

UK Government moves to ensure abortion services are commissioned in Northern Ireland

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will today (Thursday 19 May) take further legislative steps to ensure abortion services are commissioned for women and girls in Northern Ireland.

This follows inaction from the Department of Health and Northern Ireland Executive, which have not guaranteed relevant healthcare services are available by the 31 March 2022 deadline set by the Secretary of State in July 2021.

Today, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is laying regulations that remove the need for the Department of Health to seek Executive Committee approval in relation to commissioning abortion services in Northern Ireland. This means the Department of Health will have no further barriers to commission and fund services.

The UK Government is steadfast in its belief that, as a devolved matter, the Department of Health should drive forward the commissioning of abortion services without further delay.

Today's regulations will also allow the Government to intervene if there is further inaction delivering safe and high-quality abortion services. The Secretary of State will be seeking a clear and unambiguous commitment from the Minister for Health Robin Swann that he will progress this matter without further delay.

If the Department of Health does not commission and fund abortion services as directed, the regulations give the UK Government the power to do anything that a Northern Ireland Minister or department could do for the purpose of ensuring that abortion services are provided as decided by Parliament in 2019.

To ensure the Secretary of State has all the information required in those circumstances, a small team of experts in the medical field has been established in the Northern Ireland Office to work alongside the Department of Health and report back to him on progress.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, said:

“Women and girls of Northern Ireland must have access to safe, high-quality abortion services in Northern Ireland, as is their right.

“It is absolutely unacceptable that the Executive and Department of Health have failed women and girls, meaning that they cannot currently access the

same basic abortion healthcare that is available to women and girls in the rest of the UK.

“That’s why I am acting to remove any further barriers to delivering services.

“The Department of Health must drive forward the commissioning of abortion services without further delay to ensure that safe abortion becomes embedded into the health and social care system in Northern Ireland.”

Notes to editors:

AAIB Report: Boeing 737-408 (G-JMCY), heavy landing resulting in significant structural damage, Exeter Airport

News story

During an approach at Exeter Airport, a Boeing 737-408 (G-JMCY) became unstable and suffered a heavy landing which resulted in significant structural damage.



During an approach at Exeter Airport, the aircraft became unstable after the point where the crew had declared the approach stable and continued. During the final 500 ft the rate of descent exceeded the required 500 ft stable approach criteria on four occasions. All bar the first of these excursions were accompanied by GPWS “SINK RATE” alert. The subsequent hard landing resulted in extensive damage to the aircraft. There were no injuries.

The operator has taken safety action to reinforce its operating procedures with regards to the criteria for a stable approach.

[Read the report.](#)

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[UK targets Russian airlines with new sanctions](#)

- New sanctions on major Russian airlines prevent them from cashing in on landing slots at major UK airports worth up to £50 million
- Sanctions are crippling Putin's ability to wage war, disrupting vital supply chains

The UK Government has announced today (Thursday 19 May 2022) that it is introducing new sanctions against the Russian airline sector. State-owned Aeroflot, Russia's largest airline, Ural Airlines and Rossiya Airlines will now be unable to sell their unused, lucrative landing slots at UK airports – preventing Russia from cashing in on an estimated £50 million.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

As long as Putin continues his barbarous assault on Ukraine, we will continue to target the Russian economy. We've already closed our airspace to Russian airlines. Today we're making sure they can't cash in their lucrative landing slots at our airports. Every economic sanction reinforces our clear message to Putin – we will not stop until Ukraine prevails.

The news comes as the Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps takes up Presidency of the International Transport Forum which he will use to call for a united response against Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The UK was one of the first nations to implement sanctions on Putin and his allies; we forbade entrance to their ships and planes, strangling them of the privilege to benefit from global trade and commerce.

Today, the UK Government has built on the strong action we have already taken against Russia's flagship carrier Aeroflot, along with Rossiya and Ural Airlines. This means they will be unable to use their expensive landing slots at UK airports. Our actions will

also prevent Russia from selling the slots, and cashing in on up to £50 million.

Today's announcement is the latest round of UK sanctions to ensure that Russia cannot benefit from the UK's world class aviation and transport industries – having previously banned Russia from the UK's airspace and waters and banned the export of aviation goods and technology.

