

UK to end all COVID-19 travel rules ahead of Easter break

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People in the arrivals area at Heathrow Airport in London, Jan. 26, 2021, during England's coronavirus lockdown. Credit: Britain says all remaining coronavirus measures for travelers, including passenger locator forms and the requirement for unvaccinated people be tested for COVID-19 before and after their arrivals, will end Friday March 18, 2022. (AP Photo/Matt Dunham, File

Britain's government said Monday all remaining coronavirus measures for travelers, including passenger locator forms and the requirement that unvaccinated people be tested for COVID-19 before and after their arrivals, will end Friday to make going on holiday easier for the Easter school vacation.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the changes will mean people "can travel just like in the good old days."

The passenger locator forms require people to fill in travel details, their address in the U.K. and their vaccination status.

The news was welcomed by U.K. airlines such as Virgin Atlantic and British Airways, which said they are beginning to ease mask wearing requirements on some routes.

The announcement came as coronavirus infections were rising in all four parts of the U.K.—England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—for the first time since the end of January. The latest government figures released Monday showed that there were more than 444,000 new cases recorded in the past seven days, up 48% from the week before.

The number of hospital patients with COVID-19 is also going up, though it is still well below the peak recorded in January. Scientists say many of the new infections in England were a more transmissible sub-variant of the omicron variant.

Health Secretary Sajid Javid said the rise in infections was "to be expected" as people socialize more after all domestic coronavirus restrictions, including the legal requirement for anyone who tested positive to self isolate, came to an end Feb. 24.

"We will continue monitoring and tracking potential new variants, and

keep a reserve of measures which can be rapidly deployed if needed to keep us safe," Javid said.

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