

UK diners eat 100 million meals to protect 2 million jobs

- over 100 million meals have been claimed for under the government's Eat Out to Help Out scheme
- Chancellor thanks Brits for eating out to protect 1.8 million jobs in hospitality
- on 31 August – the final day of the scheme – bookings were up 216% compared to the same day in 2019 (OpenTable)

Rishi Sunak said the scheme's popularity had helped protect the livelihoods of the 1.8 million people working in the hospitality sector and drive the nation's economic recovery from coronavirus.

Latest figures show that Eat Out to Help out significantly boosted restaurant bookings during the month of August, with the scheme growing in popularity each week.

With the scheme exceeding expectations, by midnight on 31 August more than 100 million meals were eaten by diners, with the 84,700 establishments signed up to the scheme making 130,000 claims worth £522 million, meaning more jobs are being protected through people getting out and boosting the economy.

These numbers are likely to grow, with restaurants having until the end of September to claim back the 50% government-funded discount applied to bills.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak said:

From the get-go our mission has been to protect jobs, and to do this we needed to be creative, brave and try things that no government has ever done before.

Today's figures continue to show Eat Out to Help Out has been a success. I want to thank everyone, from restaurant owners to waiters, chefs and diners, for embracing it and helping drive our economic recovery.

The scheme is just one part of our Plan for Jobs and we will continue to protect, support and create jobs to ensure we come back stronger as a nation.

According to OpenTable data, restaurant bookings increased by an average of 53% on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays throughout the whole of August, compared to the same days in 2019. In July 2020, restaurant bookings were down 54% on average from Mondays to Wednesdays compared to July 2019.

On 31 August – the final day of the scheme – bookings were up 216% compared to the equivalent day in 2019.

And early signs show that despite ending, the scheme has continued to boost demand, with a 2 per cent rise in restaurant bookings on Tuesday 1 September compared to the equivalent day in 2019, according to OpenTable.

There had been an upward trend in the scheme's popularity since it launched, with 10.5 million meals claimed for in total in the first week, 35 million meals in the second, 64 million in the third and over 100 million by 31 August.

The scheme was used across the entire UK, with over 6 million meals claimed for in Scotland, over 2 million in both Wales and Northern Ireland and over 51 million meals claimed for in England by 27 August.

The Eat Out to Help Out scheme is one part of the Chancellor's Plan for Jobs, announced last month. Other measures announced to protect, support and create jobs include cutting VAT for tourism and hospitality by 15%, a £2 billion Kickstart Scheme, which opened for applications this week, and an £8.8 billion investment in new infrastructure, decarbonisation and maintenance projects.

This support for the hospitality sector comes on top of the government's unprecedented assistance for all businesses including through grants, tax deferrals, scrapping business rates, the furlough and self-employed support schemes and government-backed loans.

Quotes from businesses and organisations

Jes Staley, Barclays Group CEO, said:

Eat Out to Help Out has undoubtedly had a positive impact – our data shows that restaurant spend grew by 34 per cent on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays in August compared to the same days in July.

The scheme has given the industry a real boost, and will hopefully support the jobs of many hardworking restaurant and fast-food employees across the country. Consumer feedback was also very encouraging, with almost one in five planning to continue dining out more often to support the industry, and a similar number saying that they will return to restaurants that they would not have visited otherwise.

Kate Nicholls, Chief Executive, UK Hospitality, said:

The Eat Out To Help Out scheme has been a great success for hospitality. Our members have reported very strong bookings throughout August at a time when the sector really needed a boost. It has helped provide a lift in consumer confidence which is going to be key for hospitality businesses as they look to reopen and help rebuild the economy. The scheme has provided a timely boost in

trade which will have helped many businesses safeguard jobs all around the UK.

David Page, Chairman of Fulham Shore (Franco Manca/The Real Greek) said:

The Government's furlough scheme underpinned our effort to save as many jobs as possible at Franco Manca and The Real Greek.

This innovative policy was then followed by the Eat Out to Help Out scheme.

Eat Out to Help Out immediately increased our restaurant customer numbers by over 50%, thus enabling us to get all our staff back to work. In fact, we are now creating new jobs by hiring and training more people as fast as we can!

Stephen Wall, Managing Director and co-founder, Pho, said:

The Eat Out to Help Out scheme has really been amazing. It's so nice to see our restaurants full of happy staff and customers again. It has certainly benefitted our early week figures and seems to have encouraged the British public to dine out safely, as our restaurants are filling up and staying busy throughout the weekend, too.

Leasehold homes: CMA launches enforcement action

As part of its ongoing investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is today opening enforcement cases focusing on certain practices of:

- Barratt Developments
- Countryside Properties
- Persimmon Homes
- Taylor Wimpey

The move comes after the CMA uncovered troubling evidence of potentially unfair terms concerning ground rents in leasehold contracts and potential mis-selling. It is concerned that leasehold homeowners may have been unfairly treated and that buyers may have been misled by developers.

