

Written 9 August 2021

BUSINESS NEWS NORTHERN IRELAND

Welcome to our round up of the latest business and Covid-19 news for our clients. Please contact us if you want to talk about how these updates affect your business. We are here to support you!

International Travel Update

A number of changes to Northern Ireland's international country travel lists have been confirmed.



From yesterday the following changes were introduced.

Green list

Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Slovakia, Latvia, Romania and Norway have been added to the Green list. Anyone travelling to Northern Ireland from a country on the Green list must:

- provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test result taken up to three days before departure
- book and pay for a day two COVID-19 PCR test
- complete a UK passenger locator form within 48 hours of departure

There is no requirement to self-isolate or book a day eight COVID-19 PCR test if travelling to Northern Ireland from a country on the Green list.

Amber list

India, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE will be added to the Amber list while there will no longer be a requirement for fully vaccinated people returning from France to quarantine.

Those returning from an Amber list country (and have not been in or passed through a red list country in the 10 days before arriving in Northern Ireland), and who have been fully

vaccinated under the UK, USA or EU vaccination programmes, do not have to self-isolate or take the day eight post-arrival test.

However fully vaccinated people must still:

- provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test result taken up to three days before departure
- book and pay for a day two COVID-19 PCR test
- complete a UK passenger locator form within 48 hours of departure

Anyone travelling from an Amber list country who hasn't been fully vaccinated must:

- provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test result taken up to three days before departure
- book post-arrival testing
- complete a UK passenger locator form either on arrival, or in the 48 hours before arrival
- self-isolate for 10 days

Red list

Georgia, La Reunion, Mayotte and Mexico will be added to the Red list.

Anyone travelling to Northern Ireland from a country on the Red list must:

- provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test result taken up to three days before departure
- complete a UK passenger locator form within 48 hours of departure
- book and enter managed isolation (hotel quarantine) for 10 days, which includes post-arrival tests

The latest advice and rules on travel are available on [NI Direct\(external link opens in a new window / tab\)](#).

Top 30 common cyber vulnerabilities listed in a joint advisory document

Cyber security agencies from the UK, US and Australia have released a joint advisory detailing the most commonly exploited vulnerabilities in 2020 and 2021. According to the advisory, hackers continue to exploit publicly known - and often years old - vulnerabilities in a range of devices and software. Four of the most targeted vulnerabilities in the last year affected:

- remote work
- virtual private networks (VPNs)
- cloud-based technologies

In particular, many VPN gateway devices remained unpatched during 2020, with the growth of remote work options challenging the ability of public and private sector organisations to conduct rigorous patch management. In 2021, malicious cyber actors continue to target vulnerabilities in perimeter-type devices. This document lists suppliers, products, and common vulnerabilities and exposures that need urgent patching and outlines detection methods and provides recommended mitigations.

Read the guidance on the top 30 [routinely exploited vulnerabilities](#)

Brexit - International bus or coach services and tours: vehicle documents

This guidance in the 'Vehicle insurance and green cards' section has been updated, as green cards are no longer needed to drive in the EU (including Ireland), Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia or Switzerland.

See: [International bus or coach services and tours: vehicle documents - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

National Insurance for workers from the UK working in the EEA or Switzerland

Individuals who are employees or self-employed, pay social security contributions depending on their personal circumstances and the country they are going to work in.

The liability of the employer to pay social security contributions will follow the liability of their employees.

If you go to work in:

- the EU, you'll only have to pay into one country's social security scheme at a time
- Iceland, Norway or Switzerland, you may only have to pay into one country's social security scheme at a time

This will usually be in the country where the work is being done.

In the UK, social security contributions are called National Insurance contributions.

Individuals continue to pay National Insurance contributions only in the UK if HMRC has issued you with the relevant certificate as evidence that this is the case.

You, or your employer, should apply for a certificate if you're:

- going to work temporarily in the EU for up to 2 years
- a worker working in the UK and one or more EU countries
- a civil servant working for the UK government
- working onboard a vessel at sea, with a UK flag
- working as a flight or cabin crew member, where your home base is in the UK

For more details see the recently updated HMRC guidance:

See: [National Insurance for workers from the UK working in the EEA or Switzerland - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-insurance-for-workers-from-the-uk-working-in-the-eea-or-switzerland)

Notify Option to Tax Land and Buildings within 30 days of decision

Supplies of land and buildings, such as freehold sales, leasing or renting out the property, are normally exempt from VAT. This means that no VAT is payable, but the person making the supply cannot normally recover any of the VAT incurred on property expenses.

