

# Press release: HMRC saves public £2.4M by stopping fraudsters

Scammers create websites that look similar to HMRC's official site and then direct the public to call numbers with extortionate costs in comparison to the low cost and no cost service HMRC provides. These sites promote non-HMRC premium rate phone numbers as a means of reaching HMRC but these are merely call forwarding services which connect callers to HMRC at a significant price. HMRC's own 0300 numbers are mostly free or charged at the national landline rate. In other cases, sites charge for forwarding information to HMRC which can be provided free of charge through [hmrc.gov.uk](https://www.hmrc.gov.uk).

HMRC has successfully challenged the ownership of these websites, masquerading as official websites, and taken them out of the hands of cheats. Analysis has shown that had HMRC not taken this action then the public would have lost £2.4m to these phone scams.

Treasury Minister, Mel Stride MP the Financial Secretary to the Treasury said:

We know that HMRC is the most spoofed government brand as criminals try to take advantage of the fact that everyone has some involvement with the tax authority. In this particular case, scammers try to dupe the public into paying large sums for services that are available for free or low cost.

This is a brazen con, charging premium rates whilst simply redirecting calls to the real HMRC numbers that are available at low or no cost. It is a testament to the hard work of HMRC that they have prevented criminals extracting £2.4m from the public.

The public should go direct to [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) to obtain genuine HMRC contact numbers. These will not be premium rate numbers. People should be alert for sponsored adverts, websites charging for government services which would be expected to be free and those with disclaimers denying association with HMRC or government.

Consumer Minister Andrew Griffiths MP said:

Anyone can fall victim to scams and the cost can be devastating, so it's great to see HMRC cracking down on these bogus websites and protecting the public's purse.

This Scams Awareness Month I'm encouraging anyone who has fallen foul of false phone numbers to speak up, so we can stamp scams out.

## Further information

- This announcement comes at the start of scam awareness month organised by Citizens Advice which is running throughout June
  - In 2017 HMRC took a formal approach to denying others ownership of misleading domains, so far 105 domains have been recovered which were being used to host a range of misleading content.
  - The specific tactics and costs on each site vary, but the maximum cost of a call is £3.60 a minute, capped at £36 per call. Anecdotal reports show the average victim reporting a cost of around £15 per call.
  - Check [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk) for information on how to avoid and report scams and recognise genuine HMRC contact.
  - Follow [HMRC Press Office](#) on Twitter.
  - HMRC's [Flickr channel](#)
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## Speech: Abstention of resolutions on long-standing issues between Israel and the Palestinian people

Thank you Mr President and may I join colleagues in welcoming you to the Presidency for this month and saying that the United Kingdom looks forward to working with Russia. And may I also thank Poland for their very distinguished Presidency of this Council.

Mr President, the United Kingdom remains extremely concerned by the situation in Gaza. We condemn the violent activities of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist organisations and we condemn them unreservedly. We have witnessed recently, unacceptable mortar and rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. Such acts of terror are destructive to peace efforts and they need to stop. And in the past weeks, we have seen violence, Hamas' exploitation of peaceful protests and a disturbing volume of live fire. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organization by the UK since 2001 and the United Kingdom has sanctions in place against senior Hamas officials.

The recent violence has led to the tragic loss of life of over 100 Palestinians, and we reiterate that there is an urgent need to establish the facts surrounding past weeks' events.

Mr President, the deteriorating situation in Gaza should concentrate our minds on how we can work urgently towards a resolution of the long-standing issues between Israel and the Palestinian people.

The United Kingdom has long supported UN action on Israeli-Palestinian

issues. It is therefore regrettable, Mr President, that today's resolutions contain elements that are either imbalanced or too vague to be viable. For example, the Kuwaiti text fails to name terrorist actors including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. And its suggestion of an international protection mechanism risks raising unrealistic expectations. We condemn Hamas, but at the same time, we regret that the American text does not adequately reference Israel's responsibilities and obligations with regard to Gaza. Therefore Mr President, the United Kingdom will abstain on both resolutions today.

I have set out our principled rationale and nothing more should be construed. Thank you.

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## **News story: Operational note for UK industry: US steel and aluminium tariffs**

### **Background:**

Following an announcement of steel and aluminium tariffs under the Section 232 of the US Trade Expansion Act of 1962 earlier this year, the UK Government has worked extensively with the United States (US) and European Union (EU) counterparts to secure an EU wide exemption.

