

# Government and UK CAA launches largest repatriation in peacetime history after collapse of Thomas Cook

Following the collapse of Thomas Cook and the cancellation of all its flights, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has announced that the government and UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has hired dozens of charter planes to fly customers home free of charge.

All customers currently abroad with Thomas Cook who are booked to return to the UK over the next 2 weeks will be brought home as close as possible to their booked return date.

The flights will start operating from today (23 September 2019). All the details of each flight will be posted on a special website, [thomascook.caa.co.uk](http://thomascook.caa.co.uk), as soon as they are available.

The government and the UK CAA aim to fly people as close as possible to their booked return date – so customers are being strongly advised not to cut short their holiday or go to the airport without checking the website for information about their return journey.

The UK CAA is also contacting hotels accommodating Thomas Cook customers, who have booked as part of a package, to tell them that the cost of their accommodation will also be covered by the government, through the Air Travel Trust Fund/ATOL cover.

All Thomas Cook customers wherever they are around the world, will be brought back to the UK on special free flights or booked onto another scheduled airline at no extra cost. The dedicated website will provide all the information customers need to access these flights. A small number of passengers may need to book their own flight home and reclaim the costs.

For flights back to the UK, it doesn't matter whether customers are ATOL protected or not, or what their nationality is. Everyone on a Thomas Cook holiday with a return flight to the UK within the 2 weeks will be brought home.

Under normal circumstances, passengers who are not ATOL protected would be asked to find, and pay for, their own way home. However, given the extent of the disruption the government is stepping in to assist impacted passengers and get people home.

Hundreds of staff from many government departments and agencies, including the UK CAA, the Department for Transport (DfT), and the Foreign Office (FCO), will be deployed in call centres and at airports to help people.

Customers who haven't already left the UK, should not go to the airport, as

there will be no further outbound flights operated by Thomas Cook. The dedicated website will let customers know how to get their money back.

The Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, said:

Thomas Cook's collapse is very sad news for staff and holidaymakers. The government and UK CAA is working round the clock to help people. Our contingency planning has helped acquire planes from across the world – some from as far away as Malaysia – and we have put hundreds of people in call centres and at airports.

But the task is enormous, the biggest peacetime repatriation in UK history. So, there are bound to be problems and delays. Please try to be understanding with the staff who are trying to assist in what is likely to be a very difficult time for them as well.

Following the announcement that the company has been put into compulsory liquidation, various support schemes have been set up to assist UK based employees and customers – including a dedicated government webpage and helpline to advise on rights and protections and the Jobcentre Plus Rapid Response Service.

The Insolvency Service is taking steps to prepare for payment of statutory redundancy to employees (except in Northern Ireland where different rules apply).

The government also intends to convene a cross-government taskforce to support employees, alongside local stakeholders. The taskforce will consider existing support schemes and will also monitor the impact on local businesses.

The Business Secretary will write to the Insolvency Service to ask them to prioritise and fast-track their investigation into the circumstances surrounding Thomas Cook going into liquidation. The investigation will also consider the conduct of the directors.

Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

This will be a hugely worrying time for employees of Thomas Cook, as well as their customers. Government will do all it can to support them. I will be setting up a cross-government taskforce to monitor local impacts, will write to insurance companies to ask them to process claims quickly, and stand ready to provide assistance and advice.

I will also be writing to the Insolvency Service to ask them to prioritise and fast-track their investigation into the circumstances surrounding Thomas Cook going into liquidation.

The government has held a series of meetings to plan the operation, which is codenamed Operation Matterhorn. Further ministerial meetings will be held today.

The operation is led by the UK CAA but also involves DfT, FCO, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and other departments.

There are more than 150,000 holidaymakers abroad with Thomas Cook who are booked to return to the UK at some point over the next 2 weeks. The vast majority will not need to return today.

The operation is modelled on the successful repatriation of passengers after the collapse of Monarch Airways. The final cost of that operation to taxpayers was about £50 million. The repatriation effort with Thomas Cook is about twice the size.

All the charter aircraft meet full UK safety standards.

A minority of passengers will be returned to a different UK airport from the one they left. Where this happens, we will provide coaches and taxis to get passengers to their original departure airport.

Thomas Cook's financial problems are substantial, long-standing and well documented and government financial assistance would not have resolved them.

The operation is only intended for passengers who were due to return to the UK within the next 2 weeks.

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## **Government takes steps to protect healthcare access for UK nationals living in the EU after 31 October**

Government commits to funding healthcare for over 180,000 UK nationals living in the EU for 6 months following Brexit if we leave without a deal.

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# Living in the EU after 31 October

People already living in the EU who have their healthcare funded by the UK, including pensioners and students, will have their healthcare costs covered for 6 months if we leave without a deal.

The government has proposed to each EU member state that, if we leave without a deal, existing healthcare arrangements continue until 31 December 2020 in the same way that they do now.

