

Christmas guidance set out for university students

University students will be able to travel home to spend Christmas with their families once the national restrictions end on 2 December, following steps set out in new Government guidance published today.

In order to travel home safely, students in England will be required to follow the current national restrictions in place until 2 December, completing this four-week period in their term-time accommodation.

From 3 December to 9 December, which will be known as the 'student travel window', students will be allowed to travel home on staggered departure dates set by universities, who will work with other institutions in the region to manage pressure on transport infrastructure.

The student travel window will mean students can travel having just completed the four-week period of national restrictions, reducing the risk of transmission to family and friends at home.

Universities should move learning online by 9 December so students can continue their education while also having the option to return home to study from there.

As announced by the Prime Minister this week, the Government will also work closely with universities to establish mass testing capacity. Tests will be offered to as many students as possible before they travel home for Christmas, with universities in areas of high prevalence prioritised. This will provide further reassurance that where students test negative, they can return home safely and minimise the risk of passing coronavirus on to their loved ones.

If a student tests positive before their departure they will need to remain in self-isolation for the required period of ten days. Moving all learning online by 9 December gives enough time for students to complete the isolation period and return home for Christmas.

The guidance delivers on the Government's pledge to ensure students can be with their families at Christmas while limiting transmission of the virus.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

We know this Christmas will feel different, and following this incredibly difficult year we are delivering on our commitment to get students back to their loved ones as safely as possible for the holidays.

We have worked really hard to find a way to do this for students, while limiting the risk of transmission. Now it is vital they

follow these measures to protect their families and communities, and for universities to make sure students have all the wellbeing support they need, especially those who stay on campus over the break.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Jenny Harries said:

The mass movement of students across the country at the end of term presents a really significant challenge within the COVID-19 response.

The measures announced today will help minimise that risk and help students get home to their families as safely as possible for Christmas. It is crucial that students follow the guidance in order to protect their families and the communities they return to.

Universities are expected to make plans to ensure students can travel home safely at the end of term, working with local public health officials and transport operators.

Students should follow the Government's travel guidance, which includes wearing face coverings unless exempt, avoiding busy routes and times, and limiting car sharing with only their household or bubble where possible.

We are working with the other governments across the UK to ensure that all students, no matter where they live or study are treated fairly and can travel home as safely as possible to keep all our communities safe.

English students at universities in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, should follow the guidance relevant to where they are living before returning home. When they return to England, they should follow their local guidance for their home area. Students returning to their home in England who have not completed the 4 weeks of national restrictions should undertake at least 14 days of restricted contact either before or after return home to minimise their risk of transmission.

Universities have also been asked to provide additional help and practical support to students, particularly for students who remain on campus over Christmas, which can include care leavers, international students and students estranged from their families. Universities should ensure they are properly cared for and can access affordable food, medical and cleaning supplies if needed.

The Government has provided over £9 million to leading mental health charities to help them expand and reach those most in need, as well as working closely with the Office for Students to provide up to £3 million to fund Student Space, a new mental health support platform.

The department also worked with the Office for Students to clarify that

providers were able to use existing funds, worth around £23 million per month for April to July this year and £256 million for Academic Year 2020/21, towards hardship support.

Government sets out world-leading new measures to protect rainforests

The UK will go further than ever before to clamp down on illegal deforestation and protect rainforests, the government has confirmed today, thanks to world-leading new laws being introduced through the landmark Environment Bill (11 November).

The move coincides with the publication of a new report setting out government's approach to tackling deforestation linked to UK demand for products such as cocoa, rubber, soya, and palm oil. The report responds to the recommendations from the independent Global Resource Initiative Taskforce, which consulted over 200 leading businesses and organisations.

Combined, the package of measures will ensure that greater resilience, traceability and sustainability are built into the UK's supply chains by working in partnership with other countries and supporting farmers to transition to more sustainable food and land use systems.

There were more than 60,000 responses to the government's consultation, with 99% in favour of legislating on this critical issue.

One of the leading new measures is the introduction of a new law in the Environment Bill which will require greater due diligence from businesses, and make it illegal for UK businesses to use key commodities if they have not been produced in line with local laws protecting forests and other natural ecosystems.

80% of deforestation is linked to the expansion of agriculture, with land being cleared to make way for grazing animals and to grow crops. The UK imports over half of the food it consumes, and while in global terms the UK is a relatively small consumer of forest risk commodities such as cocoa, rubber, soya, and palm oil, we are leaving an ever-larger footprint on the world's forests.