We are therefore deeply disappointed at the unjustified decision by the US yesterday to apply tariffs to EU steel and aluminium imports. The UK and other European Union countries are close allies of the US and should be permanently and unconditionally exempted, any claim that UK steel and aluminium imports harm US national security is without foundation.

The Prime Minister and Secretary of State for International Trade, Liam Fox, have made clear to the US Government at the highest levels the importance of UK steel and aluminium to its businesses and defence projects.

Whilst we will continue to press for a permanent EU exemption from these tariffs, we also recognise that industry will be deeply concerned by their immediate impact. We have set out below the process to apply for product exemptions from tariffs and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will be holding a meeting with industry on Tuesday to share information and advice on how they can best navigate the procedure.

In parallel, we will support UK industry, by continuing to press the case for UK products to secure exemptions through this process. The Secretary of State for International Trade spoke to US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, who is leading the product exemption process, on Thursday, and raised with him the

importance to the UK of protecting its businesses.

We will also continue to work with the EU, while we remain an EU Member State continuing to engage with both the European Commission and other EU Member States. We must abide by EU trade decisions, and any EU response will be coordinated by the Commission covering all 28 Member States. We will support EU efforts to secure the swiftest possible action to safeguard industry from the knock-on effects of other countries diverting US exports into the EU.

In addition, the government will be working with the EU to shape a measured and proportionate response, in line with World Trade Organisation rules, to the impact of the US tariffs. We continue to believe that a multilateral approach, not least in the framework of the Global Forum on Steel Overcapacity, remains the best way to address structural problems in the global steel market. An escalating trade dispute between the US and EU will harm consumers and industries on both sides. We will continue to liaise with all industries involved to reflect their concerns.

## **OPERATIONAL NOTE**

### **The Response to US Tariffs from the European Union**

While we remain a member of the EU, the European Commission will be coordinating the EU response.

The EU has taken steps to facilitate three possible courses of action:

- Under Article 8 of the WTO Safeguards Agreement the EU believes it is entitled to introduce duties on the US to rebalance the harm caused by US tariffs – these duties are known as ‘countermeasures’ or ‘rebalancing measures’. Under WTO rules, the EU must notify the WTO of its list of potential countermeasures and then wait at least 30 days before triggering tariffs. The list is made up of 103 steel and 8 aluminium product lines, and a range of other products.

Following a unanimous vote by Member States, the EU notified the WTO of its potential list on 18 May, and could therefore trigger tariffs on this list of products from 20 June. The Commission is required to seek Member State approval a second time in order for any of the countermeasures to come into effect. The date of this vote is yet to be determined by the Commission.

- An investigation towards possible imposition of ‘safeguard’ measures on steel was launched on 26 March. Safeguards are measures used to protect domestic industry from injury caused by unforeseen surges in imports. They act as a safety valve and provide industry with some breathing space to adjust to increased imports.

The Commission has nine months to decide whether safeguard measures will be necessary. This decision could also be taken much earlier in the proceedings, if the investigation confirms the necessity for swift action. The Commission has also put in place a surveillance system for imports of aluminium to be prepared in case action will be required in that sector.

- On 1 June, the EU launched a WTO dispute challenging US steel and aluminium tariffs.

## **Product exemptions from steel and aluminium tariffs**

The tariffs imposed under Section 232 of the US Trade Expansion Act of 1962 include provision for individual companies to seek an exemption for their products. This process is being led by the US Commerce Department. DIT and BEIS have been supporting UK firms to appeal for exemptions under this process and will continue to do so. The issue was raised by Trade Secretary Liam Fox with US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross on Thursday 31 May.

Details on the process for seeking product exemptions are outlined below:

- On March 18th the US [Department of Commerce announced](#) that it would oversee a process to allow requests for excluding products from steel and aluminium tariffs. Commerce published a notice on the '[Federal Register](#)' setting out the process
- All exclusion requests must be in electronic form and submitted to the Federal rulemaking portal [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).
- Only companies with business activities in the US can apply. This means UK firms without a presence in the US cannot apply directly to Commerce for a product exemption and firms will need to work with the end users of their products in the US to apply for the for a product exemption.
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- Approved product exemptions will only apply to the US firm applying, i.e. even if the producer is the same each end user must apply separately.
- All the information is on the [regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) website along with the [guide](#) and [application form](#).
- The data required for application is detailed and must demonstrate that the product is not readily available in the US.
- Each request will be posted online for 30 days for comment.
- Processing of exclusion requests normally will not exceed 90 days, including adjudication of objections submitted on exclusion requests.