The CMA's action relates to the following areas of concern:

Mis-selling

- Ground rents: developers failing to explain clearly exactly what ground rent is, whether it increases over time, when increases will occur and by how much.
- Availability of freehold: people being misled about the availability of freehold properties. For example, the CMA found evidence that some people were told properties on an estate would only be sold as leasehold homes, when they were in fact later sold as freeholds to other buyers.
- Cost of the freehold: people being misled about the cost of converting their leasehold to freehold ownership. When buying their home, the CMA found evidence that some people were told the freehold would cost only a small sum, but later down the line the price had increased by thousands of pounds with little to no warning.
- Unfair sales tactics: developers using unfair sales tactics – such as unnecessarily short deadlines to complete purchases – to secure a deal, meaning people could feel pressured and rushed into buying properties that they may not have purchased had they been given more time.

Unfair contract terms – ground rents

- The use of unfair contract terms that mean homeowners have to pay escalating ground rents, which in some cases can double every 10 years. This increase is built into contracts, meaning people can also struggle to sell their homes and find themselves trapped.

Alongside these issues, the CMA will also be looking further into ground rent increases based on the Retail Price Index (RPI) and may take enforcement action should it find evidence of unfair practices in relation to these. In particular, the CMA is concerned about the fairness of escalating ground rent terms linked to RPI and that these are not always effectively explained by developers when discussing RPI-based ground rent with prospective homeowners.

The CMA will also be investigating certain firms who bought freeholds from these developers and have continued to use the same unfair leasehold contract terms.

The CMA has now written to Barratt, Countryside, Persimmon, and Taylor Wimpey outlining its concerns and requiring information.

How the case proceeds will depend on the CMA's assessment of the evidence. Possible outcomes include legal commitments from the companies to change the way they do business, or if necessary, the CMA could take firms to court.

Andrea Coscelli, CMA Chief Executive, said:

It is unacceptable for housing developers to mislead or take advantage of homebuyers. That's why we've launched today's enforcement action.

Everyone involved in selling leasehold homes should take note: if our investigation demonstrates that there has been mis-selling or unfair contract terms, these will not be tolerated.

Alongside its enforcement action, the CMA is also sending letters to a number of other developers, encouraging them to review their practices to make sure they are treating consumers fairly and complying with the law.

For people who own, or are looking to buy, a leasehold property, the CMA has produced written and video guidance, which offers advice on a number of issues, including what people can do when faced with fees and charges they consider unjustified.

The CMA will continue to work with the Government on its reform plans for the leasehold market, including supporting the move to ban the sale of new leasehold houses and reduce ground rents for new leases to zero.

Notes to editors

1. It should not be assumed at this stage of the CMA's investigation that the businesses under investigation have been involved in any or all of the outlined practices.
2. The key pieces of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation are the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) and Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA). The CPRs contain a general prohibition against unfair commercial practices and specific prohibitions against misleading actions, misleading omissions and aggressive commercial practices. Part 2 of the CRA aims to protect consumers against unfair contract terms and notices, and requires contract terms to be fair and transparent.
3. As an enforcer under Part 8 of the Enterprise Act 2002, the CMA cannot levy administrative fines but it can enforce the above legislation through the courts, and where appropriate, obtain additional measures to improve consumer choice, drive better compliance with the law, or obtain redress for consumers.
4. People wishing to provide further evidence regarding the companies named can get in touch via email: leasehold@cma.gov.uk. The CMA is interested in hearing information on either leasehold houses and/or flats, referred to above as leasehold homes.
5. For further information please contact the CMA press office via press@cma.gov.uk or on 020 3738 6460.

New stage in the Humanitarian Project

Plan

World news story

The UK and Argentina exchanged notes today in order to advance to a new stage in the Humanitarian Project Plan.



The UK and Argentina exchanged notes today in order to advance to a new stage in the Humanitarian Project Plan, which between 2017 and 2019 enabled the identification of 115 Argentine soldiers who died during the 1982 conflict.

In this framework, both countries agreed to submit a new request to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to act once again as a neutral intermediary for the identification of the remains buried in grave C.1.10 in the Argentine Cemetery at Darwin, in the Falkland Islands.

The ceremony held at the headquarters of the Argentine Foreign Ministry was led by Foreign Minister Felipe Solá and Ambassador Mark Kent.

British Ambassador [Mark Kent](#) said:

We hope that the new phase of the Humanitarian Project Plan will help bring closure to families who lost their loved ones in the conflict.

As during the first phase, we set aside our differences because we believe that humanitarian issues take priority over any political issue.

I would like to thank the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Argentine Foreign Ministry, the Falkland Islands Government, the Islanders and the families of the fallen for contributing to making this project a reality.

