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October - December 2023 British Edition

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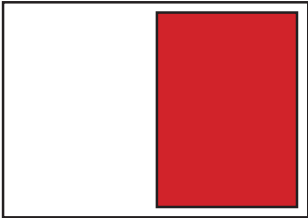
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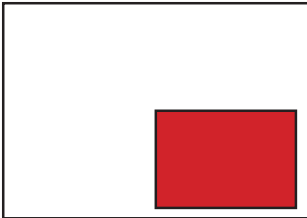
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A field of poppies on a clear day



News Roundup

Summary of the main news and sports events over the last three months

By Paul G Bazeley for Government World

October News Review

On the 7th October 2023, a Hamas (a designated terrorist organisation) launched a surprise attack from the Gaza Strip on Southern Israel. The group launched rockets at specific targets and entered through several checkpoints. One of the most notable targets was a music festival near Re'im where over 325 people were killed and many more injured. Over the course of the attack hostages were taken. Israel



has reported that rape and sexual violence took place against women during the attacks. Israeli military forensic teams also stated there were signs of rape and torture.

In a televised speech, Israeli President Netanyahu replied to the attacks with "We are at war" and continued to say that Gaza is a "city of evil" and threatened to "turn all the places where Hamas is organised and hiding into cities of ruins". Residents of Gaza were

urged to leave as air strikes, on what were said to be Hamas compounds, began quickly and continued through the month. Later in October Israeli ground troops entered Gaza.

Israel have been shown support from many countries including the UK and USA. However, the amount of civilian casualties said to be from air strikes raised many concerns and sparked protests for a ceasefire across the world.

Representatives from all European Union states informally met in Kyiv, Ukraine. Most of the EU



representatives were foreign ministers that met with the Ukrainian government to show their ongoing support of the country in its fight against the Russian invasion.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced that phase two of HS2 was cancelled. The high-speed rail project



was supposed to go all the way to Manchester from London. However, the cancellation of phase 2 means the new line will only go from London Euston to Birmingham. Mr. Sunak said that the money would be reinvested in rail, road and bus networks instead of HS2.

Jon Fosse was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. He was awarded the prize “for his innovative plays and prose which give voice the unsayable.” His innovative style of writing is now known



as Fosse minimalism.

Microsoft's acquisition of video game company Activision Blizzard was approved by the UK Competition and Markets Authority.

October Sports Review

The 44th Ryder Cup golf competition between Europe and the USA culminates with Team Europe winning



the competition. Team Europe won with 16.5 points, compared to America with 11.5 points after three days at the Marco Simeone Golf Club in Italy.

FIFA awarded the 2030 football World Cup to Spain, Portugal and Morocco. Morocco will be the first country in North Africa to host the tournament. Meanwhile UEFA announced that the UK and Republic of Ireland will host UEFA Euro 2028. Italy and Turkey were announced as the hosts for the 2032 tournament.



South Africa won their fourth Rugby World Cup after beating New Zealand 12-11 in the final at the State de France in France. The



Springboks are the first team to lift the Webb Ellis Cup for a fourth time.

Red Bull Formula One driver Max Verstappen won his third World Drivers Championship at the Qatar Grand Prix.

November News Review

The border crossing between Egypt and Gaza opened for the first time since the Israel-Hamas war began on 7th October. The crossing allowed injured



Gaza residents ambulances and foreign passport holders to exit. On the 6th November the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry said that 10,022 people had died in Gaza since the war began.

Calls from US officials and other countries for a ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza were dismissed by President Netanyahu unless hostages were released. Israel agreed to 4 hour pauses in fighting



areas of northern Gaza each day. A second humanitarian corridor was also agreed to allow civilians to leave hostile areas of north Gaza. Later in the month a temporary evacuation corridor from the Gaza Strip was also opened. At the end of the month, a ceasefire occurred with Hamas releasing hostages, Israel releasing prisoners and Israel allowing aid and fuel into Gaza.



Prime Minister Rishi Sunak dismissed Home Secretary Suella Braverman and replaced her with Foreign Secretary James Cleverly and appointed former Prime Minister David Cameron as the new Foreign Secretary. The changes came after Braverman condemned a pro-Palestinian protest held in central London.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service reported that October 2023 was the hottest October observed. They stated that average global temperatures were 1.43 degrees



Celsius higher than preindustrial levels.