However it is possible to waive the exemption, or “opt to tax” the land. For the purposes of VAT, the term ‘land’ includes any buildings or structures permanently affixed to it. You do not need to own the land in order to opt to tax. Once you have opted to tax all the supplies you make of your interest in the land or buildings will normally be standard-rated, and you will normally be able to recover any VAT you incur in making those supplies. See updated HMRC Notice 742a for details:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/opting-to-tax-land-and-buildings-notice-742a>

If you are notifying HMRC of a decision to opt to tax land and buildings, you are normally required to notify HMRC within 30 days by either:

- printing and sending us the notification, signed by an authorised person within the business
- emailing a scanned copy of the signed notification

The 30 day deadline was temporarily extended to 90 days to help businesses and agents during the pandemic. That temporary extension has now ended so for decisions made from 1 August 2021 onwards, you must notify HMRC within 30 days.

See: [Changes to notifying an option to tax land and buildings during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/changes-to-notifying-an-option-to-tax-land-and-buildings-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

The Queen's Awards for Enterprise

The Queen's Awards for Enterprise recognise and encourage the outstanding achievements of UK businesses in the fields of:

- innovation
- international trade
- sustainable development
- promoting opportunity (through social mobility)

Businesses of all sizes and from all sectors can apply. The awards are free to enter, and you can apply for more than one award. The deadline for applications is midday on 8 September 2021.

Find out how to apply for [The Queen's Awards for Enterprise](#)

Women in Innovation Awards 2021/22

Women with exciting, innovative ideas who will inspire others can apply for a £50,000 grant and bespoke business support. The competition opens Monday 23 August 2021.

Innovate UK, as part of UK Research and Innovation, is offering at least 20 Women in Innovation Awards to female entrepreneurs across the UK. The winners will receive a £50,000 grant and a bespoke package of mentoring, coaching and business support.



The aim of this competition is to find women with exciting, innovative ideas and ambitious plans that will inspire others. The awards are for female founders, co-founders or senior decision makers working in businesses that have been operating for at least one year.

Applicants must be confident, with the support of an award, that they can make a significant contribution to a pressing societal, environmental or economic challenge through their innovative project.

The competition is split into 2 phases. In phase 1 the application will be assessed by independent experts. In phase 2 the shortlisted applicants will be interviewed by a panel of experts.

See: [Competition overview - Women in Innovation Awards 2021/22 - Innovation Funding Service \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](#)

COVID-19 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT NEWS

Below is our weekly roundup of changes to government support information generally and for businesses, employers and the self-employed.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) – free HMRC webinar

The latest HMRC webinar provides an overview of the CJRS extension, how employers are affected, flexible furloughing, key dates and support available.

This free webinar covers:

- the extension of the scheme
- how employers will be affected
- flexible furloughing
- key dates
- support available

This live webinar is offered several times - [select the date and time that works best for you](#).

[Access a recording of this webinar](#).

If you have missed any of HMRC's other recent webinars, or have been unable to join, you can now [view a recording on HMRC's YouTube channel](#)

Innovation Self-assessment questionnaire

Innovate NI's self-assessment tool could help you find out how innovative your business is and get recognition along the way. Innovation can create new value and growth and can lead to long-term benefits.

To help local businesses actively engage in innovation, Innovate NI has developed an Innovation Accreditation Programme that consists of:

- a four-step [innovation framework](#) - to take you from ideation to commercialisation
- an [innovation recognition scheme](#) - to help you gain recognition for your efforts

Supporting this framework and scheme is an [innovation self-assessment](#) tool, a simple online questionnaire that enables you to:

- discover how innovative your business is
- join the framework
- receive the corresponding recognition

When you complete the questionnaire, the results suggest where your business sits on the framework and tells you how to progress through the different innovation levels.

Following successful completion of each level, you can achieve Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum Innovator status and receive official recognition from the Department for the Economy (DfE). You can also get promotional materials to help market your business as an innovative enterprise.

