

The fightback against coronavirus

Mr Speaker. I rise to make a statement on the fightback against this virus.

Across the country, our vaccine roll-out continues at pace.

With each vaccine we administer, we are one step closer to normal.

And as of today, we've vaccinated 9.2 million people.

I want to thank everyone involved in this collective national effort that saw nearly a million people get vaccinations last weekend alone – or, put another way, one in 60 of the UK's adults.

We've now protected almost 9 out of every 10 people over 80 and over half of people in their 70s.

I'm also delighted we've visited every eligible care home – 10,307 in total.

I want to thank everyone involved in that effort – including the NHS, our dedicated staff in social care and the residents themselves – for coming forward.

And I also want to pay tribute to my honourable friend, the Minister of State for Care, who has worked so hard to help us meet this ambitious target.

I know many of us in this House are playing our part in the national vaccination effort, and today we published a new resource for the House that provides more information on the vaccine roll-out and how all colleagues can play such an important part in increasing the take-up of the vaccine in their area.

Because the take-up of this vaccine will directly impact how effective the vaccines are and how fast we can safely get out of this.

Vaccine supply

Mr Speaker, we're confident we have the supplies to meet our target to offer the vaccine to the 4 most vulnerable groups by 15 February.

We now have over 400 million doses of vaccine on order, including the additional 40 million vaccine doses from Valneva we ordered yesterday.

And, Mr Speaker, that we find ourselves in this position is no accident.

Our strategy has been to invest early – and invest at risk.

We've backed many horses – no matter where they're from.

We've also built up our vaccine manufacturing capability here at home.

As a result, today we have:

- the AstraZeneca jab being manufactured in Oxford, Staffordshire and Wrexham
- the Novavax vaccine made in Teesside
- and the Valneva vaccine manufactured in Livingston in Scotland

It's a great example of what we can achieve together, working as one United Kingdom.

South African variant

Mr Speaker, despite this optimistic backdrop, we must continue to act with caution, not least, because of the renewed challenges posed by new variants of the coronavirus.

We have now found here 105 cases of the variant first identified in South Africa, including 11 cases which do not appear to have any links to international travel.

As with the variant first identified in the UK, there's currently no evidence to suggest it is any more severe.

But we have to come down on it hard.

Our mission must be to stop its spread altogether – and break those chains of transmission.

In those areas where this variant has been found – parts of Broxbourne, London, Maidstone, Southport, Walsall and Woking – we're also putting in extra testing, and sequencing every positive test.

Working with local authorities, we're going door-to-door to test everyone in those areas.

And mobile testing units will be deployed, offering PCR tests to people who have to leave their home for work or other essential reasons.

We have also seen 11 cases of mutations of concern in Bristol, 32 in Liverpool – and are taking the same approach.

In all these areas, it is imperative that you must stay at home and only leave home where it is absolutely essential.

When your local authority offers you a test, you should take up the offer because we know that around one in 3 people with coronavirus have no symptoms – but can still pass it on.

We are offering testing to everyone aged 16 and over – even if you have been vaccinated.

And if you live in one of those areas but have not been contacted, and you're unsure if you should have a test, I encourage you to visit your local authority website to find out.

Anyone who must leave your home to go to a workplace – for instance, because they cannot work from home – should get tested.

All local employers should support and encourage their workers to get tested.

The message is more important than ever: to stay at home, maintain social distancing and get tested.

Mr Speaker, across the whole country, we're expanding workplace testing, including here in Parliament itself.

This morning you and I visited the new COVID testing site here in Parliament, which offers all those who work here – MPs, peers and staff – the chance to get tested.

I took a test this morning – thankfully, negative. It's quick, easy – and you get the result back fast.

And I encourage colleagues who have to be here in person to sign up and do the same.

And for all of us, no matter where we live, we need to continue to follow those rules.

Because, while more scientific work is underway to learn more about new variants, we know – with absolute certainty – that social distancing works.

It denies the virus the social contact it needs to spread.

We must all keep at it.

We've all sacrificed too much – and come so far with the vaccine – to give up now.

And I know we that won't.

Closing

Mr Speaker, while we have been working night and day to fight coronavirus, I have often drawn inspiration from our fight against another killer pandemic: HIV.

A disease that also took too many people before their time.

This is HIV Test Week.

It's a reminder of how important it is to get your free HIV test.

But it's also a reminder of the progress we've made in tackling that terrible pandemic, that we can credibly commit to no new transmissions by the end of this decade.

And today, I'm sure the whole House will join me in wishing Lord Norman Fowler a very happy 83rd birthday.

He was an inspirational former Health Secretary and fearless advocate for tackling HIV and AIDS.

Lord Fowler is someone who knows the importance of taking action early, and the power of testing to turn the tide.

