

Press release: Marriage Allowance promoted on Valentine's Day

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is sharing the love this Valentine's Day and encouraging married couples and those in a civil partnership to sign up for Marriage Allowance.

More than 3.5 million couples are already benefitting from Marriage Allowance, which was introduced in April 2015, but HMRC estimates around 700,000 couples are still eligible for the free tax break worth up to £238 this year. If their claim is backdated, they could receive a lump sum of up to £900.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, [Mel Stride](#), said:

For more than 3.5 million married couples and those in a civil partnership, we are putting up to £238 this year back into their wallets, and it is encouraging to see so many people taking advantage of the tax relief.

Married couples who are yet to sign up for this great scheme – you too can benefit – it is quick to register and any back-dated allowances will be paid as a lump sum.

Marriage Allowance lets lower income workers transfer £1,190 of their Personal Allowance to their husband, wife or civil partner – if their income is higher. This reduces their tax by up to £238 for 2018 to 2019 tax year.

Customers can benefit from Marriage Allowance if all the following apply:

- you're married or in a civil partnership
- you do not pay Income Tax or your income is below your Personal Allowance (usually £11,850)
- your partner pays Income Tax at the basic rate, which usually means their income is between £11,851 and £46,350

The personal tax allowance is increasing to £12,500 in April 2019. The increase in non-taxable earnings means eligible couples will be able to transfer up to £1,250 from the lower income to the higher income earner – reducing their tax by up to £250 a year.

Couples are guaranteed 100% of their eligible entitlement if they apply directly through HMRC.

There is no need to reapply for Marriage Allowance every year because it is automatically renewed. However, couples should notify HMRC if their circumstances change and they want to cancel it.

1. Marriage Allowance is available in Scotland although the higher earning partner must pay the starter, basic or intermediate rate, which usually means their income is between £11,850 and £43,430.
2. In Budget 2018, the government asked the Law Commission to propose options for a simpler and fairer system to give modern couples meaningful choice. This will include looking at reducing unnecessary red tape and lowering the cost of wedding venues for couples.

[News story: UK Transport Secretary continues to fund direct flights between City of Derry Airport and London](#)

People in Derry-Londonderry and its surrounding areas will continue to benefit from direct flights to London, the Transport Secretary announced today (14 February 2019).

Speaking in the House of Commons earlier, Chris Grayling confirmed that the UK government, in partnership with the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland, will subsidise the route between City of Derry Airport and London Stansted.

This provides an important link between Northern Ireland and London, enabling daily round trips to help boost trade and tourism.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

The government is committed to this route because it strengthens the Union, protects choice and boosts trade and travel opportunities.

It will be welcomed by businesses in the north of Northern Ireland because corporate trips to and from London within a day will remain a possibility. The extension will continue to provide easy access for tourists to visit the spectacular causeway coast line, as well as spectators attending the 148th Open golf championship at Royal Portrush this summer.

Since [May 2017](#), the Department for Transport and Derry City and Strabane District Council have subsidised a flight service from City of Derry Airport

[to London Stansted, operated by flybmi](#). This deal will be renewed for a further 2 years, until 1 May 2021, maintaining 13 rotations per week on a 49-seater aircraft.

The Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said:

This announcement is hugely welcome and vital for the continued economic growth of Northern Ireland. Connectivity to Derry-Londonderry helps boost the huge potential on offer, including tourism and global business opportunities.

I am delighted to have secured this funding and maintained the air link between the thriving City of Derry-Londonderry and London, the financial and cultural centre of Europe.

Mayor of Derry and Strabane District Council, Councillor John Boyle said:

We are delighted to retain this important air link with London and continue a route that offers timings that are conveniently scheduled for a full working day at either destination, and offers connectivity with adequate capacity and competitive fares.

The airport remains an important regional gateway that is an essential part of the future development of the north west city region and we remain committed to ensuring that CoDA is the airport of choice for the north-west of Ireland, offering both convenience and excellent customer service.

Council would like to thank the Department for Transport and Department for Economy for providing the necessary funding to ensure this vital connection can continue

Chairperson of City of Derry Airport, Albert Harrison said:

We are pleased to learn that the crucial London route has been retained and our strong working relationship with BMI will continue.

