

# New measures to tackle corrupt elites and dirty money become law

The new Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act received Royal Assent in the early hours of this morning (15 March), following an expedited passage through Parliament.

Introduced following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the new legislation will mean the government can move more quickly to impose sanctions against oligarchs already designated by our allies, as well as intensifying our sanctions enforcement. The Foreign Secretary will set out further sanctions made possible by our new powers later today.

A new Register of Overseas Entities, requiring those behind foreign companies which own UK property to reveal their identities, will also be created under the act. Entities who refuse to reveal their 'beneficial owner' will face tough restrictions on selling the property and those who break the rules could face a fine of up to £2,500 per day or up to 5 years in prison. This will be a valuable tool for law enforcement agencies in investigating suspicious wealth. Companies House will now begin work to implement the register as quickly as possible, working closely with the UK's 3 land registries. Any foreign company selling properties between 28 February and the full implementation of the register will also be required to submit their details at the point of sale.

Reforms to Unexplained Wealth Orders (UWOs) will remove key barriers to their use, increasing time available to law enforcement to review material provided in response to a UWO and protecting them from incurring substantial legal costs if they act reasonably in a case that is ultimately unsuccessful.

Furthermore, UWOs will be more effective against those who hold property in the UK via trusts and other complex ownership structures. The government has also committed to publishing an annual report on their use.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

This government has moved quickly to strengthen our response to Putin's cronies and ensure that corrupt elites have nowhere to hide their dirty money in the UK.

We will continue to work with our international partners to take the strongest possible action against those who enable this unprovoked aggression towards Ukraine.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

There is absolutely no room for illicit finance in the UK, and by bringing forward this Economic Crime Act at unprecedented speed we've put Putin, and the corrupt elites propping him up, on notice.

Our new Register of Overseas Entities, the first of its kind in the world, will have an immediate dissuasive effect on oligarchs attempting to hide their ill-gotten gains, ensuring that the UK is a place for legitimate business only.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak said:

Our Economic Crime Act will enable us to crack down harder and faster on dirty money and those who support Putin and his regime.

We are using all of our financial might to send a clear message to the Kremlin that this criminal venture will end in total failure.

These measures form part of a wider package of legislative proposals to tackle illicit finance which will be introduced in Parliament in the coming months, including reforming Companies House and introducing new powers to seize crypto assets more easily.

The Prime Minister also announced a new 'Kleptocracy Cell' based in the National Crime Agency, which has been created to target sanctions evasion and corrupt Russian assets hidden in the UK.

The Home Secretary will attend the inaugural ministerial Russian Elites Proxies and Oligarchs Task Force on Wednesday. This meeting will bring together finance and justice and home affairs ministers from the G7, EU and Australia responsible for the supervision of sanctions and enforcement work. The task force aims to ensure the effective implementation of financial sanctions on Russian elites and oligarchs to further drive collective efforts to tackle Kremlin-linked illicit finance.

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## [RPA opens application window for farm payments for 2022](#)

The Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application window has opened today (15 March) for farmers to claim for their 2022 payments. The claim window for customers with existing Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Environmental Stewardship (ES)

revenue agreements has also opened.

Farmers are being encouraged to apply as soon as they are able, to ensure applications are submitted ahead of the deadline of 16 May.

All applicants can quickly update their personal and business information by applying through the Rural Payments service, where farmers and their agents can also view and transfer their BPS entitlements and land parcels.

Rural Payments Agency (RPA) Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

I am pleased that last year we paid over 98% of all BPS claims in the first month. This year we are committed to match this target, and ensure timely payments to all farmers and land managers – but we strongly encourage all eligible farmers to submit their applications as soon as possible.

We will continue to build on our performance while also supporting farmers across the country to make the most of the opportunities arising from the transition to the new farming schemes.

Since leaving the Common Agricultural Policy, the Government is introducing a new system that is tailored to the interests of English farmers. The new [environment land management schemes](#) are the most significant change to farming and land management in 50 years, designed to deliver a renewed agricultural sector, producing healthy food for consumption at home and abroad, where farms can be profitable and economically sustainable.