So, as we face these difficult weeks ahead, we can all draw inspiration from that great struggle: that even when you're facing a mountain of challenges, science, ingenuity and sheer power of will can see us to better days.

I commend this statement to the House.

Working for the Parliamentary Counsel: Amy Perkins

I joined the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) just over a year and a half ago; it has been a very steep learning curve but a really enjoyable and rewarding one.

Prior to joining OPC, I worked as a government lawyer at the Department for Work and Pensions and before that I practiced as a family law barrister and spent two years at the Law Commission working on family law projects. It was at the Law Commission that I first encountered the OPC and seeing the work they were doing really sparked my interest; I was quite envious that their job was to turn the Commission's recommendations into actual law and I really wanted to have a go at drafting! Some 3 years later, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to do so.

Drafting can be extremely challenging but that is a big part of its appeal. Turning policy into law is no easy feat and the policy often evolves as a result of the drafting process; for me that's a really enjoyable part of the job. We work closely with the Bill team, lawyers and policy officials from the instructing department, to clarify the policy and translate it into effective and clear law. That process requires us to understand the current law as well as the change that the department wants to achieve; you have to be able to look very closely at the detail but also keep in mind the bigger picture of how this change fits into the existing and developing legal

landscape.

A part of the job that I knew little about before arriving at OPC is the role that the office plays in advising departments on parliamentary procedure and helping to manage bills as they progress through Parliament. There is no expectation that new recruits will have any experience of this, and like all aspects of the job, the office provides excellent training, with a lot of the learning taking place as bills that you are working on make their way through the House of Commons and House of Lords. I joined the office around the time that there was considerable public interest in Brexit legislation and it was fascinating to be learning the detailed, and quite obscure, workings of Parliament at the same time that it was front-page news.

In my relatively short time in the office, I have worked on legislation about immigration and Brexit, Parliamentary constituencies, the Windrush compensation scheme and criminal justice; I have really enjoyed this variety. Learning and developing the skills needed for the job in all these different contexts has kept me very much on my toes. Currently, I am an Assistant Parliamentary Counsel (APC), this is the training role in which all new recruits enter the office. As an APC, you work with a supervisor who will lead the work on the bill. I have felt very well supported by my supervisors and other colleagues. There is a real culture in the office of sharing knowledge and ensuring that each piece of legislation is the best it can be; even once fully trained, members of the office will work in pairs or small teams on each bill. I can see that this is a job where you truly never stop learning, and I think that's the joy of it.

Appointment to roles of Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements and Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee on Protection

Press release

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Rt. Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP today announced the extension of appointment of His Honour Brian Barker CBE QC to the dual role of Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee on Protection and Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements in Northern Ireland.



The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Rt. Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP today announced the extension of appointment of His Honour Brian Barker CBE QC to the dual role of Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee on Protection and Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements in Northern Ireland.

The extended appointment will take effect on 1 February 2021.

The Northern Ireland Committee on Protection (NICOP) was established in 2009 to determine the policy in relation to the provision of close armed protection to individuals living in Northern Ireland. The Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements in Northern Ireland reviews annually the operation of the arrangements for national security matters.

Biography of Appointee

His Honour Brian Barker CBE QC is a former British judge. He served as the Recorder of London and senior judge at the old Bailey 2013 – 2015 and previously was the deputy senior judge and Common Serjeant of London from 2005 to 2013. He currently holds an appointment as an Assistant Surveillance Commissioner.

Terms of Appointment

- The position is a part-time appointment.
- The position attracts a daily remuneration of £848.
- The appointment will be from 1 February 2021 for a period of up to one year.

Political Activity

His Hon. Brian Barker declared no political activity in the past ten years. Regulation

This appointment is not regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

UK nationals living in Norway: Facebook sessions

The British Embassy in Oslo has invited UK nationals to information meetings across Norway and hosted several Facebook Q&A sessions to deliver the latest updates to UK nationals working and living in the country regarding the UK's departure from the European Union.

We have gathered the most frequently asked questions from UK nationals and the updated answers from both the Embassy team and the Norwegian Immigration Directorate (UDI). This information is correct as of February 2021.

Residence rights, new residence permit and card

What link should I apply through on UDI.no?

Please read the [UDI guidance](#) carefully. Under each category, there is a list of requirements in order to apply through that specific link. If after reading that page and our FAQ below you still do not know, please [contact UDI](#) for advice.

How much does the application cost?

The application is free of charge for all UK nationals who were legally residing in Norway by the end of 2020 in scope of the EEA EFTA Separation Agreement. If you have incorrectly paid a fee please contact your local Police and request a refund. You will then need to reapply for the correct permit under Brexit regulations

What is the difference between the permit and the card?

