suits, and cover shoes.

The aid was dispatched to logistics hubs in Poland, and forwarded to local refugee camps and families in need in Ukraine itself.

Jan Syrnyk wrote:

Most sincere thanks for your kindness, solidarity, and help for Ukraine. Because of your hard work and selflessness we had the chance to use (the products you brought) and pass in an appropriate form to those who stayed in Ukraine. Thank you. We can count on you!

Current and former Sellafield workers including Gordon McKay, Kevin Agnew, Tom Kelly, Shaun Kelly, and Richard Wilkinson were involved in the effort.

David Connolly, a Sellafield Ltd employee who supported the work, said:

What started out as a quick response from the local area for donations to hubs in Poland turned into a much larger and more organised effort.

The UK's early efforts to deliver aid to Ukraine were hampered by traffic issues but the group found an enterprising way around the problem.

David added:

There was a bottleneck with the large lorry transports from the UK.

However, by using volunteer drivers and smaller vehicles, backed by financial donations to fund fuel and ferry journey, we were able to get humanitarian aid batches through in just a couple of days.

A huge thanks to everyone who has contributed to this effort, including local organisations and the ferry companies who offered massive discounts.

The effort involved community members from across Cumbria.

David said:

Deliveries initially went via Polish shops in Maryport and Carlisle before being transported to hubs in Poland and then distributed to local refugee camps and key areas in Ukraine.

After the local shop donation hubs had been overloaded, the efforts stepped up a gear with donations also collected at supportive local businesses.

The business donations were taken to Forth Engineering, in Cleator Moor, combined with other local donations, and sorted before being transferred in 10 vans to Poland.

The van drivers worked in teams to tackle the mammoth journey.

One of them, Gordon McKay, said:

We set off on what was a journey offering a constant stream of new, novel, and unfamiliar experiences.

There were elements of anxiety and apprehension but they were overcome by the welcome we received and the opportunity to make a real difference.

Separately, Sellafield Ltd has provided advice to Ukraine on nuclear issues.

The company has given strategic risk management guidance, via the World Association of Nuclear Operators, and is working on co-ordinated UK support for the International Atomic Energy Agency in Ukraine and the agency responsible for Chernobyl.

Phil Hallington, Sellafield Ltd head of policy, said:

We have been working with community, national, and international partners to understand how we can best assist in the local response to the crisis. I'm delighted at our recent efforts.

[Five reasons to get a heat pump](#)

It is now cheaper than ever to install cleaner, more energy efficient heating solutions thanks to the government's new £450 million Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

Homeowners and small businesses across England and Wales can now apply for vouchers to get thousands of pounds off replacing their oil and gas boilers

with clean heating systems.

Under the scheme, which will run for 3 years, property owners will be able to get:

- £5,000 off the cost and installation of an air source heat pump
- £5,000 off the cost and installation of a biomass boiler
- £6,000 off the cost and installation of a ground source heat pump

Phil Hurley, Chair of the Heat Pump Association said:

The Boiler Upgrade Scheme is a great opportunity for householders to make their home more energy efficient and we encourage anyone thinking about switching out their oil or gas boiler to make use of the grants.

The upfront funding available means that heat pumps have never been more accessible, making it easier than ever for households to reduce their energy bills and carbon footprint.

Here are 5 reasons why you should consider swapping your oil or gas boiler, or direct electric heating, for a heat pump:

1. Reduce your energy bills

Moving to a heat pump means you can avoid the volatile prices associated with gas and oil. If you are using oil, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) or electric heating, you could see a reduction to your energy bill if you move to a heat pump.

2. No VAT to pay on installation

The government has recently announced 0% VAT on the installation of heat pumps and biomass boilers, which will last for 5 years, further reducing the cost of installation.

3. Reduce your carbon footprint and combat climate change

Heat pumps are significantly more efficient than traditional boilers and use cleaner electricity, so will reduce your home's carbon footprint. A heat pump takes heat at a low temperature from the air or ground, increases that heat to a higher temperature and transfers it into your home to provide heating and hot water.

4. Save time and storage space by stopping fuel deliveries

If you're using oil or LPG, you'll no longer need to deal with fuel deliveries and can save space with not needing the storage for this anymore.

5. Get ahead of the curve

Heat pumps are an important part of the future of heating, and installing one

now will give you access to the latest technology and allow you to future proof your home.

Rosalind Nashashibi has been appointed as an Artist Trustee of the Tate

News story

The Prime Minister has appointed Rosalind Nashashibi as an Artist Trustee of the Tate for a four year term, from 15 April 2022 until 14 April 2026.



Rosalind Nashashibi is a London-based filmmaker and painter of Palestinian and Northern Irish heritage. Her films use both documentary and speculative languages, where observations from her own life and the world around her are merged with paintings, fictional or sci-fi elements; often to propose models of collective living. Her paintings likewise operate on another level of subjective experience, they frame arenas or pools of potential where people or animals may appear, often sharing the picture plane with their own context of signs and apparitions that hint at their position vis a vis the artist.