The London route is a key element to the sustainability of the airport and provides essential daily connectivity to London for our customers. Maintaining frequent, conveniently scheduled air services to London is vitally important for the economic development of the north west city region and for the development of our regional economy and the social development of our region.

UK airports like City of Derry Airport play an important role in delivering domestic and international connections that help passengers travel further and link businesses to global trade partners.

The renewal of this funding is a clear example of the government's own ambitions for a thriving economy as it works to ensure all regions and nations of the UK are well served by airports and routes to the rest of the country.

Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Mauritania: February 2019



Mr Simon Boyden has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr Simon Boyden has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in succession to Mr Samuel Thomas who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Boyden will take up his appointment during February 2019.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Simon Boyden

Married to: Nathalie Hélène Geraldine Gallagher

Children: Three

2016 to 2018 Kabul, Political Counsellor

2014 to 2016 FC0, Head, Spending Review Team

2010 to 2014 Berlin, First Secretary (European Union)

2006 to 2010 Vienna, First Secretary, UK Delegation to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

2003 to 2006 FC0, Head, Serbia and Montenegro Section, Eastern Adriatic Department

2002 to 2003 FC0, Head, Regional Issues Section, Eastern Adriatic Department

1999 to 2002 Moscow, Second Secretary (Commercial)

1997 to 1998 FCO, EU/Russia policy lead, European Union Department (External)

Further information

Published 14 February 2019

[News story: Inspectors of Marine Accidents – Southampton](#)



We are looking for a Marine Engineer, a Naval Architect and a Human Factors specialist.

Your responsibilities will include:

- deploying to accident sites and leading investigations
- collecting evidence and interviewing witnesses
- conducting detailed analysis in order to identify safety issues and draft recommendations
- writing investigation reports and safety bulletins
- giving evidence at inquests and fatal accident inquiries

You must be prepared to travel throughout the UK (for which you will need a full UK driving licence) as well as overseas.

You must also be a British citizen as this is a reserved post.

Closing date: 6 March 2019.

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[News story: Defence Science and Technology Laboratory launches 'SME Searchlight' to harness innovation](#)

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) has launched a new initiative to encourage small and medium sized enterprises to work with them.

The project, called SME Searchlight, aims to attract non-traditional Defence suppliers and SMEs to help deliver a projected £40 to £45million increase in Dstl research spending with external companies, in line with the Government's intent to increase external spending with SMEs to 33% by 2022. As well as having access to this increased funding, companies could also benefit through working at the cutting edge of research and technology, with potential exploitation into new Defence and Security systems and applications.

Dstl's Chief Executive Gary Aitkenhead said:

This initiative is important at every level; from strategic partnerships and UK prosperity and growth to making a breakthrough which could save lives.

The increase in demand for new research opportunities extends across Dstl's portfolio, but they have identified four quite different areas to try out new approaches to develop a broader supplier ecosystem: radio frequency engineering, artificial intelligence, synthetic biology and wargaming.

Over the next 12 months, Dstl will be running a series of events, workshops and consultations focused on these four areas in partnership with ADS, the Federation of Small Businesses, Team Defence Information and TechUK. An ambitious target has been set of 60% of attendees at these events having never worked with Defence before, with the aim of bringing these new companies into Dstl's supply chain as direct suppliers; as members of Dstl's framework contracts; or through the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA).

Rob Solly, Dstl Division Head for Defence and Security Analysis and senior responsible owner for SME Searchlight said:

The benefits of this programme include increasing the innovation available to Dstl, collaboration across different sectors and the creation of UK intellectual property. From start-ups to established businesses, we want to hear from people with great ideas. We're simplifying the process of working with Government and we're hoping to show that it can be a fantastic and worthwhile partnership for

both parties.

Dstl is partnering with [Venturefest](#) – taking place on 29 March – to engage with some of the best technology SMEs in the South. The first Dstl SME Searchlight event, focused on radio frequency engineering, is due to be held in April.

On 7 March, hosted through the Analysis Support Construct, Dstl is holding an event to invite proposals to identify and develop ways to use science and technology to generate savings for Defence. This will be focused around, but not limited to, Logistics, Personnel and Infrastructure/Estates.

For more information contact searchlight@dstl.gov.uk