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Bringing about the vision for a peaceful Afghanistan

Thank you, Mr President and to SRSg Lyons for the remarks. And I commend you, Mr President, for taking the initiative to invite Mr Mohseni to brief us today and to offer a perspective from Afghanistan's dynamic and, as you heard, a vibrant civil society and media.

I was really struck by his vision of a peaceful Afghanistan where the Afghan people can be free from war and able to reach their full potential. And I was also struck by the polling that he set out for us that tells us what the people of Afghanistan really want for their future. I think it's important that we in the Council listen to and reflect on that.

I thought his vision clarified the objectives for us of the Afghan peace process, which we're all eager to support.

We – Afghans and the international community – are not working towards an end to conflict alone, vital though that is. We are working to ensure that Afghans of all ethnicities, tribes, sexes, backgrounds can live in a country at peace; where they can trust well-governed, accountable institutions; where they can enjoy the full extent of their fundamental human rights; and where they can build their own futures for themselves, for their families and for their communities.

And for that reason, it's essential that the upcoming intra-Afghan negotiations are fully inclusive and lead to a long-lasting and sustainable peace.

This means ensuring effective and timely transitional justice for the victims of conflict and the protection and advancement of rights such as the freedom of expression, as Mr Mohseni has highlighted today.

It also means that groups who suffered so much under Taliban rule must be able to have confidence that their rights will be protected. That is why the UK, as co-chair of the Group of Friends of Women of Afghanistan, have made the participation of women and girls in the peace process and the protection of their rights such a priority here in New York, as well as in Afghanistan, to the work of our embassy in Kabul. And I take this opportunity to thank you, SRSg Lyons, for your participation in the Arria formula meeting on this issue that we co-hosted with Afghanistan, Germany and Indonesia in July.

This is the vision, and today we are closer than ever before to achieving this vision.

We were glad to hear from SRSg Lyons that the intra-Afghan negotiations will start within days. Afghanistan and its people potentially stand on the

threshold of a new beginning. As SRSg Lyons said, we have more reason than ever to hope for an end to conflict. But we also stand at the beginning of a process that will be long and challenging. It will require the support of all of us.

We commend the Afghan Government for taking bold steps in removing obstacles that have allowed this moment to happen. We commend also the negotiating team of the Islamic Republic for its preparations, including outreach to women's groups and other civil society actors across the country. We note the continuing efforts to form the Cabinet and the High Council of National Reconciliation and hope both can be fully established and begin their work swiftly.

But, Mr President, there are two sides to this negotiation. Let me emphasise that the Taliban, too, must demonstrate that they are a credible partner for peace. That means:

First, ending violence now. They cannot expect to be accepted back into Afghan society when they continue to attack and harm Afghan men, women and children.

Second, fulfilling the commitment to counter terrorism by breaking completely with all terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda, and condemning all acts of terrorism in Afghanistan, which continue to claim too many innocent lives.

And third, engaging in good faith in the upcoming negotiations.

The roles of the UK and the international community, Mr President. On the UK's part, we stand ready to provide our support at any stage of the upcoming peace process. We also lend our full support to the work of SRSg Lyons and the UN in supporting the talks.

As one of the largest donors in Afghanistan, the UK is providing assistance via the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan to combat Covid-19 and planning with partners how we can support Afghanistan in mitigating both immediate health impact and critically, as SRSg Lyons said, the severe socio-economic effects.

We are also working closely with Finland and the UN and other partners to prepare for the meetings later this year to secure Afghanistan's immediate financial stability and set out the future parameters of the international donor communities' medium-term support for Afghanistan.

Mr President, yesterday in London, the UK created the new Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. We will continue to bring the best of our diplomacy and development expertise to support the people of Afghanistan as they stand at this crucial juncture. And we join Mr Mohseni and SRSg Lyons in their pragmatic and cautious optimism.

Thank you, Mr President.

UK-EU future relationship: UK and Gibraltar hold further discussions with Spain

News story

Today's discussions focussed on issues relating to Gibraltar, as negotiations with the EU on our future relationship continue.



Today the United Kingdom, Gibraltar and Spain held further constructive discussions on a range of issues relating to the bilateral relationship, with particular focus on those issues relating to Gibraltar as negotiations with the EU on our future relationship are ongoing.

The UK delegation comprised officials from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and HM Ambassador to Spain. The Chief Minister, Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, led for Gibraltar. The Spanish delegation comprised officials from the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries.

The discussion focussed on those areas of the UK-EU future relationship that are relevant to Gibraltar, including the mobility of persons in the region and continued access to provide cross-border services.

The UK Government has always been clear that Gibraltar is an integral part of our negotiations with the EU and we continue to seek outcomes which support Gibraltar's interests.

The UK, Spain and Gibraltar have agreed to meet again soon and reaffirmed their intention to work constructively and positively to deliver their shared priority of continued well-being and prosperity of people in the region.

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