

Withdrawal Agreement Specialised Committee meeting on UK Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus: joint statement

Press release

The second meeting of the Committee on 3 December by video conference, co-chaired by European Commission and UK government officials, looked at Sovereign Base Areas.



Joint UK-EU statement following the second meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Specialised Committee on issues related to the implementation of the Protocol on the Sovereign Base Areas of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Cyprus

The second meeting of the Specialised Committee on the Protocol on Sovereign Base Areas was held today, 3 December via video conference, co-chaired by officials from the European Commission and the UK Government. The Committee was established by the Withdrawal Agreement to facilitate the implementation and application of the Protocol.

The UK and the EU examined the progress in the preparation for the implementation of the Protocol, which shall become effective at the end of the transition period, and reaffirmed their commitment to full implementation of the measures outlined in the Protocol.

The co-chairs agreed that the Committee will meet again before the end of the year to finalise the remaining issues and to ensure the smooth and timely entry into effect of the Protocol.

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[Form: Porcine \(live\): health certificates](#)

Use these certificates to import live pigs to Great Britain, the Channel Islands or Isle of Man.

[News story: Avian influenza \(bird flu\): Latest situation](#)

New housing measures will come into force in England, Scotland and Wales on 14 December.

[Travel corridor update, 3 December 2020](#)

There will be no additions to or removals from the travel corridor list this week following data received from the Joint Biosecurity Centre and Public Health England.

The government will continue to take decisive action if necessary, to contain the virus, including removing countries from the [travel corridor list](#) rapidly if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

A range of factors are taken into account when deciding to remove a country from the travel corridor list, including the continued increase of coronavirus (COVID-19) within a country, the numbers of new cases, imported cases, information on a country's testing capacity, testing regime and test positivity rate. None of these indicate the need to amend the list of travel corridors this week.

The government has also announced today (3 December 2020) a limited number of exemptions for passengers arriving into England, including for business travellers who meet a set of required criteria.

From 4am on Saturday 5 December, individuals undertaking specific business activity which would deliver a significant benefit to the UK economy – including activity that creates or preserves 50+ UK jobs – will no longer need to self-isolate when travelling or returning from non-exempt countries.

Individuals will only be exempt when undertaking the specific business activity and will only be able to meet with others as required by that specific activity. Further information will be available on gov.uk when these exemptions come into force.

Exemptions will also come into force at the same time for domestic and international performing arts professionals, TV production staff, journalists, and recently signed elite sportspersons, ensuring that industries which require specific, high talent individuals who rely on international connections can continue to complete their work.

PHE do not anticipate these changes will raise the risk of domestic transmission, due to the protocols being put in place around these exemptions, however all exemptions will remain under review.

All travellers, including those from exempt destinations, will still be required to show a complete [passenger locator form](#) on arrival into the UK unless they fall into a small group of exemptions.

COVID-19 has profoundly changed the nature of international travel. Travellers should continue to check the [latest advice from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#), given the potential for changing coronavirus infection rates to affect both the advice about travelling to other countries and rules about self-isolation on return.

Penalties for those breaching the [self-isolation rules](#) when returning from non-exempt countries have increased from £1,000 for first offences up to £10,000 for subsequent offences, mirroring penalties for those breaching self-isolation following a positive COVID test or contact from Test and Trace.

[Government to add COVID-19 to Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme](#)

- COVID-19 vaccines will only be deployed once they meet strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality and are approved for use by the regulator
- No safety concerns have been reported in clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines authorised for use
- Addition of COVID-19 a responsible step and standard process to further prepare for safe roll out

In advance of a rollout of an authorised COVID-19 vaccine and in line with other immunisation programmes, the government is taking the precautionary step to ensure that, in the very rare possibility where someone is severely disabled as a result of taking a COVID-19 vaccine, they can access financial assistance through the Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme (VDPS).

No safety concerns have been reported in vaccines authorised for use following rigorous clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people and extensive analysis of the vaccine's safety, quality and effectiveness by experts from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine is now the first COVID-19 vaccine to be authorised for use in the UK, and the MHRA will keep safety under continual review.

Adding diseases to the VDPS is not new and numerous diseases have been added as successive governments have rolled out more immunisation programmes, such as HPV and Meningitis B. In response to the H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic, the previous government added swine flu to the VDPS on 10 October 2009.

Generally, only those who were administered vaccines as part of a childhood immunisation programme are covered under the VDPS. However, because COVID-19 vaccines will be rolled out to a large proportion of the adult population, the government will amend the eligibility requirements, ensuring adults who are administered a COVID-19 vaccine in the UK or Isle of Man, or as part of an armed forces medical treatment, will be covered by the scheme too.

This is not a novel approach. Currently, polio, rubella, meningococcal group C, HPV and meningococcal group W (up to age 26) are also exempt from the age requirement, as these vaccines were primarily offered to adults.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Jonathan Van-Tam said:

We are extremely confident in the effectiveness and safety of our immunisation programmes. We will not be rolling out a COVID-19 vaccine unless it has met robust standards of safety, effectiveness and quality and authorised for use by the medicines regulator, the MHRA.

The UK has one of the most comprehensive immunisation programmes in the world, and sensible routine precautions such as these form a huge part of our global-leading standards in safety.

The VDPS is a safety net to help ease the burden on individuals who have in extremely rare circumstances experienced harm due to receiving a government-recommended vaccine. It is not a compensation scheme. Rather, it provides a one-off, tax-free lump sum – currently £120,000 – for those suffering a severe disability as a result of a vaccine against a disease listed under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act.

Currently, in order to qualify for the payment, it must be accepted, on the balance of probability, that there is a causal link between the vaccine and

the claimed disability and that the resulting disability amounts to severe (ie at least 60%) disablement.

Claims are assessed and paid where successful by the Department for Work and Pensions.

[Existing diseases included within VDPS eligibility](#)