US President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping held talks in San Francisco, US. It was their first meeting in over a year. The talks were described as positive and made 'real progress'. Some of the topics spoken about were apparently drug trafficking and artificial intelligence.



Nepal banned the short form video service TikTok. It cited that the app "disturbs social harmony and disrupts family structures and social relations"



when misused.

A bicorne hat worn by the French



emperor Napoleon was sold for 1.93 million euros at an auction in France.

November Sports Review

Iga Swiatek defeated Jessica Petula in the WTA tennis finals 6-1, 6-0 to win the singles title. The Pole also regained the



world number 1 ranking from Aryna Sabalenka after the win. Swiatek will finish the year as world number 1 for the second consecutive year.

Novak Djokovic won the ATP final after beating Jannik Sinner 6-3, 6-3 in the ATP finals in Turin, Italy. It is the Serbs seventh ATP title, a new record, after beating Roger Federer's record of six.

Australia beat India in the Cricket World Cup final. The Australians beat the hosts by six wickets. India's Virat Kohli was named as the player of the tournament.



Everton Football Club were deducted 10 points in the 23/24 Premier League for breaching profit and sustainability rules, the largest point deduction in league history. It comes after they made a loss of £124.5 million in three years up to 2021-22 with the limit being £105 million.



December News Review

The ceasefire between Israel and Hamas ended after the deadline expired. Qatar, one of the mediators of the ceasefire, continued to attempt to renew the ceasefire and expressed sadness that it came to an end so quickly.

As the Russian invasion continues, a report from the Kiel Institute stated that aid to Ukraine since the invasion was at its lowest point. It reported that the



amount of aid pledged had dropped 90% compared to the same period the previous year.

The 17 year-old Alex Batty, who had disappeared 6 years ago, was found alive in France. Batty went missing after going to Spain with his Mother and Grandfather, who did not have legal custody of the child. He was found when spotted walking in the rain near Toulouse, France by a motorist who allowed him to use their phone to text his Grandmother saying “I love you, I want to come home.”



The International Energy Agency forecasted that coal consumption would have increased 1.4% in 2023, a record high. It is thought to be due to the increased demand in developing and emerging countries.

Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd suspended their container shipments in the



Red Sea until further notice due to increased Houthi attacks on vessels in the area.

Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex, won a phone hacking lawsuit against



the publishers of the Daily Mirror. The High Court found that private investigators had gathered information unlawfully and that phone hacking was widespread at the Mirror Group.

Google settled a lawsuit worth \$5 billion. It alleged that Google spied on



users in “incognito” mode on Chrome browsers, and other similar modes on other browsers, which mislead users into thinking their activities would not be tracked.

Conservationists in New Zealand announced the birth of a kiwi in the wild near Wellington. It's the first kiwi born in the wild in over a century.



December Sports Review


The European Court of Justice ruled that FIFA and UEFA threats to sanction football clubs that wished to join the proposed European Super League were unlawful.




Manchester City beat the Brazilian side Fluminense 4-0 in the final of the FIFA Club World Cup. It was City's first Club World Cup and their playing Rodri won the tournaments Golden Ball.


End











Mobile phone use to be banned in schools in England

October

From: Department for Education and The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP

Mobile phone use should be banned in schools across England to improve behaviour, the Education Secretary Gillian Keegan announced today.

New guidance from the Department for Education will back head teachers in banning mobile phone use throughout the school day, including at break times, to tackle disruptive behaviour and online bullying while boosting attention during lessons. It aims to support the wider work the government is doing to raise standards in schools by increasing students' focus and reducing distractions.

This ban supports the hard work of teachers and education staff – and continues to build on government's reforms backed up by the highest level of funding for schools in history, in real terms, of nearly £60 billion by 2024-25.

The move will bring England in line

with other countries that have already implemented a ban, including France, Italy and Portugal. It follows warnings from the United Nations on the risks of smart phones in schools and government data that found around a third (29%) of secondary school pupils reported mobile phones being used when they were not supposed to in most, or all, lessons.