International sanctions are having a significant impact on Putin and his war machine. Russia's own Central Bank has admitted that sanctions are a major challenge for Russian supply chains. Sanctions mean that:

- several Weapons manufacturers having to suspend their activity due to a lack of parts
- defence company capabilities are restricted, limiting Russia's ability to replace advanced tech, including drones
- Russia's domestic vehicle sales have dropped by 80% partly due to a lack of components – which is also reducing their ability to produce military vehicles

Russia's vital exports of energy are also shrinking – with crude oil exports down 30% in April and expected to fall further as sanctions bite. Through co-ordinated action across the G7 to phase out oil imports, alongside the banning of critical oil refining and catalyst goods, international allies are tightening the vice on Putin's most trusted revenue stream.

Hard hitting economic sanctions are also having a long term impact on Russia's economy. While the Kremlin has managed to stabilise the rouble, Russia is still heading for the deepest recession since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Forecasts show Russia's GDP shrinking by between 8.5% and 15% this year, with the IMF expecting the economy to shrink a further 2.3% in 2023.

Background

Asset freeze

An asset freeze prevents any UK citizen, or any business in the UK, from dealing with any funds or economic resources which are owned, held or controlled by the designated person. UK financial sanctions apply to all persons within the territory and territorial sea of the UK and to all UK persons, wherever they are in the world. It also prevents funds or economic resources being provided to or for the benefit of the designated person.

Travel ban

A travel ban means that the designated person must be refused leave to enter or to remain in the United Kingdom, providing the individual is an excluded person under section 8B of the Immigration Act 1971.

Transport sanctions

Recently introduced powers make it a criminal offence for any Russian aircraft to fly or land in the UK, and give the government powers to remove aircraft belonging to designated Russian individuals and entities from the UK aircraft register, even if the sanctioned individual is not on board. Russian ships are also banned from UK ports.

Sanction Profiles

- Aeroflot, Russia's largest airline and among the top 20 largest airlines in the world. It is majority owned by the Russian state, and is carrying on business in the transport sector, which is of strategic significance to the Russian Government. Aeroflot not only provides services for the Russian Government, but also generates an important source of revenue for the Kremlin. The UK, along with international partners, sanctioned the CEO of Aeroflot Mikhail Igorevich Poluboyarinov in March. Aeroflot is subject to an asset freeze.
- Rossiya Airlines, otherwise known as Russian Airlines, is one of Russia's oldest and largest airlines, and is a part of state-owned Aeroflot. Therefore, Rossiya Airlines is carrying on business as a Russian Government-affiliated entity, and is involved in obtaining a benefit from or supporting the Government of Russia. Rossiya Airlines is subject to an asset freeze.
- Ural Airlines, one of the largest airlines in Russia, and was previously part of Aeroflot. It is obtaining a benefit from and supporting the Government of Russia by carrying on business in the transport sector, which is of strategic significance. Ural Airlines is subject to an asset freeze.

[Rod licence income benefits fisheries in Devon and Cornwall](#)

The projects were delivered in collaboration with several different partners, including local angling clubs, rivers trusts and landowners.

The funding has helped to enhance fisheries, boost fish stocks and make improvements for anglers, angling facilities and the environment.

Mike Holland, Environment Agency Fisheries Specialist, said:

Anglers often ask us about how we spend the money raised from the sale of fishing licences. The Fisheries Improvement Programme is a prime example of the wide range of activities this income pays for in order to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries.

All of the projects we fund must demonstrate benefits for anglers. The Fisheries Improvement Programme (FIP) allows us to identify and invest in work supporting a local, sustainable future for angling.

The programme is also a great demonstration of our partnership efforts, with many of the projects completed with the support of landowners, local businesses and fishing clubs – it's a real team effort! The more people who go fishing, the more we can invest.

Local FIP projects across Devon and Cornwall in 2021/22 included:

Rivers Deer and Claw

The Environment Agency, working with the Westcountry Rivers Trust and local angling associations, used FIP funding to carry out a range of work to improve bankside habitats and increase trout and grayling numbers in the Deer and Claw, tributaries of the River Tamar. The work has also created refuges for these and other fish, invertebrates and mammals.

Stafford Moor Fishery, Winkleigh

FIP funding was used to build an on-site permanent toilet block, improving access to facilities for less-abled anglers across the fishery.

Harper's Lake, near Double Locks, Exeter

Working with Exeter and District Angling Club, FIP funding was used to install a new composting toilet, providing a sustainable alternative to the portaloos previously used at this remote site.