Discussions are ongoing but if arrangements with all member states have not been finalised by 31 October, Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock has today confirmed the government will provide support to around 180,000 UK nationals living in the EU who currently have their healthcare costs paid for by the UK for a 6-month period following exit day. This includes pensioners, students, those on disability benefits and UK workers temporarily posted in the EU.

The government has also committed to covering the costs of UK nationals in the EU who are in the middle of treatment when we leave the EU, for up to a year.

The government will also provide cover during the time it takes to be registered with a local healthcare scheme. This is to ensure people are not exposed to gaps in healthcare coverage and potentially high costs while they register for healthcare locally. To be eligible for this support, people must apply within local timeframes or no later than 6 months after we leave, whichever is the shortest.

The NHS is writing to 180,000 UK nationals living in the EU to make them aware of the information they need in the country they live in:

The value of the commitment will ultimately depend on which EU countries accept the government's offer. Modelling has been performed to assess the likely costs of the policy if it is required. This suggests the maximum expenditure the government would expect to make under this commitment if no further bilateral agreements are finalised may be in the region of £50 million in 2019 to 2020 and £100 million in 2020 to 2021 but could be significantly lower.

In addition to this, the government has committed to:

- cover the healthcare costs for students who began their courses in the EU ahead of 31 October for the duration of their course
- cover the healthcare costs of UK visitors to the EU who commenced their trip before the UK left the EU until they return to the UK
- ensure that people currently insured by the UK living in the EU can return to use the NHS temporarily in England, Wales and Scotland free of charge

British citizens living in Ireland will be able to access healthcare in

Ireland in the same way as before Brexit.

The UK and Spain have each taken steps to ensure that people living in each country can continue to access healthcare as they do now until at least 31 December 2020. This means that your healthcare access will remain the same after 31 October 2019, whatever the Brexit scenario.

See the [NHS travelling and living abroad guides](#) for the latest information on individual countries.

People should not delay taking action to put appropriate permanent arrangements in place for after exit day, particularly as for some EU countries the timeframe for UK nationals to register with their domestic health system is far shorter than 6 months.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Protecting the healthcare rights of UK nationals is a priority of this government.

While the government continues to work towards a good deal, I am today announcing that pensioners, students and UK workers living in the EU will have their healthcare costs covered for 6 months after 31 October, whatever the circumstances of Brexit.

All UK nationals in the EU should act now and take the simple steps needed to secure their access to healthcare.

Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Nick Archer, said:

We are pleased to confirm this additional support, which has been offered to pensioners and others who have their healthcare covered by the UK.

These transitional arrangements provide welcome reassurance to thousands of our UK residents living in Europe who may have their access to healthcare affected after Brexit.

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## [Speech by Alok Sharma at UNGA climate resilience and adaptation event](#)

Thank you Andrew.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, of course, I'm absolutely delighted to introduce the work of our coalition, alongside my excellent co-lead, Her Excellency Minister Fouad.

I'm really grateful for the joint working Andrew, as you've set out – obviously on the UK side – but also particularly with our friends in Egypt and Minister, for your personal commitment to this – I think that has really helped to drive this agenda forward.

I would also like to extend my thanks to my esteemed colleagues from Bangladesh, from the Netherlands, from Malawi and of course, St Lucia for their contributions.

When talking about the climate it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the challenge we face:

- With almost a million plant and animal species at risk of extinction.
- And with floods, droughts and storms – each one pushing yet more people into poverty.

We must take this threat seriously.

In his remarks, Achim Steiner talked about referencing events in the Bahamas, well Hurricane Dorian is an incredibly sad and yet timely reminder of the urgency that we need in facing this particular threat.

First responders to Dorian described the scenes on the ground as 'apocalyptic.' Roofs ripped from buildings. Homes under water. Families left devastated by the loss of their loved ones.

And it's not as if we haven't been warned before about this.

30 years ago, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher warned about the "insidious danger" of man-made climate change.

We cannot afford to wait.

The UK is proudly leading the way:

- We were the first major economy in the world to enshrine our commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 into law, into legislation in the UK.
- We are deeply honoured to have been nominated, in partnership with our friends in Italy, for the COP 26 presidency next year.
- And of course we are delighted to be co-leading on adaptation and resilience at the Climate Action Summit.

My friend, Minister Fouad has already outlined the package that we plan to put forward. We are rallying the international community, our Call to Action has, as she's already said, got over 100 signatories.

The United Kingdom is committing £236 million towards these efforts, and the package will have three priorities:

Firstly, it's about protecting our natural environment.

Whilst feeding nine billion people, we need a rural transition towards sustainable land use to rise to the challenge, we will need the best experience from around the world to come together.

And while we do this, we need to support those on the front line. Smallholder farmers across the developing world are among the most vulnerable.

We will support them by providing £61 million to develop crops that are drought, flood and disease resistant.

