

UK government provides over £140 million of support for exports to Ghana

UK Export Finance (UKEF) has today announced it will provide over £140 million of financing to support UK exports to Ghana and help secure export opportunities for UK companies on major national infrastructure projects across the country.

This infrastructure support has helped to secure export opportunities for UK companies in healthcare, sanitation and transport across the country.

The support that UKEF has provided in Ghana includes:

- a direct loan of £27 million to the Ghanaian government will help UK-based Aqua Africa provide clean energy to sterilise drinking water for 225,000 people across the country. Aqua Africa will use solar powered technology to deliver 5 litres of water a day for less than a quarter of a penny.
- over £50 million will enable the construction of the new regional hospital in Koforidua. The project led by engineering companies Ellipse and Tyllium will provide 285 beds, a modern and fully functional hospital.
- over £70 million of financing in the form of direct loans and guarantees that will boost UK involvement in the redevelopment of a major commercial road between Tema and Aflao by construction company BHM International (UK) Ltd. This road links Ghana with close trading partners including Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Niger.

UKEF has also increased its country cover in 24 African nations this year, including for Ghana which has now doubled to £1.5 billion.

This announcement is part of HM government's ambition to cover 80% of the UK's trade with free trade agreements to strengthen the UK's position as the trading partner of choice for countries in Africa.

Minister for Exports, Graham Stuart, said:

Building on the UK Africa Investment Summit in January this year, I'm delighted to see British capability being exported to Ghana and improving people's lives across the country.

UK Export Finance supports UK exports at no cost to the taxpayer and has an important role in powering an export-led recovery from coronavirus (COVID-19) and giving UK exporters of all sizes a foothold in fast-growing markets across Africa and beyond.

Quotes from exporters

Aqua Africa's Managing Director Philip Foster said:

We commend the tri-partnership approach between the government of Ghana, UKEF and the private sector in securing agreement for this vital social impact investment project that will provide access to clean water to over 225,000 Ghanaians, in support of Ghana's 'Water for All' policy aligned with the SDG agenda.

We are looking forward to implementing this project and to developing the relationship that will deliver further projects that are planned to follow.

Bruno Schambacher, CEO of Tyllium, said:

UKEF's support is allowing EPC companies like ours to take full advantage of the new trading opportunities created by the rise of developing economies like Ghana. Their flexible finance was at the core of our successful bid.

Olivier Picard, CEO of Ellipse Projects, said:

Our company operates actively in Africa and is already present in Ghana in the health sector. We are pleased that UK Export Finance is supporting us as we secure these exciting contracts. UKEF's flexible finance demonstrates the government's true commitment to the growth of UK exports.

Phil Atkinson International Director of BHM Construction International UK said:

Securing this project has been dependent on the world class support provided by UKEF. It shows the commitment of the UK government in supporting exporters as they establish new trading relationships across Africa.

Through the combined assistance of the Ghana Ministry and Roads and UKEF, our team are committed to the development of this critical infrastructure to provide a safe, efficient and reliable road transport system and foster economic growth within Ghana and the region at large.

Ed Harkins, Managing Director of GKB Ventures, who acted as ECA Advisor to Tyllium and BHM, said:

We are delighted to have been appointed as ECA advisor by both BHM and Tyllium on these important infrastructure projects in Ghana. We were able to work with our clients, the banks and the team at UK Export Finance to ensure that the funding was closed in a timely manner in an extremely volatile funding market.

The support UK Export Finance provided through its direct lending facility was essential to ensuring that these vital projects could be funded through a long-term affordable funding solution for the government of Ghana.

GKB has now completed three UKEF supported projects for our clients in Ghana. In each case the support provided by UKEF was a key to ensuring our clients were able to unlock much needed new export contracts.

All possible measures to be taken before schools and colleges close

Today (28 August) the government has published detailed guidance for schools on contingency planning for areas with local lockdowns in place.

The guidance sets out that all possible measures should be taken before any restrictions are imposed on schools to maintain consistent education for children and young people.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our primary focus remains supporting all schools to welcome back all pupils for the start of term and we thank teachers and staff for their hard work in preparations

We hope that we won't have to implement the guidance set out today because the local lockdown measures we have introduced so far are working. Changes to school attendance will only ever be an absolute last resort.

However, it is important that both government and schools prepare for a worst case scenario, so this framework represents the sensible contingency planning any responsible government would put in place.

The updated [CONTAIN](#) guidance sets out four tiers of restrictions for education settings, for use as an absolute last resort in areas subject to

local restrictions.

All schools, colleges and other education settings are opening for the start of term, with all those in areas subject to local restrictions currently at Tier 1 – fully open to all pupils full time, with face coverings required in corridors and communal areas for pupils in Year 7 and above.