Since last year, Direct Payments are being gradually reduced – with the biggest reductions made to the higher payment bands. Reductions will be applied until the last payments are made in 2027.

The savings from phasing out these payments will free up funds which will go back to farmers and land managers through new grants, and through the roll-out of the three environment land management schemes, namely the Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery, which will incentivise sustainable farming practices alongside profitable food production.

Later this year, Defra will open applications for the [Lump Sum Exit Scheme](#), which provides financial support to BPS applicants in England who wish to retire or leave farming in a planned way. Farmers who are considering applying for the Lump Sum Exit Scheme are encouraged to apply for BPS in 2022 as well as applying for the Lump Sum Exit Scheme later on. This will protect applicants if they find that they are not eligible for the lump sum payment, cannot complete the transfer of their land in time, or decide to withdraw their application before payments are made.

- The Sustainable Farming Incentive will open for applications later this

year. Farmers who participated in the SFI pilot will continue to receive their BPS payments while they are in pilot agreements.

- Basic Payment Scheme guidance 2022 is available [here](#).
  - Guidance on how to make a capital or revenue claim for Countryside Stewardship is available [here](#).
  - Guidance on how to make an Environmental Stewardship claim is available [here](#).
  - The Rural Payments Service can be accessed [here](#).
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## [Businesses to benefit from extension to plug-in van and truck grants](#)

- plug-in van and truck grants extended for 2 years as government goes further and faster to decarbonise transport
- drivers with standard licences can continue driving electric goods vans at a higher weight limit, making it easier for businesses to make the switch
- comes ahead of 2030 phase-out of new petrol and diesel cars and vans as part of net zero commitment

Businesses will be supported to make the switch to electric as the government commits to a 2-year extension of [plug-in van and truck grants](#).

The move is expected to support the purchase of tens of thousands of greener vans and trucks, and will help make the UK less reliant on imports of foreign oil, improving the security of our energy supply and reducing our vulnerability to volatility in global energy prices.

Last year, industry figures showed the UK had the [highest number of plug-in electric vans sold in Europe](#) and there were around 4 times as many grant applications compared to 2020.

Existing grants have supported the purchase of more than 26,000 electric vans and heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) across the UK since the programme launched in 2012.

With nearly 5% of the UK's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions currently coming from vans, the 2-year extension to these grants and the switch to greener vehicles is essential to support the government's climate change and air quality commitments.

Transport Minister Trudy Harrison said:

When it comes to clean business, this government means business. We are backing a generation of green growth for our thriving fleet

sector.

As demand for electric vehicles continues to grow at speed, this extension to our grant scheme will allow tens of thousands more vans to be purchased, transporting goods in a way which is kinder to our environment. This will support our vital, ongoing work to clean up our air in towns and cities right across the country and build back greener.

Government grants for electric vans and trucks has helped kickstart the market, which now offers more than 30 models of electric vans and trucks which qualify for such schemes.

Electric vehicles are becoming more popular and affordable, and the number of available models will continue to rise, allowing more people and businesses to benefit from the lower running costs of greener vehicles.

This government has committed £2.5 billion to vehicle grants and chargepoint infrastructure to support the transition to zero emission vehicles to date, and plug-in vehicle grant schemes have supported the purchase of over 450,000 ultra-low emission vehicles across the UK – including more than 300,000 zero emission vehicles.

As well as the extension to grant schemes, the government has also announced it will continue to allow drivers holding standard car driving licences to drive electric goods vans at a higher weight limit, up to 4.25 tonnes (compared to a 3.5 tonne limit for diesel vans).

This takes into account the additional weight of electric vehicle batteries and makes it easier for businesses and drivers to make the switch.

To ensure funding and taxpayers' money goes where it's really needed and supports the transition to zero emission vehicles, eligibility criteria for existing plug-in vehicle grants will also be recategorised from the spring with a focus on heavier vehicles.

From 1 April 2022, the threshold to claim the small truck grant of up to £16,000 will be increased from 3.5 tonnes to 4.25 tonnes. Vans up to 4.25 tonnes will be able to claim the large van grant of up to £5,000.