If schools fail to implement the new guidance, the government will consider legislating in the future to make the guidance statutory.

Tom Bennett, school behaviour advisor said:



“This is a fantastic move forward for ensuring that students are able to work, learn and grow in a place free from the distracting influence of mobile phones. Schools that have already banned them report that students are safer, happier and able to focus far more than they were before- and it’s popular with them too.

And heads should now be reassured that their efforts to keep schools mobile-free will be backed by the DfE. This is a positive and progressive step forward.”

The guidance will set out limited exemptions where necessary - for example, where children require their phones for medical reasons.

The ban builds on a £10 million investment in behaviour hubs which support up to 700 schools to improve behaviour alongside the appointment of a new behavioural taskforce led by DfE's behaviour tsar Tom Bennett.

UK government opens world's most remote marine science base on Pitcairn Islands

October

From: British High Commission Wellington

The Governor to the Pitcairn Islands, Iona Thomas, has officially opened the new UK government-funded marine science base, providing a platform for scientists to visit the area and study its unique marine habitats.

Scientists from around the globe will be able to explore some of the world's most untouched marine habitats and potentially discover new life underwater thanks to the creation of a new marine science base on the remote Pitcairn Islands.

This remote volcanic outcrop and its three neighbouring islands in the South Pacific are a UK Overseas Territory and the third largest continuous 'Highly Protected' Marine Protected Area in the world – with some of the planet's most pristine coral reefs and an abundance of sea life not seen anywhere else on earth.

The base will provide visiting scientists with a range of equipment – from remote

operated vehicles to cutting-edge underwater video technology – to allow them to monitor the health of marine habitats that are mostly untouched by humans.

Iona Thomas, Governor to Pitcairn and British High Commissioner to New Zealand, said:

“The ocean around the Pitcairn Islands is one of the most pristine places on earth and home to a treasure trove of sharks, fish, corals and other marine life not seen anywhere else in the world.

I'm delighted to be able to open the new marine science base here in Pitcairn with the support of the local community.

I hope this base will attract a continuous cycle of scientists to the islands and provide a huge boost to our knowledge of marine science in what is one of the last remaining untouched marine habitats on the planet.”

David Rutley, Ministers for the Americas and with responsibility for Overseas territories at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, said:

“Studying our oceans is crucial to understanding the impact of climate change, land-based pollution and habitat degradation, and the opening of our new marine science base will ensure that we are better equipped to protect our ocean waters against such threats.



The UK has always placed great importance on conducting scientific research to safeguard our valuable marine protected areas and I encourage scientists from all over the world to visit and utilise this tremendous base.”

The Pitcairn Islands MPA was created in 2016 and is now the third largest continuous ‘Highly Protected’ MPA in the world.

As a ‘Highly Protected’ MPA with fully intact marine ecosystems, no commercial fishing is allowed across the 842,000 square kilometres of waters around Pitcairn’s four islands. This makes Pitcairn an important reference point to help scientists study marine biodiversity and assess the impacts of climate change – and in turn measure the benefits of marine protected areas.

The pristine coral habitats of the Pitcairn Islands’ will be a barometer on ocean climate change, particularly as oceans get warmer and more acidic, which is happening in more northerly equatorial waters. The corals grow in deeper, clearer, and cooler waters compared to most other tropical coral reefs and because of their isolation they harbour species found nowhere else in the world.

Specialists from the Blue Belt Programme, the UK government’s flagship marine conservation programme that works with the UK Overseas Territories, provided advice and assistance for the set-up and is funding the University of St Andrews to work with residents to undertake the management and governance of the laboratory.

Joseph Peters, Integrated Marine Manager, Blue Belt Programme, said:

“We are honoured to work with the government of Pitcairn through the Blue Belt Programme to help secure the long-term protection of their marine environment. This new marine science base is a fantastic facility that will provide visiting scientists and the local community with the space and equipment they need to generate evidence that will support the sustainable management of Pitcairn’s Marine Protected Area.”