International Environment Minister, Lord Goldsmith, said:

In every conceivable way we depend on the natural world around us. Rainforests cool the planet, provide clean air and water, and are a haven for some of the most endangered species on Earth – and so protecting them must be a core priority.

Our new due diligence law is one piece of a much bigger package of measures that we are putting in place to tackle deforestation. Our intent is not just to take world-leading domestic measures, but to build a global alliance of countries committed to working together to protect the world's precious forests.

Last month, nearly 80 countries signed the Leader's Pledge for Nature, committing to reverse the destruction of nature by 2030. The UK played a key role in crafting the pledge, and as hosts of the next and all important UN Climate Conference, we have a chance to turn those powerful words into action.

CEO of Tesco UK & ROI, Jason Tarry, said:

Due diligence has an important role to play in halting deforestation, fighting climate change and protecting communities.

We welcome these new measures as an important first step towards creating a level playing field in the UK, aligned with Tesco's goal of zero deforestation. We hope this encourages all businesses to do the right thing.

Sir Ian Cheshire, the chair of the independent taskforce, said:

We are at an extraordinary inflection point – governments are having to invest in recovery and have choices about how to invest to build back better. One of the ways we can do this is through our supply chains and what we buy.

The Government's Response to our GRI Report recognises the responsibility of the UK to ensure we are not importing deforestation and contributing to further environmental crisis, but doing so in partnership with other countries to help them make this transition to sustainability.

The GRI Taskforce will continue to support and advise Government towards ambitious outcomes as it delivers on these commitments in the run up to the UN Climate Change Conference next year.

Executive Director of Tropical Forest Alliance, Justin Adams, said:

We welcome the recommendations of the GRI report which recognise both the importance but also the complexity of addressing tropical deforestation.

It's heartening to see the UK Government already adopting some of

the recommendations with the inclusion of due diligence legislation in the upcoming Environment Bill and building a new approach to partnership with forest countries with the Sustainable Land Use and Commodity Trade Dialogue as the leading component of the UK's Nature Campaign for the upcoming UN Climate Summit in Glasgow next year.

CEO of the Green Finance Institute, Rhian Mari Thomas, said:

The success of this portfolio of initiatives from the GRI provides the UK with the opportunity to demonstrate global leadership and to catalyse much-needed change. Reversing tropical rain forest loss is essential to avoiding global temperature increases and biodiversity loss in the near future. The Green Finance Institute welcomes the ambition of the GRI recommendations and encourages government, business and the financial sector to match this ambition with action.

Through private and public sector collaboration we can support the transition away from supply chains which contribute to deforestation and land conversion, and move to a system which rewards the protection and restoration of forests and biodiversity – whether that be the advancement of the Environment Bill or government-backed financial solutions which enable UK businesses and banks to support sustainable supply chains.

The Environment Bill, the UK's landmark legislation to transform our environment, returned to Parliament on Tuesday 3 November. The Bill sets out a world-leading vision to allow our environment to prosper for future generations and ensure that we maintain and enhance our world-leading environmental protections.

Today's report also details the Government's wider package of measures to support countries and companies looking to reduce commodity driven deforestation, including through future trade policies, public procurement, and the development of a sustainable Food Service Sector Action Plan. Igniting change in the financial sector also features heavily in the government's approach, including scaling up investment in sustainable land-use.

Alongside the domestic measures set out in today's report, the UK Government will capitalise on its forthcoming presidency of the UN Climate Change summit next year in Glasgow to accelerate a global transition to more sustainable supply chains by bringing together producer and consumer countries of forest risk commodities to share perspectives and take action.

Today's announcement sets the tone for the ambitions of COP26 whilst driving forward a transition to sustainable patterns of production and consumption, a key commitment in the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, signed at the UN General Assembly in September this year.

Further background

- The law will also mean businesses will need to be more transparent about where they source key commodities from, and businesses that fail to comply will be subject to fines, with the precise level to be set at a later date through secondary legislation.
- We will move swiftly to bring this legislation into force, laying the necessary secondary legislation shortly after COP26, where we will be forging an alliance of governments from around the world to agree a new approach to tackling this problem.
- Almost 50% of all recent tropical deforestation was caused by illegal deforestation for commercial agriculture and timber plantations – but this is much higher in some regions, with over 90% of deforestation being illegal in some of the world's most important forests.
- Defra, BEIS and FCDO jointly commissioned the Global Resource Initiative (GRI) in 2018 and in March 2020, delivering on a commitment in the 25 Year Environment Plan to find ways of reducing the UK's environmental footprint. The taskforce published its final report in March 2020, which featured 14 recommendations for ambitious actions to reduce the climate and environment impacts of key UK supply chains.
- The GRI Taskforce has looked at ways in which the production, trade and consumption of commodity agricultural and forestry products needs to change to ensure it is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable for all including farmers, foresters, communities and indigenous peoples, and in particular, women. There is a specific focus on the impacts of deforestation linked to key commodities for the UK including soya, palm oil, timber, pulp & paper, beef & leather, rubber, and cocoa.