The new permit is the legal basis allowing UK nationals to continue living in Norway as non-EU citizens. The card is the main official document to prove that legal basis. All non-EU citizens in Norway have this card. All UK nationals need to get a card. Other official residence documents such as your registration letter will still be valid until you receive the new residence card.

Who has to apply for the permit and who has to order the card?

UK nationals without a permanent permit (oppoldstillatelse/bosettingstillatelse) need to apply for the new permit and will automatically get a card as part of the process. UK nationals with a permanent permit (oppoldstillatelse/bosettingstillatelse) do not need to

apply for a permit. They only need to order a card from 15 February 2021. Read more information on [UDI's website](#).

What is the difference between a permanent permit (oppoldstillatelse/bosettingstillatelse) and the permanent right to remain (varig oppholdsrett)?

The permanent permit is for all citizens (EU and non-EU). It used to be called a settlement permit and was in place for UK nationals before the EU system came into force in Norway. It grants extra rights to live and work in Norway indefinitely and extra protection against expulsion. The permanent right of residence is only available to EU citizens. EU citizens need to have lived in Norway for 5 years before being eligible to apply. It grants extra rights to live and work in Norway indefinitely and protection against expulsion.

I have a permanent permit (oppoldstillatelse/bosettingstillatelse). What do I have to do?

As stated on the UDI site you do not need to apply for a new permit, but you do need to order a residence card. It will be possible to order a card from 15 February 2021 on UDI.no. You will have until 31 December 2021 to do this. You will need to book an appointment with the Police for an ID check for the new card.

I have been in Norway for over 25 years, what do I have to do?

If you have previously been granted a permanent residence permit, you can still live in Norway and do not need to apply for a new permit. If you have a permanent residence permit, you must order a residence card. You can order the residence card from 15 February onwards, and must order it by 31 December 2021. Read more information on [UDI's website](#).

There are no available police appointments in my area, what should I do?

COVID-19 has reduced police capacity. In some areas, you will have to wait to get an appointment. Keep checking the UDI Police appointment system as new slots may open up soon. Do not worry, you have plenty of time to get your card. Please contact your local police station if you are concerned about the lack of appointments.

I have applied for Norwegian citizenship, but my application has not been processed yet, what should I do?

If you applied for dual citizenship in 2020 then: You can wait until you receive an answer to your application for citizenship. If the application is granted, you do not need to apply. If you are refused, you must apply for a new residence permit. If you have a permanent right of residence now, you must apply for a permanent residence permit.

If you applied for dual citizenship in 2021: If you have not received a response to your citizenship application by 31 August 2021 or your application has been refused, you must apply for the new residence permit. If

you have a permanent right of residence, you must apply for a permanent residence permit.

See the [Q&A pages on the UDI website](#).

If you are granted Norwegian citizenship, you do not need to get a permit for UK nationals.

I want to get the new permit. What is the correct link to the online application form?

Please read the [UDI guidance](#) carefully. Under each category, there is a list of requirements in order to apply through that specific link. If after reading that page and our FAQ below you still do not know, please contact UDI for advice.

I have a Bostedsattest (Residence certificate). Do I still need to get the new residence card?

Yes. The Bostedsattest is just a confirmation of your address in Norway. It is not an official document granting you residence rights.

The residence card needs renewal every 5 years. Is the renewal of the card more a formality (like a passport renewal) with a check we have not been out of the country long enough to lose the permanent residency status, or will it be a more thorough re-application? For example, are there reasons which might make us loose our Permanent status and be rejected for renewal?

If you have been granted a permanent residency permit, your residency will not be affected of any changes regarding family situation, job/income etc. When ordering a new card there will be no check of the terms of your permit.

Can I continue to reside over the 5 year period of the permit under the same conditions, i.e. to change employment, move from student to employee to self-employed (as per previous EU/EEA regs) in that period without applying for a new permit. What exactly are the requirements to ensure that we do not have irregular status?

If you meet the requirements for the new Brexit residence permit (you had a right to reside before 31 December 2020), you will retain your rights as they were under the EEA agreement. This means you can change your basis for staying in Norway, e.g. move from student to employee or person with own funds without applying for a new permit.

You will keep this right/permit as long as you do not stay more than 6 months outside Norway. Then your permit will be lost.

How many years do I have to wait before I can apply for a permanent residence permit?

After you have been granted a temporary residence permit, you can apply for a permanent permit after 3 years by the Norwegian regulations – if all other requirements are met. For instance, you must then pay a fee and complete

mandatory tuition in the Norwegian language and social studies. If you are applying after 5 years you only need to document that you have had the right of residence for those years. If you came in august 2019 you can apply for a permanent residency in august 2024.