Local authority leaders and directors of public health, alongside national government, would be at the centre of any decision making to move out of Tier 1 for education settings.

They would take all other possible measures, including implementing restrictions on other sectors, before considering restricting attendance in education.

If all other measures have been exhausted, Tier 2 would advise secondary schools and colleges in a restricted area to use rotas to help break chains of transmission of coronavirus, while primary schools remain open to all pupils.

Tiers 3 and 4 introduce remote learning full time for wider groups of pupils, with vulnerable children and children of critical workers continuing to attend.

The government asked schools in July to ensure they were able to provide high quality remote education that mirrors in-school education, in case any pupils were required to self-isolate or local restrictions were needed. These plans should extend to rotas if ever required.

All children are due to return to school for the autumn term and schools have been putting in place protective measures to reduce the risk of transmission.

School staff have been working to implement increased hygiene and handwashing with children remaining in consistent groups, using measures such as staggered break times to keep groups apart.

To further reassure parents and teachers that all proportionate measures are being taken to make schools as safe as possible, the government has announced that in areas of the country currently subject to enhanced restrictions, staff and pupils in secondary schools should wear face coverings in communal areas where social distancing cannot be maintained.

From this week, schools and colleges have begun receiving home testing kits, each receiving a pack of 10 tests, with more available to be ordered if needed. The home testing kits are to be used in exceptional circumstances such as an individual with symptoms who may have barriers to accessing a test elsewhere and the home kit would significantly increase their chance of getting tested. This will enable schools and colleges to take swift action to protect others if the test result is positive.

Schools are also receiving packs of PPE to use in the very limited circumstances it may be required, such as when it is not possible for a staff member to maintain 2m distance from a pupil with a suspected case of

coronavirus.

This week the Chief Medical Officers from all four nations in the United Kingdom made it clear that the risks to children contracting Covid-19 in school or college is extremely low and that the risks associated with not being in school or college outweighs that of not being there.

The Department for Education has also published further [guidance](#) to help schools plan for potential Tier 2 restrictions, which will involve secondary year groups operating a rota system in order to reduce pupil numbers on-site.

Restrictions lifted in parts of Greater Manchester, Lancashire and West Yorkshire

- Positive progress means 2 households can mix again in areas including Bolton, Stockport, Trafford, Hyndburn and Burnley
- Some improvements in Leicester, with current restrictions remaining in place for a further 2 weeks as cases remain high

Following discussions with local leaders, the Health and Social Care Secretary, NHS Test and Trace, the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), and the Chief Medical Officer for England have agreed this week's changes to local restrictions in some parts of England.

From Wednesday 2 September restrictions on 2 households mixing introduced last month will be lifted in:

- Bolton
- Stockport
- Trafford
- Burnley
- Hyndburn
- parts of Bradford excluding Bradford city and Keighley town
- parts of Calderdale excluding Halifax
- parts of Kirklees excluding Dewsbury and Batley

It means next week over 1 million people will be able to mix with family and friends outside their household, in line with national social distancing rules, for the first time since restrictions were announced on 30 July.

Businesses and organisations that opened elsewhere in England on 15 August, including bowling alleys and indoor play areas, will also be permitted to reopen in the areas listed above, bringing these areas in line with the rest of the country.

The easements have been agreed thanks to the outstanding local efforts to halt spikes in the virus, through local interventions, increased targeted testing and avoiding mixing with other households indoors.

Data shows cases per 100,000 decreased during the week ending 20 August in Burnley, where cases have more than halved from 52 to 24.6, and cases in Bolton and Stockport fell from 25.6 to 18.9, and 23 to 15.1 respectively, and Trafford fell from 27.1 to 17.8.

To maintain this good progress, it is important local residents continue to wear face coverings where necessary, practise good hygiene and adhere to national social distancing rules.

This week local areas have been encouraged to take a new, collaborative approach to advise on the geographical boundaries of local restrictions, with councils, public health leaders and MPs making proposals to the Gold Local Action committee based on the latest data available.

It means restrictions in some areas will only apply to certain wards, rather than the entire local authority area. This is a key part of the government's enhanced Contain Strategy, which was [announced last week](#), and will deliver more targeted action to drive down rates of COVID-19 at a hyper-local level.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We brought in measures to protect people in these parts of Northern England, and I want to thank residents who have worked so hard to get on top of this virus.

We're seeing the positive results of our local approach, and are able to bring in increasingly targeted measures.

It is vital we can maintain this good progress. I have every faith people across the county, especially in areas where we are seeing higher numbers of cases, will continue to play their part by following local rules, and self-isolating and requesting a free test as soon as they get any symptoms.