With the increasing number of large vans on the market, the move will ensure government targets support where it's most needed, allowing for heavier and more costly trucks, up to 12 tonnes, to benefit from the higher grant funding.

This change will ensure funding is focused on helping more polluting trucks to make the switch to a zero-emission future.

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# Solent's underwater meadows get a boost

England's largest seagrass planting project will begin planting in its new restoration site in the Solent this week.

It is part of the 4-year (LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES) project being led by Natural England to help protect and restore the marine environment. The seagrass planting is being carried out by the project's restoration lead, the Ocean Conservation Trust (OCT).

At least 44% of the UK's seagrass has been lost since 1936\*, but seagrass meadows provide homes for juvenile fish and protected creatures like seahorses and stalked jellyfish. They also play an integral role in stabilising the seabed, cleaning the surrounding seawater and capturing and storing significant amounts of carbon.

The project's new seagrass restoration site is west of the Beaulieu River mouth, next to the North Solent National Nature Reserve shoreline. The OCT is preparing to carry out one hectare of planting there this week. Around 20,000 biodegradable hessian bags of seed are being packed by Natural England staff and by volunteers at the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth, North Solent National Nature Reserve, University of Portsmouth, and National Oceanography Centre in Southampton. The bags will be taken out onto the water by barge and dropped down long pipes to land on the seabed.

Fiona Crouch, Natural England Project Manager for ReMEDIES, said:

Seagrass meadows are an important but threatened habitat. Restoring them means restoring the benefits they bring to people and nature – vital homes for wildlife, enhanced water quality, carbon storage, and so much more.

We're very proud of our partners, funders, and the many volunteers who have given their time to pack seed bags.

Mark Parry, Development Officer at the Ocean Conservation Trust, said:

After the success of our previous planting efforts in Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, we are excited to be getting underway in the Solent. These events are only made possible by the hard work of our partners in the LIFE ReMEDIES Project and the hundreds of volunteers who are willing to dedicate their time to help restore such an important habitat.

Seagrass is delicate and can be damaged by activities such as the anchoring,

mooring, and launching of leisure boats, as well as other shore and water-based activities. That's why, in addition to planting new seagrass meadows, ReMEDIES is working to protect existing beds by helping recreational users to reduce impacts on these sensitive habitats. This has involved trialling and installing Advanced Mooring Systems (AMS) at popular boating locations including the area around Yarmouth Harbour on the Isle of Wight. These AMS are specially designed to minimise interaction with the seabed.

The seagrass planting is being carried out by the project's restoration lead, the Ocean Conservation Trust; Photo: Ocean Conversation Trust

ReMEDIES will also be working with local schools around the Solent to introduce pupils to the importance of seabed habitats, as well as collaborating with other organisations including Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, World Wildlife Fund, Isle of Wight Estuaries Officer and Project Seagrass. Together, they hope to visit and assess every seagrass bed in the Solent to build a thorough picture of its health and extent so that restoration efforts can have the greatest impact.

Find out more about LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES by following on [Twitter](#), Instagram and Facebook, or visiting [www.saveourseabed.co.uk](http://www.saveourseabed.co.uk).

Volunteers will be packing seagrass seed bags at the National Oceanography Centre in Southampton on 15 March, and at the Institute of Marine Science, University of Portsmouth on 16 March (evening), and 17 March (daytime).

Subject to weather, there will be planting in the Solent on the morning of Friday 18 March.

Media are welcome to attend packing and/or planting and interview representatives from Natural England and Ocean Conservation Trust.

Please note: Media will not be able to accompany the planting team on the barge but can film/photograph the barge being loaded from Portsmouth International Port (from approximately 7am) and setting off. Please let us know by Thursday 17 March if you would like to attend so we can arrange your security clearance through the port.

Images and footage from the seagrass planting in Plymouth Sound in April 2021 and November 2021 is also available.

\*Research by Alix Green, published in Frontiers in Plant Science journal, March 2021

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpls.2021.629962/full>.