How will my spouse's status be impacted? She is a non EEA, non UK citizen and she has requirements to extend her permit.

Under the Separation Agreement, you have the right to have close family members including your spouse live with you in Norway. Your wife can apply for a permit as a family member of a UK national in scope of the Separation Agreement. Please read more about this on [UDI's guidance page](#) under the heading "Family member to a British citizen"

I left Norway to study. How long can I be absent from Norway before losing my residence status?

Normally the right to residence is lost upon 6 months stay outside Norway. However, exemptions are made for some groups, including students. As long as you were studying while living outside Norway, you can stay for up to 12 months, and still keep your right of residence. So if you returned to Norway within 12 months, you kept your right to live in Norway.

Please be informed you have a right to stay in Norway for a period up to 6 months looking for work in Norway. The period starts from the date you entered Norway.

If and when I do apply for citizenship or other forms of residency, will the requirements be based on my status as an EU citizen from when I first came to Norway, or on my now being a third country national?

If you are in scope of the EEA EFTA Separation Agreement, when applying for citizenship the requirements will be based on your status as a previous EU citizen.

Travel

When we get a permanent residence card for Norway, does that give us any additional rights regarding travel in the EU/Nordic countries, or will we have identical status to UK resident UK citizens?

From 1 January 2021, all UK nationals became non-EU citizens. As the status changed, rights to stay in Schengen area countries also changed. UK nationals can now travel to other Schengen area countries for up to 90 days in any 180-day period without a visa for purposes such as tourism.

To stay for longer than 90 days in any 180-day period, to work or study, or for business travel, you must meet the entry requirements set out by the country you are travelling to. This could mean applying for a visa or work permit.

This is the same requirement for both UK nationals in Norway and those

residing in the UK.

The new residence card proves that you are legally resident in Norway and are therefore not limited to 90 in 180 days there. It also means that the time you have spent residing in Norway will not count towards your overall time in Schengen.

Please do read more about travel in the Schengen area on our [Living in Norway guide](#).

I have a Norwegian-issued EHIC. Can I still use this when I am on holiday in the UK or the EU?

If you are in scope of the EEA EFTA Separation Agreement you are entitled to continue using your card in the UK and the EU. You can continue to renew this on [Helsenorge's website](#)

I am currently visiting Norway. How long can I stay?

You are subject to the 90 in 180 day Schengen limit if you are normally resident in the UK. Days you have stayed in Schengen before 1 Jan 2021 do not count towards this limit.

Tax

Does anything change for tax?

The UK has a double taxation agreement with Norway to ensure you do not pay tax on the same income in both countries. Existing double taxation arrangements for UK nationals living in Norway have not changed. Please check the [Norwegian Tax Office site](#) for more information about tax payments in Norway or [contact them](#).

Key links

Further information

Tackling deforestation by working together ahead of COP26

Greetings.

And welcome everyone to the Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade Dialogue.

Thank you so much for joining us today.

Friends, as COP26 President, I have one very clear aim: and that's to put the world on track to make the Paris Agreement a reality.

And it is evident that we cannot achieve that unless we deal with the vital issue of deforestation.

Around the world, we are seeing forests depleted and biodiversity vanishing at a terrifying rate, driven by the global trade in agricultural commodities.

Demand for such goods is putting immense pressure on the earth's forests, on which more than one and a half billion people depend on their livelihoods, and they are also having a devastating effect on our planet.

Land use is responsible for 23 per cent of total global emissions.

As I say, if we continue on this course, our Paris Agreement targets will slip out of reach,

And that will have devastating effects for people and of course for nature.

We will have temperatures soaring, seas rising and storms intensifying.

The Dasgupta Review, on the Economics of Biodiversity, published today, is very clear that our treatment of nature presents grave risks to our economies, livelihoods and well-being.

So we must act now to turn the tide.

But we must do so in a manner that supports those who depend on forests, prioritising their economic interests and development.

And ultimately, we all have a responsibility to act.

The UK is taking action.

We are contributing £3 billion over the next five years to support nature.

But what is vital to tackling this problem is cooperation, across borders and between sectors.

Working together, we can mobilise investment, and grow markets for sustainable production.

Markets that support both the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

To achieve this, producer and consumer countries must come together in the spirit of mutual respect, dialogue and collaboration.

Working hand in hand with business and civil society.

That is what we are doing today.

We hope these dialogues will establish long-term plans.

And result in practical, ambitious measures.

Which of course are then implemented by governments, business and civil society.

Today is just the start of the conversation.

And I look forward to working with all of you, ahead of COP26 and of course beyond.

To reform this vital trade.

To protect livelihoods.

And to help to put the Paris Agreement into practice.

Thank you.