

[Keeping you updated about the Grenfell Tower wrapping](#)

The Grenfell Tower site is managed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. It is the department's job to keep the site safe and secure until a decision is made about its future.

One of the things the department does is to keep the tower enclosed in two layers of protective wrapping. The outside layer of the wrapping needs to be updated once a year. Here we explain why, and how the rewrapping process is managed.

[Foreign, Commonwealth & Development \(FCDO\) statement on the expulsion of the Head of the EU Delegation to Venezuela](#)

Press release

UK response to Expulsion of Head of EU Delegation to Venezuela.



A Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office spokesperson said:

“The decision of the regime in Venezuela to expel the Head of the EU Delegation is unwarranted and deeply regrettable. The UK stands shoulder to shoulder with our EU partners.”

Newsdesk

Press and Digital Department | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
All the latest news is available on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office page of the gov.uk website at: www.gov.uk/fcdo Follow the FCDO on twitter for the latest news [@FCDOGovUK](https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK) and travel advice [@FCDOtravelGovUK](https://twitter.com/FCDOtravelGovUK)

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[Suriname signs CARIFORUM-UK EPA](#)

Press release

Suriname joins the UK and 13 other CARIFORUM States that have already signed.



The deal was signed on 4 March in Suriname by Surinamese Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation, Albert R. Ramdin, witnessed in London by the United Kingdom's Minister for International Trade, Ranil Jayawardena.

Once applied, the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) will provide duty-free and quota-free access to the United Kingdom. The Agreement also includes the gradual liberalisation of tariffs on many UK exports to Suriname, including machinery, whisky and cars.

The EPA also provides generous market access for both sides on services trade, and has provisions on intellectual property, procurement, competition and other modern trade policy issues. This is important for the deepening of bilateral trade and investment relations between the United Kingdom and Suriname.

International Trade Minister Ranil Jayawardena said:

This agreement will be key to strengthening our bonds of prosperity, and will support jobs and livelihoods in both our countries as we look to build back better from Covid-19. I look forward to working in close partnership with Suriname and all CARIFORUM States as we continue to forge deeper trade and investment ties in 2021 and beyond.

UK Acting Non-Resident Ambassador to Suriname Ross Denny said:

That we have found a way for Suriname to sign the agreement, despite travel and other restrictions in the UK and Suriname as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, shows the deep commitment of both sides to this Agreement.

Total trade in goods and services between the United Kingdom and Suriname was £19 million in 2019. Suriname's exports to the United Kingdom include around £270,000-worth of fish and shellfish.

Suriname becomes the 14th CARIFORUM State to sign the CARIFORUM-UK EPA, securing continuity for trade and preservation of market access between the United Kingdom and 14 CARIFORUM States, providing vital assurance to businesses, consumers and investors.

Notes to Editors

- Further information about the UK-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement can be found [here](#).
- The Agreement will enter into effect between Suriname and the UK following the completion of relevant internal procedures in both countries.
- The UK government has agreed trade deals with 66 countries plus the EU, that account for £890bn of UK bilateral trade in 2019.
- Sources: ONS UK Trade: All countries, non-seasonally adjusted, Q3 2020; ONS Trade in goods: country-by-commodity, December 2020.

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[New immigration rules provide boost for Scottish fishing industry](#)

News story

The Scottish fishing industry has received a major boost as new immigration rules make it easier to recruit skilled deckhands from abroad.



The Home Office has accepted the Migration Advisory Committee recommendation that deckhands on large fishing vessels, with three or more years of experience using their skills, should be included in the list of occupations eligible for Skilled Worker visas.

The decision was welcomed by UK Government Minister for Scotland David Duguid who said:

This is good news for the Scottish industry, particularly the demersal – or white fish – fleet, and represents the fruits of close co-operation between Government and industry.

We have listened to concerns that crewing problems have been particularly acute here with some boats unable to fish within 12 miles of the shore because of visa restrictions on their vital deckhands. The new arrangements should quickly ease these difficulties.

Mike Park, Chief Executive of the Scottish White Fish Producers' Association, said:

This is something we have been campaigning about for over four years and the industry will find it very useful and supportive. It is of particular significance for vessels operating in the remoter parts of the west of Scotland and helps those vessels who faced problems when forced to operate outside the 12-mile limit, and helps too with landing crew for essential rest periods.

The change means that although deckhands are not being added to the UK's Shortage Occupation List (SOL) – which specifies which jobs have insufficient resident workers – they will become eligible for Skilled Worker visas which should make recruitment from abroad easier.

To qualify, their sponsoring employer must be offering a salary of at least £25,600, in line with other non-shortage occupations. If the deckhand is a

'new entrant' (mainly those under the age of 26), a lower salary threshold of £20,480 will apply. In all cases, their pay must also be at least £10.10 per hour. The changes take effect from 6 April.