Calling on private financial institutions to commit to net zero

Good afternoon.

And thank you to the Lord Mayor for organising this event.

We last shared a platform at The Guildhall in February for the launch of the COP26 Private Finance Agenda.

And it was during the first two weeks in my new roles as Business Secretary and COP26 President Designate.

Where we were living in a very different world then.

As I speak to you during the first week of our new national restrictions we know all too well the damage the coronavirus pandemic has caused.

Both human and economic.

But though our circumstances have changed immeasurably. The challenge I set out when I spoke to the financial sector in February remains the same.

There is an urgent need to raise global ambition in reducing our emissions, building climate resilience and reaching a net zero global economy.

And finance has a pivotal role to play.

If we are to increase green global investment from the billions to the trillions, all finance must align with the Paris Agreement.

As someone who previously worked in finance, I am really proud to say that this sector is rising to the challenge.

Since I spoke to you in February, major financial institutions have come forward with ambitious commitments.

This week M&G plc committed to become net zero by 2050. Over the past two months, the likes of HSBC, JP Morgan, and Morgan Stanley have made similar commitments. Whilst, in October, the BT Pension Scheme announced it will reach net zero by 2035.

The Net Zero Asset Owners Alliance includes some of the world's largest pension funds and insurers.

And now represent over 5 trillion dollars in assets. Up 1 trillion dollars from last year.

And today, the UK government has endorsed proposals from the IFRS Foundation to develop global sustainability standards.

Helping to achieve consistency across the world.

We have come a long way.

Particularly in the past year.

But we know there is more to do.

The next decade is absolutely critical.

Avoiding the worst effects of climate change means rapid decarbonisation and increased resilience.

To remain in-line with the Paris Agreement, we must reduce our emissions up to five times quicker over the next ten years than we have over the past twenty.

We must finance the transition to net zero before it is too late.

That is why we are making international finance a central theme of our COP Presidency.

Last year, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would double its international climate finance to £11.6bn between 2021 and 2025.

And on the 12th December the UK will, alongside the UN and France, co-host an ambition summit, with Italy and Chile.

We are calling on countries to come forward with new commitments on finance.

So that together, we can meet and exceed the goal of mobilising \$100 billion a year for developing countries.

And in the run-up to COP26, we also want more companies to disclose climate risk in their financial reporting.

Yesterday, the Chancellor announced our plans to achieve widespread mandatory TCFD reporting by 2023.

This is a major step forward for transparency of the largest UK companies, financial institutions, and pension funds.

And we want to see more commitments ahead of COP26 that reflect the urgency of the situation we face.

Commitments that change the future of financial flows.

And that actively support the transition to zero emissions.

So I leave you with one message: join the Race to Zero.

Commit to net zero by 2050 at the latest and publish a clear plan for how to get there.

Please do it now.

Because we do not have time to waste.

Together, with your knowledge and expertise, we can finance the move to our green global future.

PM call with President-elect Biden of the United States: 10 November 2020

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke with President-elect Joe Biden of the United States.



In a call this afternoon the Prime Minister warmly congratulated Joe Biden on his election as President of the United States.

The Prime Minister also conveyed his congratulations to Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on her historic achievement.

They discussed the close and longstanding relationship between our countries and committed to building on this partnership in the years ahead, in areas such as trade and security – including through NATO.

The Prime Minister and President-elect also looked forward to working closely together on their shared priorities, from tackling climate change, to promoting democracy, and building back better from the coronavirus pandemic.

The Prime Minister invited the President-elect to attend the COP26 climate change summit that the UK is hosting in Glasgow next year. They also looked forward to seeing each other in person, including when the UK hosts the G7 Summit in 2021.

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Letters from the Culture Secretary to the BBC and S4C on the 2022 licence fee settlement

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Last updated 21 January 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 21 January 2022

Added BBC Case for CPI (March 2021) and SoS Initial Determination (July 2021).

2. 14 December 2020

Added S4C response letter to Secretary of State.

3. 17 November 2020

BBC response letter added

4. 10 November 2020

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