The weekly Local Action Gold Committee, chaired by the Health and Social Care Secretary, agreed local restrictions will continue in the following areas.

Greater Manchester:

- a ban on 2 households mixing indoors will continue in City of Manchester, Salford, Rochdale, Bury and Tameside
- in Oldham, in addition to a household mixing ban indoors, residents will continue to be advised to avoid mixing with anyone from another household anywhere. Cases per 100,000 in Oldham reached 67.1 during the week ending 20 August, the second highest in England

Lancashire:

- in Pendle and Blackburn residents will continue to be advised to avoid mixing with anyone from another household anywhere. Some businesses and organisations remain closed in Blackburn and Darwen. Pendle had the highest number of cases per 100,000 anywhere in England during the week ending 20 August, reaching 67.8
- the ban on 2 households mixing indoors will continue in Preston

Leicester:

- on top of the indoor gatherings restrictions, some leisure sector businesses will continue to remain closed
- the next review of these measures will take place by 11 September

West Yorkshire:

- in urban areas of Bradford, the ban on indoor household gatherings remains in place and some businesses and organisations remain closed
- in Kirklees, the ban on indoor household gatherings will continue in Dewsbury and Batley
- the ban will also continue in parts of Calderdale

Shielding advice for clinical extremely vulnerable individuals remains in place across all of Blackburn with Darwen, and Leicester.

The announcement on this week's changes to local restrictions comes as the Health and Social Care Secretary has signed new national regulations formalising penalties for people who repeatably do not wear face coverings on public transport, shops and other areas where it is mandatory.

Fines for not wearing face coverings start at £100, which can be reduced if paid within 14 days. Repeat offenders on public transport or in indoor settings will now have their fines doubled at each offence. After the first offence, there will be no discount. This means a second fine will amount to £200 and a third fine will be £400, up to a maximum value of £3,200.

The full changes will be published on GOV.UK at [Local restrictions: areas with an outbreak of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

PHE's [weekly surveillance report](#) includes changes to the watchlist of local authority areas with higher-than-average incidences of COVID-19.

The changes are:

- Sandwell and Swindon move up the list and become 'areas of enhanced support'
- Luton becomes an 'area of concern' following a drop in cases
- Trafford, Bolton, Stockport, Burnley, Hyndburn, Burnley, parts of Bradford, parts of Kirklees and parts of Calderdale are moved down the list, becoming areas of 'enhanced support'
- Stoke-on-Trent is being added to the list for the first time as an 'area of concern'

This week's PHE surveillance report also included data on rates of COVID-19

by ethnicity and age in each major region in England. This will allow the public and local leaders to more easily see how the pandemic is affecting different ethnic groups across the country, and to inform action to protect our most vulnerable communities

The 3 definitions for JBC and PHE's watchlist are 'areas of concern', 'areas of enhanced support' and 'areas of intervention':

- for 'areas of concern', upper tier local authorities will work with partners, supported by regional PHE and NHS Test and Trace resource, to take additional actions to manage outbreaks and reduce community spread of the virus to more normal levels. Actions taken may include additional targeted testing at high-risk areas or groups, for example care homes, enhanced communications around the importance of social distancing, hand hygiene and other preventative measures, and more detailed epidemiological work to understand where clusters of the virus are occurring so that appropriate action can be taken
- areas deemed for 'enhanced support' will be provided with increased national support, capacity and oversight, including additional resources deployed to augment the local teams where this is necessary. Actions taken may include significant additional widespread testing deployed to the upper tier local authorities, national support for local recommendations put in place to manage outbreaks, and detailed engagement with high-risk groups and sectors to help increase the effectiveness of testing and tracing in these areas
- 'areas of intervention' are defined where there is divergence from the lockdown measures in place in the rest of England because of the significance of the spread of COVID-19. There are a range of non-pharmaceutical interventions available to local and national leaders, from extensive communications and expanded testing, to restrictions on businesses and gatherings

See the [Contain Framework](#) for more information.

Area-specific changes

Areas in Bradford where restrictions are being lifted:

- Worth Valley
- Craven
- Ilkley
- Baildon
- Bingley
- Bingley Rural
- Shipley
- Wharfedale
- Windhill and Wrose

Areas in Calderdale where restrictions are being lifted:

- Brighouse
- Calder

- Elland
- Greenland and Stainland
- Hipperholme and Lightcliffe
- Luddendenfoot
- Rastrick
- Ryburn
- Todmorden

Areas in Kirklees where restrictions are being lifted:

- Golcar
- Greenhead
- Heckmondwike
- Holme Valley South
- Lindley
- Liversedge and Gomersal
- Mirfield
- Newsome
- Cleckheaton
- Dalton
- Denby Dale
- Almondbury
- Colne Valley
- Crosland Moor and Netherton
- Holme Valley North
- Kirkburton
- Ashbrow
- Birstall and Birkenshaw

[UK statement to the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body on Appellate Body Appointments](#)

World news story

The UK delivered the following statement to the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body on Appellate Body Appointments on 28 August



The WTO is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Thank you, Chair.