See: [Is your business innovating? | Innovate NI](#)

Vaccine certificate availability extended

Northern Ireland vaccine certificates are now available for those travelling abroad up to and including 17 August. The certificates provide Northern Ireland citizens with official confirmation that they have received both their COVID-19 vaccinations in Northern Ireland. They are available in digital format – via an app for your phone or a pdf file for printing.

If you cannot apply online, you can request a paper version by phone – this process will take longer than the digital process and it may take up to 10 working days for the printed paper version to arrive.

See: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): COVID certificate for NI residents | nidirect](#)

Support for construction industry to meet rising costs

Finance Minister, Conor Murphy, has announced steps being taken to help government contractors with the rising costs of raw materials. Minister Murphy said: “Covid-19 has had a huge impact on the availability of construction materials with global demand, product shortages and delivery delays leading to market volatility and increased prices.”

The Executive has agreed proposals to make provision to manage delays in supplies and to include mechanisms in existing and new contracts to make allowances for inflationary prices. This will provide vital support to our construction industry which will play a key role in our economic recovery while also ensuring important government projects such as schools, hospitals and infrastructure projects are delivered.

See: [Murphy announces support for construction industry to meet rising costs | Department of Finance \(finance-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Re-opening of EFS Wider

DAERA Minister, Edwin Poots MLA, has announced that Tranche 5 of the Wider Level of the Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) will open for applications on 16 August 2021.

EFS Wider Level applies to land outside areas of environmental designation and as such will be available to most farmers in Northern Ireland. Applicants simply choose which options they feel best suit the needs of their farm business and then submit an application for the land they will have control of for the five year duration of the scheme.

Launching Tranche 5 of the Scheme, Minister Poots said: “EFS supports farmers to implement environmentally beneficial methods on their land. It aims to protect and enhance biodiversity and water quality and mitigate against climate change by sequestering carbon.

“I have therefore taken the decision to open a fifth tranche of EFS Wider for applications from 16 August 2021. The application process must be completed online, and if anyone requires help with this process, my staff within the EFS team can offer assistance on 0300 200 7848 or via email at efs@daera-ni.gov.uk.”

See: [Prepare now for the re-opening of EFS Wider | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Tourism Challenge Fund competition for Antrim and Newtownabbey

As part of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's COVID-19 recovery plans, a new tourism challenge competition has been launched aimed at encouraging new experiences, services and attractions to start-up and/or expand in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Entrepreneurs can pitch for up to a 75 per cent grant to help test the feasibility of their new business idea. If the idea has the potential to become a success, they will be able to apply for seed funding of up to £50,000 per scheme to make the idea become a reality.

Expressions of Interest are invited from individuals or organisations which meet the following criteria:

1. Business applicants must have their operating business address in the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Area.
2. The proposed business opportunity must be located within and delivered within the Borough.
3. The business idea must meet the bespoke needs of visitors and tourists.
4. The business idea must be non-discriminatory to all Section 75 groups (persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with a disability and persons without, persons with dependants and persons without).

Applications close at 14:00 on Friday 20 August 2021.

See: [Read the full guidance notes and apply](#)

Business start-up grants

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council's new scheme will offer a limited number of cash grants of up to £500 to assist with the development of new businesses across the borough.

Now accepting applications, the scheme is open to new start-ups based in the borough who:

- have joined the [Go For It Programme](#) since 1 July 2021
- will have completed their business plan by 30 September 2021
- will begin trading within six months of finishing the programme
- can demonstrate potential for business growth

Helping eligible entrepreneurs fund some of the expenses associated with the start-up process, the grant can be used to cover everything from rent, rates, new equipment and stock to training memberships, courses and updating business premises.

To find out more about the programme, eligibility and assessment process, get in touch with your local enterprise agency:

- Armagh Business Centre: Dermot Hicks, 028 3752 5050, Dermot@abcarmagh.com
- Banbridge District Enterprises: Samuel Marshall, 028 40 662260, Samuel@bdelonline.com
- Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation (CIDO): Kirsty Watson, 028 38 396520, kirsty.watson@cido.co.uk

See: [Apply for a business start-up grant \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](http://nibusinessinfo.co.uk)