## **Government support**

The Government will continue to press the US for an EU wide exemption from these unjustified tariffs. The Government will also make representations to the Commerce Department to process applications for product exemptions promptly. UK firms will lead on liaising with their US customers on submitting the applications for product exemptions.

To support UK firms, the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy has shared from a US legal firm advice on seeking product exclusions and has also invited industry to a meeting on Tuesday to discuss matters further.

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## News story: Aviation Minister visits Inverness Airport to welcome increased connectivity for the Highlands

A series of new routes opening up from Inverness Airport this summer will provide an economic boost for the region.

New flights operating from Inverness to Bergen, Zurich and Majorca will offer passengers new destination options as well as export opportunities for local businesses.

Daily flights to Heathrow from the airport saw 79,000 passengers travelling on the route in 2017. This figure is projected to increase in 2018 with the number of weekly flights set to increase from 7 to 10 over the summer.

This important route boosts the export of goods and services by businesses, gives passengers access to the wide range of destinations offered from Heathrow and opens up the Highlands for visitors from across the world.

Today (1 June 2018) the Aviation Minister met leading businesses in Inverness to discuss how the Highlands could see even greater connectivity with Heathrow expansion.

Aviation Minister Baroness Sugg said:

With new destinations and increasing numbers of passengers passing through its terminal, Inverness Airport is going from strength to strength.

With up to 15% of new slots at an expanded Heathrow reserved for domestic flights, it would deliver even more opportunities for greater connectivity across Scotland, benefitting both passengers and businesses.

We've already seen a big increase in tourism and exports following the introduction of a new Heathrow flight in 2016, and we want the vibrant city of Inverness to see an economic boost through the growth of its high performing businesses and more visitors to the cultural capital of the Highlands.

Inverness and other Scottish airports could benefit from strengthened routes to Heathrow with expansion which improve connectivity for passengers and businesses and boost the regional economy.

Goods and services exported from Scotland valued a total of £29.8 billion

through over 12,000 exporters last year.

And the latest figures show Inverness Airport's total passenger numbers increased by 92,000 last year, further illustrating the airport's popularity and increasingly important role as a driver for the Highland region and economy.

Today the minister met the Inverness Chamber of Commerce and businesses such as Jacobite Cruises and Gordon & MacPhail whisky and distillery to discuss the growing strength of the airport and how to boost connectivity to the Highlands.

HIAL managing director Inglis Lyon, said:

We very much welcome the minister's visit to Inverness to see for herself the work being undertaken to further improve connectivity and nurture sustainable growth. It is vital for the entire Highland region that the Heathrow link continues to thrive. We very much appreciate the opportunity to explain to the minister the importance of continued investment in aviation and associated infrastructure to maintain growth, not just in the airport, but for the wider Highland economy.

When the Heathrow flight was reintroduced in 2016 we were confident of its success and the impressive increase in passenger numbers in the years since its reintroduction shows that demand is very much there. Only by continued investment in services and infrastructure will be secure our future growth.

Following the launch of a route between the Scottish airport and Heathrow in 2016, the city has benefited from more than £8 million per year as a result of tourism according to the Inverness Chamber of Commerce.

Jacobite Cruises, the longest running cruise company on Loch Ness, reported a 12% rise in visitors just 4 months after the daily air service between Inverness and Heathrow was introduced.

The government remains on track to lay a final Airports National Policy Statement before Parliament for a vote in the first half of this year, subject to consideration of 80,000 consultation responses and the recommendations of the Transport Select Committee.

## **Aviation and maritime media enquiries**

Media enquiries

020 7944 3021

Out of hours media enquiries

020 7944 4292

## News story: Prime Minister appoints British Museum Trustee

Sir Charlie Mayfield became the John Lewis Partnership's fifth Chairman in March 2007 after joining the Partnership in 2000 as Head of Business Development, responsible for business strategy and development for both John Lewis and Waitrose. Charlie joined the Board as Development Director in 2001 and was responsible for developing the Partnership's online strategy. He became Managing Director of John Lewis in January 2005 prior to taking up his appointment as Chairman of the Partnership in March 2007.

Charlie began his career as an officer in the army. He joined SmithKline Beecham in 1992 and became Marketing Manager for the Lucozade brand, before moving to McKinsey & Co in 1996, where he worked with consumer and retail organisations.

Charlie is Chair of the Productivity Leadership Group and is the President of the Employee Ownership Association. He is also a Trustee of Place2Be and a Director of FabIndia, and Non-Executive Chairman of QA. He received a knighthood in June 2013 for services to business.

The role is not remunerated. This appointment has 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. Charlie has declared no such political activity.