The United Kingdom continues its support for this proposal for the launch of the selection process and we refer to our previous statements on this agenda item. We also support the statement made by Mexico on behalf of all co-sponsors.

We continue to be concerned that the WTO Membership has not been able to launch the selection processes for new Appellate Body members and we are now seeing the concrete impairment of rights arising from this situation.

While we do not underestimate the challenge of reaching agreement on the necessary reforms, we continue to view a two-stage dispute settlement system with the support of all Members as a central pillar of the broader multilateral trading system. We have listened carefully to the concerns raised, and proposals advanced, and we continue to call on all Members to engage in a solutions-based discussion on reform.

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Government has changed the law so most renters have a 6 month notice period

The government is continuing to help renters with an unprecedented package of support measures.

Legislation has now been introduced, so landlords must now give tenants 6 months' notice before they can evict until March 2021, except in the most serious of cases, such as incidents of anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse perpetrators.

The stay on possession proceedings has been extended until 20 September,

meaning that in total no tenant can have been legally evicted for 6 months at the height of the pandemic.

The package of support for renters includes the extension of notice periods and the extension to the stay on possession proceedings. For the most egregious cases, notice periods have returned to their pre-coronavirus levels, and landlords will be able to progress serious rent arrears cases more quickly.

These changes mean that from 29 August, landlords must provide at least 6 months' notice period prior to seeking possession through the courts in most cases, including section 21 evictions and rent arrears under 6 months.

Notices served on and before 28 August are not affected by these changes, and must be at least 3 months.

The government is also helping landlords affected by the worst cases to seek possession; these are:

- anti-social behaviour (now 4 weeks' notice)
- domestic abuse (now 2 to 4 weeks' notice)
- false statement (now 2 to 4 weeks' notice)
- over 6 months' accumulated rent arrears (now 4 weeks' notice)
- breach of immigration rules 'Right to Rent' (now 3 months' notice)

In addition, new court rules have been agreed, which will come into force on 20 September meaning landlords will need to set out in their claim any relevant information about a tenant's circumstances, including information on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Where this information is not provided, judges will have the ability to adjourn proceedings.

Secretary of State for Housing, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We have developed a package of support for renters to ensure they continue to be protected over winter. I have changed the law so that renters are protected by a 6 month notice period until March 2021.

No tenant will have been legally evicted for 6 months at the height of the pandemic as the stay on possession proceedings has been extended until 20 September. For the most egregious cases, for example those involving anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse perpetrators, notice periods have returned to their normal level, and landlords will be able to progress serious rent arrears cases more quickly.

These changes will support landlords to progress the priority cases while keeping the public safe over winter. We will keep these measures under review and decisions will continue to be guided by the latest public health advice.

The new legislation applies to both the private and social rented sectors in England, and to all new notices in relation to assured, assured shorthold, secure, flexible, introductory and demoted tenancies and those under the Rent Act 1977, but not to any notices issued before the legislation comes into force.

Courts will carefully prioritise the most egregious cases, including anti-social behaviour, fraud, and domestic abuse, ensuring landlords are able to progress the most serious cases, such as those involving anti-social behaviour and other crimes.

If a landlord made a claim to the court before 3 August, they must notify the Court and their tenant that they still intend to seek repossession before the case will proceed, including in section 21 cases.

More detailed guidance on using the courts and the new arrangements will be made available in advance of possession proceedings starting again.

We are conscious of the pressure on landlords during this difficult time and do not want to exacerbate this. Of course, it is important that tenants who are able to do so must continue to pay their rent.

The government has put in place an unprecedented support package to support tenants to pay their living costs, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, £9.3 billion of additional support through the welfare system, and increasing the Local Housing Allowance rate to the 30th percentile.

We are committed to bringing forward the Renters Reform Bill to abolish section 21 and deliver a fairer and more effective rented sector in due course. However, such legislation must balance greater security of tenure with an assurance that landlords are able to recover their properties where they have valid reasons to do so.

We have been working closely with the judiciary through a Master of the Rolls led Working Group to finalise the arrangements on the prioritisation of cases, for when the stay on possession proceedings lifts from 20 September.

29 August, landlords must provide at least 6 months' notice period prior to seeking possession through the courts in most cases, including section 21 evictions and rent arrears under 6 months. We have also extended the validity of a section 21 notice from 6 to 10 months to accommodate this change.