River Lyn fishery, near Lynmouth

The Environment Agency has used FIP funding to produce new eye-catching signage at this popular day ticket trout and salmon fishery on Exmoor.

The new signs promote the great fishing available, and include information on the salmon lifecycle, and health and safety. It's hoped the new signage will encourage more anglers to fish this river and enjoy the benefits of being out in the outdoors.

Plymouth & District Coarse Angling Club – East Cornwall & West Devon

Working with Plymouth and District Coarse Angling Club we used FIP funding to refurbish 4 fishing pegs and upgraded steps and walkways at the clubs St Germans fishery near Saltash, providing safe access around the fishery to all users. FIP funding has also paid for new aquatic plants and coir bank protection products which will be installed to improve aquatic habitats and

water quality at the clubs Filham Park fishery in Ivybridge and Cadover fishery in West Devon.

[New benefit counter-fraud plan set to save taxpayer £2 billion](#)

- Over £600m to bolster the counter-fraud frontline with thousands of trained specialists, stopping around £2 billion in fraud over three years
- New powers planned for specialist Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) staff to arrest and carry out search and seizure
- Measures also include boosted access to bank data on a larger scale and a new civil penalty will prevent fraud going unpunished

Announced by Work and Pensions Secretary Thérèse Coffey today, the “Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System” plan outlines how 2,000 trained specialists will review over two million Universal Credit claims over the next five years, as part of bolstered ambitions to ensure money is well spent and give taxpayers confidence that funds are reaching those who need it.

Measures also include several new powers which will align DWP with other government departments including HMRC. The new plan sets out how DWP officers will be given powers to undertake arrests, execute warrants, conduct searches and seize evidence – all increasing their ability to tackle the most serious cases. The plan also proposes introducing a new civil penalty to ensure those who commit fraud face adequate punishment.

Additionally, the measures include the power to require organisations, such as banks, to securely share data on a larger scale. Currently, the DWP can only request data on identifiable individuals. This change will allow DWP to proactively identify potentially fraudulent claims – for example knowing if claimants have too much in savings or are living abroad which would make them ineligible for Universal Credit.

Further powers will improve the department’s access to information from a wider range of organisations, growing the department’s ability to drive fraud out of the benefit system.

Work and Pensions Secretary, Thérèse Coffey said:

The welfare system is there to help the most vulnerable. It is not a cash machine for callous criminals and it’s vital that the government ensures money is well spent.

Fraud is an ever-present threat and before the pandemic, our efforts brought fraud and error close to record lows.

This plan outlines what we need to fight fraud in 2022 and into the future. Thousands of trained specialists, combined with targeted new tools and powers, will mean we can keep up with fraud in today's digital age and prevent, detect and deter those who would try to cheat the system.

Minister for Government Efficiency, Jacob Rees-Mogg said:

Taxpayers must have confidence that money spent on welfare reaches those who really need it.

This plan builds on the announcement of the new Public Sector Fraud Authority, which will use data analytics to recover money stolen from the taxpayer.

The new powers will be granted by parliament, subject to securing time and approval.

The DWP brought fraud and error close to near record lows before the pandemic, rolling out Universal Credit across the country. In recent years, fraudsters have exploited the system as DWP streamlined the processes for people to receive support as part of the government's emergency support during the pandemic.

In response to this fraudulent activity, the department undertook expert interventions to identify and stop abuse of the welfare system preventing billions from ending up in the wrong hands, through the disruption of stolen identity fraud, retrospective reviews of claims and the introduction of the Enhanced Checking Service.

Other measures announced today include creating the Fraud Prevention Advisory Group to bring together government and external experts to identify and develop innovative ways to crack down on fraudsters, including through more flexible and proactive use of data. This comes as part of the government's wider commitment to cut crime and give people confidence that the welfare support system is functioning as efficiently as possible to support those who need it.

Further information

- Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System will be published on gov.uk on 19 May 2022.
- When parliamentary time allows, we plan to introduce a raft of new powers, including bolstering the penalty regime by introducing a new

type of civil penalty for cases of fraud. This approach of dealing with fraud by civil penalties follows that taken by other government departments such as HMRC.

- Measures set out in the plan will stop an estimated £2billion of loss over the next three years, and over £4billion of loss over the next five years.

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