This will support 100 million farmers and lift 30 million people out of poverty.

Secondly, it's about protecting the most vulnerable people in our society from natural disasters.

For every \$100 invested in a humanitarian response, we only invest \$4 in disaster risk reduction.

This has to change.

Tomorrow, we will launch a new Partnership that will make 1 billion people safer from extreme weather and natural disasters by 2025.

By bringing the latest technology together with humanitarian and climate finance, we can prepare for disasters before they strike.

The UK will invest £85 million towards this effort. But we'll still need to respond to the effects of when disasters occur. So we will also invest £90 million to help people respond to emergencies after they have struck.

And finally, it's about building the resilience of our economies.

As we have seen in the United Kingdom, economic growth does not need to come at the expense of our natural environment.

Developing countries need infrastructure to grow their way out of poverty. Infrastructure that is resilient in the face of a changing climate.

That is why we are working with key private sector partners to launch a Coalition for Climate Resilient Investments. To make infrastructure fit for the future.

In closing, I would just say that our commitment to vulnerable countries is clear. We will support through initiatives like the Least Developed Countries

Vision for a Resilient Future, and the African Adaptation Initiative.

My Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced last month that the United Kingdom will double our contribution to the Green Climate Fund, which again underlines our commitment.

In closing, I would just add, that it is easy to talk about the scale of the threat. It is of course much, much harder to put these words into action.

But together, we can, and will, rise to the challenge.

Thank you.

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## UK aid to help protect one billion people from impact of extreme weather

- UK co-creating partnership to protect one billion people in the developing world from extreme weather.
- A new £175 million package will help make people safer and better prepared for disasters such as typhoons and hurricanes, as well as dealing with their aftermath.
- UK and Egypt urgently call for the world to step up preparations for the impact of climate change.

The UK Government is co-creating a global partnership to help protect one billion people in developing countries from the impact of extreme weather events, International Development Secretary Alok Sharma announced today.

The Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership will help ensure the world's poorest people receive earlier warnings of potential disasters such as typhoon and hurricanes – and are better prepared to deal with their effects.

International Development Secretary Alok Sharma, today [September 22] announced £85 million in funding to the partnership. He said:

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges the world is facing, and the world's poorest will be the worst hit.

Early warning systems save lives. Helping developing countries to protect against the impact of extreme weather will ensure that the world's poorest are better able to cope with disasters in the



future.

Working with countries across the world and organisations like the UK Met Office and International Federation of the Red Cross and Crescent, the Partnership will improve the availability and quality of weather forecasting information available.

Better information and early warning systems will give people more time to adapt and prepare for extreme weather events, making them easier to predict.

The Partnership will also help the governments of developing countries to make detailed action plans for natural disasters, including ensuring survivors are safe and have access to food, water and shelter.

The UK, working with IFRC and Finland, has led on setting up the Partnership.

At the UN in New York, both the UK and Egypt called for urgent global action to help the world adapt to the effects of climate change.

Speaking at the UN, The International Development Secretary also announced up to £90 million of support for the Global Risk Financing Facility, which will help cut the costs of disaster risk insurance. It will help governments and humanitarian agencies to access funding quicker, ensuring a faster and more effective response in emergencies.

The UK is also leading the charge to make infrastructure more resilient to climate change. Working with Jamaica, insurance company Willis Towers Watson, and the World Economic Forum the UK has brought together organisations to ensure that we work to make buildings, roads, bridges and transport networks fit to withstand climate shocks.

## **Notes to editors:**

The UK is committing £175 million to help make people safer from and reduce the impact of disasters.

This is made up of:

- £85 million through the Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership, a new global partnership of governments and humanitarian and climate experts to help protect one billion people from disaster.
- £90 million to the Global Risk Financing Facility. Co-funded by Germany and delivered by the World Bank, it will use financing services such as insurance to help governments and humanitarian agencies access funding more quickly to support a faster, more effective response in emergencies.

The International Development Secretary also announced a new Coalition for

Climate Resilient, alongside Jamaica insurance company Willis Towers Watson, and the World Economic Forum. This coalition brings together 38 countries, institutions and companies with trillions of assets to ensure infrastructure is designed to withstand climate shocks.

The Secretary of State also pledged to give £61 million at the UN to develop crops, which are better adapted to grow in higher temperatures, can withstand droughts or floods, and have natural resistance to pests and diseases.

These crops are developed specifically for the most vulnerable countries in Asia and Africa. This is made up of:

- £30 million to global agricultural research organisation CGIAR, to support the development and delivery to poor farmers of new crops which are more productive, climate and disease-resistant, and are more nutritious.
- £13 million for developing disease resistant, nutrient-enriched wheat through the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre.
- £18 million, which will go to the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International to support the tracking of plant pests and diseases; the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology to support pest control work; and the World Vegetable Centre to breed vegetables varieties better adapted to future climate.