## **LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES**

[LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES](#) is a £2.5 million, 4-year marine conservation project to Save Our Seabed at 5 Special Areas of Conservation along England's south coast, through seagrass restoration, education and innovation. It is funded by the LIFE programme and led by Natural England in partnership with

Marine Conservation Society, Ocean Conservation Trust, Plymouth City Council/Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum and Royal Yachting Association.

## **Natural England**

[Natural England](#) is the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide.

## **Ocean Conservation Trust**

The [Ocean Conservation Trust](#) is an Ocean conservation charity that focuses on 2 key areas: habitat restoration and behaviour change. Following a conservation pathway that has been proven to work, the charity's approach puts people at the centre, working hard to create meaningful connections between people and the Ocean as the first step to inspiring long-term behaviour change. This is done in tandem with more traditional conservation work surrounding the monitoring and restoration of crucial Ocean habitats, with a particular focus on seagrasses.

## **Royal Yachting Association (RYA)**

The [RYA](#) is the national body for dinghy, yacht and motor cruising, all forms of sail racing, RIBs and sports boats, windsurfing and personal watercraft and a leading representative for inland waterways cruising.

The [Green Blue](#) is the joint environment programme created by British Marine and the RYA. It was set up to encourage everyone who enjoys getting out on the water or whose livelihood depends on it, to do so as sustainably as possible.

## **Marine Conservation Society**

The [Marine Conservation Society](#) is the UK's leading charity for the protection of our seas, shores and wildlife.

## **Plymouth City Council/Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum**

[Plymouth City Council](#) is a unitary authority and has hosted Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum since it was first established in the early 1990s. It has a vision for Plymouth to be Britain's Ocean City and one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities which is sustainable and cares about the environment and is currently working towards creating Britain's first National Marine Park.

The Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) is a collaborative partnership bringing together the key authorities responsible for the management of the tidal waters of Plymouth Sound and Estuaries European Marine Site. Under the chair of the Queen's Harbour Master, members consist of 5 local authorities, 4 harbour authorities, Natural England, Environment Agency, Marine Management Organisation, Duchy of Cornwall and both Devon and Severn, and Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities.



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## [£10 million to provide long-term income for woodland creation with fifth auction of Woodland Carbon Guarantee](#)

£10 million is being made available for farmers and land managers to create new woodlands to help tackle the effects of climate change, through a unique scheme which provides new income in the form of long-term payments for the amount of carbon a new woodland will store.

Farmers and land managers across England are encouraged to [apply for the Woodland Carbon Guarantee scheme](#) by 24 April, ahead of the fifth auction which will take place online between 9 and 15 May 2022.

Administered by the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Carbon Guarantee is a £50 million scheme that aims to help accelerate woodland planting rates and permanently remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Following an online auction process, successful bidders will be offered the option to sell woodland carbon in the form of Woodland Carbon Units – a financial value given to each tonne of carbon stored – to the Government over 35 years at a guaranteed price protected against inflation. The scheme reflects the Government's confidence in the continued growth of markets for woodland carbon, as landowners will continue to benefit from a reliable revenue stream in selling carbon on the domestic market.

Before applying for the Guarantee, land managers will need to have [registered with the Woodland Carbon Code](#), which provides the tools and information required to verify and record the carbon they are capturing and can sell in future.

**Sir William Worsley, Chair of the Forestry Commission, said:**

This pioneering scheme could be the perfect fit for land managers of all kinds looking for long-term income support for creating new woodlands.

Now in its fifth round, it's encouraging that this scheme has continued to grow in its success, resulting in the creation of 2,650 hectares of new woodland specifically to help combat the many and varied impacts of climate change.

I strongly encourage farmers, foresters and land managers across England to submit their applications to the Guarantee ahead of the

application deadline on 24 April.

The outcome of previous auctions supported projects across England at a range of scales, including in the South West and East where tree planting has been lower in recent years. The average price of bids accepted in the fourth auction was £18.62 per woodland carbon unit.

Encouraging diverse woodland types and tree species is a key factor in the Forestry Commission's efforts to treble tree planting rates in England by the end of this Parliament and plant 30,000 hectares of trees across the UK per year by 2025.

[Register with the Woodland Carbon Code](#) and [apply for the Woodland Carbon Guarantee](#) here.