Nashashibi has exhibited in Documenta 14, Manifesta 7, the Nordic Triennial, and Sharjah X., She was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2017 and won Beck's Futures prize in 2003. She represented Scotland in the 52nd Venice Biennial. Her most recent solo shows include Vienna Secession, CAAC Seville, Chicago Art Institute and Kunstinstuut Melly, Rotterdam. She was the National Gallery's artist in residence in 2020.

Trustees of the Tate are not remunerated. These appointments have been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments. The appointments process is regulated by the [Commissioner for Public Appointments](#). Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election.

Rosalind Nashashibi has not declared any political activity.

Published 30 May 2022

[New homeowners warned over tax refund claims](#)

New homeowners are being warned about cold calls from rogue tax repayment agents advising them to make speculative Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) refund claims, which could leave them with large tax bills.

The warning comes after a recent spate of Stamp Duty refund claims to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) failed to meet very specific criteria.

The agents have been known to call new property owners after finding them through Land Registry records and property search websites, promising money back on 'unknowingly overpaid' Stamp Duty.

Recent analysis undertaken by HMRC suggests that up to a third of claims for 'multiple dwelling relief' refunds were incorrect.

HMRC raise enquiries on these claims, but sometimes that is after the agent has taken their fee, leaving the homeowner to pick up the difference. Incorrect refund claims must be repaid with interest, with some potentially facing penalties as well.

Nicole Newbury, HMRC Director for Wealthy and Mid-sized Business, said:

We are seeing obviously spurious refund claims that are never going to succeed; but will lead to an unnecessary bill for the customer.

So we are warning new homeowners not to get caught out by tax repayment agents promising easy money on a 'no win, no fee' basis. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. We want to help people get it right and avoid unnecessary tax bills, so treat promises of easy money with real caution.

Anyone approached about a Stamp Duty refund claim should check with their original conveyancer, take independent professional advice and check HMRC's guidance by searching 'Stamp Duty Land Tax' on GOV.UK. You can also contact our helpline on 0300 2003 510.

In a recent example, a letter from a rogue agent suggested a homeowner may have overpaid £60,000 worth of Stamp Duty. The agent claimed the home could

be designated as two properties, despite it clearly being one. This is not an isolated example – other cases include:

- A claim that a bedroom could be a separate dwelling and in line for claiming 'multiple dwellings relief' because it had an en-suite and a built-in wardrobe which could be a kitchen if you added a microwave and a kettle.
- An individual who claimed their house was not wholly residential because a paddock behind the garden was used occasionally to keep a neighbour's horse. The agent advised that they were due lower stamp duty rates because the presence of the paddock made the transaction a mix of residential and non-residential property, which would incur a lower Stamp Duty payment.
- A new owner of a six-bedroom house claimed it was not a wholly residential property because a room above a detached garage was used as an office.

SDLT is a tax on land transactions and a form of Self-Assessed transfer tax. £11.6bn was collected in SDLT in 2019 to 2020.

HMRC charges Stamp Duty Land Tax on property transactions in the UK where the value is greater than the different thresholds. However, some transactions qualify for reliefs that reduce the amount of tax you pay or, mean that you do not pay SDLT.

Customers are advised that they might get cold called or receive letters from repayment agents claiming a refund could be due for the following listed cases:

- Claims for multiple dwellings relief.
- Claims house purchases should be charged at a lower rate because it contains something which is non-residential.
- Claims homes purchased are uninhabitable, so you are charged at lower SDLT rates.
- Claims that homes purchased with access to a communal garden mean you are charged SDLT at lower rates.
- Claims there is no SDLT due on the transfer of property to pension schemes.

To check if you may be eligible for SDLT relief, search 'Stamp Duty Land Tax' on GOV.UK. Here are some of the more common instances where either no Stamp Duty or a lower rate of Stamp Duty will be due:

- A first-time buyer of a residential property.
- A first-time buyer of a shared ownership property.
- A first-time buyer of a residential property.
- A first-time buyer of a shared ownership property.
- Buying more than one dwelling where a transaction or a number of linked transactions include freehold or leasehold interests in more than one dwelling.
- A building company or property trader buying a home from someone who in exchange is buying a new home from you.

- An employer or property trader buying an individual's house because they're moving with their work.
- Buying a house through a compulsory purchase order.
- A property developer subject to planning obligations.
- A group of companies that buys or sells property to or from each other.
- If you're in an investment scheme such as a Property Authorised Investment Fund (PAIF) or a Co-ownership Authorised Contractual Scheme (CoACS).
- If you are buying property or land for a charitable purpose.

HMRC has nine months to enquire into a claim and would look to recover the full tax, with interest, and penalties charged where appropriate from those found to be incorrect.

It's important to know that HMRC requires tax repayment agents to meet an acceptable level of standards and behaviour, known as the HMRC Agent Standard. This includes exercising professional competence and due care. The Standard says to "[take] particular care not to include figures in returns or claims which are not sustainable".

An agent making speculative claims, particularly given the legal precedents set by some of the examples shown above, could be seen by HMRC to have breached that aspect. There is also a legal requirement for tax repayment agents to be registered for Anti Money Laundering (AML) supervision.