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[Rail centre and green energy funding in Budget boost for Wales](#)

- People and businesses in Wales to benefit from extension of Covid-19 support schemes
- Chancellor announces £740 million in additional funding for the Welsh Government
- More than £130 million of investment to turbocharge green recovery and accelerate the creation of almost 13,000 jobs

Millions of families and businesses across Wales will continue to be supported by the UK Government through a Budget that 'meets the moment', the Chancellor said this week.

Speaking in the House of Commons on Wednesday 3 March, Rishi Sunak set out a three-part plan that protects jobs and livelihoods through the next stage of the crisis, starts the work of building our future economy and begins fixing the public finances once we are on the way to recovery.

As part of the next stage of the UK Government's Plan for Jobs, he announced the furlough and self-employment support schemes would be extended until the end of September, alongside a six-month extension to the £20 Universal Credit uplift, a one-off £500 payment to eligible Working Tax Credit claimants and Covid-19 related income tax exemptions for employees.

The Chancellor also set-out an extension to the VAT reduction for the tourism and hospitality sectors and provided a £740 million boost for Wales with additional funding for the Welsh Government through the Barnett formula.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

This is a fantastic budget for Wales. As well as continuing to protect hundreds of thousands of jobs and livelihoods through the pandemic, the Chancellor has shown that the UK Government is building back better and greener and that Wales is central to those plans.

The continuation of furlough, self-employed and business support, the Universal Credit uplift, the hospitality VAT cut and the fuel

duty freeze will provide vital certainty of people and businesses in Wales in the months ahead, while the announcements of the Centre for Rail Excellence, hydrogen hub and investment in growth deals will bring thousands of high-skilled jobs, signalling Wales's place as a centre for innovation and the industries of the future.

As we have seen over the past year, the strength of the United Kingdom has never been more important to Wales and we will continue to provide vaccines, Covid testing and Armed Forces support which are key to lifting restrictions and reopening the Welsh economy. Today's Budget delivers for every part of Wales and paves the way for brighter times ahead.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak said:

Throughout the pandemic, the UK Government has stepped in to support millions of lives and livelihoods across Wales.

The Budget bolsters that support – ensuring our Plan for Jobs continues through the next stage our recovery.

We are also investing millions in Welsh towns and cities, key infrastructure and green industries that will be vital to long-lasting economic growth.

The Budget also looked to the future with nearly £93 million of investment to turbocharge green recovery and accelerate the creation of almost 13,000 jobs.

It included:

- Accelerated funding for the Swansea Bay, North-Wales and Mid-Wales City and Growth Deals. Accelerating these deals will help to deliver projects faster, create up to 12,800 new jobs and support an uplift to the regional economies of over £3.3 billion.
- £4.8m in 2021-22 for the Holyhead Hydrogen Hub: a green hydrogen demonstration project which will create 30 new high-skilled green jobs in Anglesey, indirectly support 500 jobs, and bring further investment into the area.
- Up to £30m for the construction of a Global Centre for Rail Excellence in Neath Port Talbot, which will see up to 120 skilled jobs at the new rail and infrastructure testing facility.

In order to protect jobs, increase productivity and maintain the competitiveness of Wales, the Chancellor also outlined direct local investment to towns and communities across the UK to improve town centres, high streets, local transport and cultural assets through the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund, the £150 million UK-wide Community Ownership Fund, and Community Renewal Fund.

Fuel duty will be also frozen for the 11th consecutive year, while alcohol

duties will be frozen across the board – only the third time in 20 years, saving drinkers £1.7 billion. This will save 2p off a typical pint of beer in Wales.

As part of the aim to make Wales a premier destination for trade and investment, the Government continues to work constructively with the Welsh Government to establish at least one Freeport in Wales, which will channel new investment to regenerate communities.

Welsh businesses will also benefit from UK-wide initiatives to invest in the future of firms from start-up to scale up.

The new Help to Grow scheme to offer up to 130,000 companies across the UK a digital and management boost, and a £375 million UK-wide 'Future Fund: Breakthrough' will support highly innovative companies such as those working in life sciences, quantum computing, or clean tech, that are aiming to raise at least £20 million of funding.

Plans to ensure the UK remains a prime destination for talent and investment will see reforms to the immigration system to help ambitious UK businesses attract the brightest and best international talent, and the launch of the world's first green savings bond for retail investors allowing savers to help drive the country's transition to net zero.

In good news for sports fans, the Chancellor announced £2.8 million to support the UK and Ireland's 2030 World Cup bid and £25 million investment in grassroots sports enough for 700 new pitches across the UK.

Covid-19 support provided in Wales so far includes:

- almost 400,000 jobs in Wales protected by the CJRS
- 295,000 claims in Wales have been made through the SEISS
- Over £2bn lent to over 57,000 businesses in Wales through BBLs and CBILs