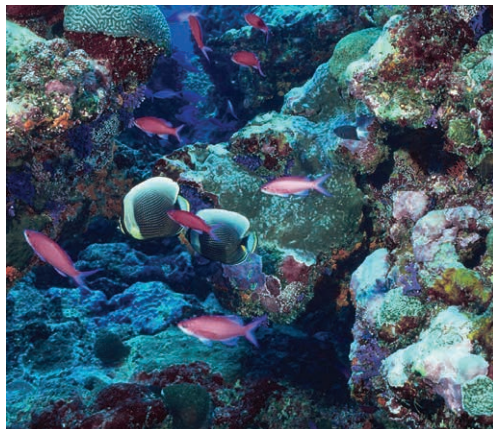
Over 1,250 marine species have been recorded in the waters around Pitcairn, including 3 species of whales that are listed as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List.

The area is also home to hawksbill and green turtles (critically endangered and endangered, respectively); as well as 3 species of endangered seabirds; one critically endangered fish and one endangered fish. There are also 5 species of endemic bony fishes found nowhere else on Earth.

One of Pitcairn’s outer islands, Ducie, plays an important role as a shark nursery and there are growing numbers of Humpback whales coming into Pitcairn’s waters every year to calve.

Pitcairn is home to only around 40 inhabitants and the marine science base has been built locally by these residents. It will be locally-managed with the support of the UK government and UK academia.

Pitcairn’s MPA was awarded a Platinum Status ‘Blue Park Award’ by the Marine Conservation Institute in February in recognition of its exceptional marine wildlife conservation.



Environment Agency consults on updating charges for international waste shipments

October

From: Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has today (4 October) launched a public consultation on updating charges for regulating waste shipments to ensure it can continue its work to protect people and the environment from hazardous waste.

Currently, the cost of the Environment Agency's regulatory activities is greater

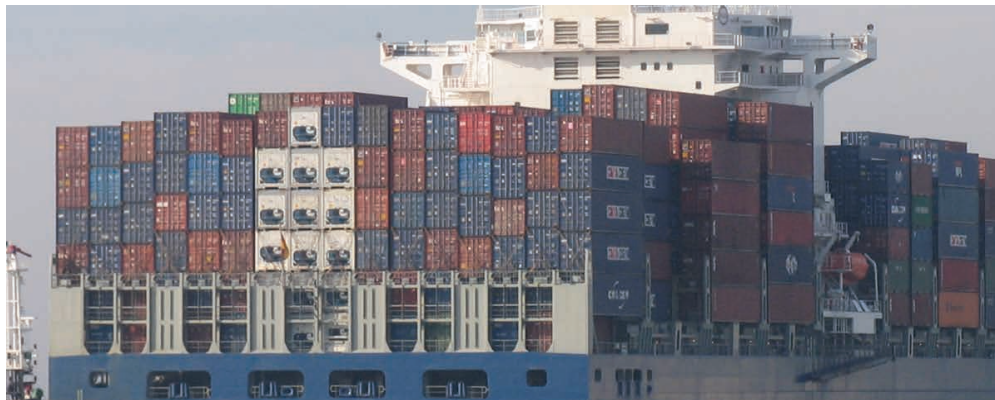
than the fees it charges waste importers and exporters. The most recent amendments to international waste shipment charges were published in 2012 – and in the last decade, multiple factors including market trends and policies to improve environmental standards have increased the costs of regulation.

The Environment Agency spends its income from charges on processing

applications, data reporting and compliance work to ensure shipments are lawful and do not pose a risk to the environment. It has a responsibility to recover fully the costs of its regulatory activities via charges, avoiding costs being carried by the taxpayer.

The Environment Agency inspected 1,390 containers of waste in the 2021/22 financial year. Of these, 260 were returned to their site of loading which, combined with the Environment Agency's regulatory interventions at waste sites, prevented the illegal export of more than 19,000 tonnes of waste.

The consultation has been launched to make certain the Environment Agency has the appropriate resources to provide a quality service and its customers pay the right amount for



the work it does to ensure the protection of the environment and human health.

Steve Molyneux, Environment Agency Deputy Director of Waste Regulation, said:

“Notification controls are crucial – they allow us to work with the UK’s waste industry and our partners around the world to ensure waste movements are correctly managed and don’t cause harm to the environment.

Currently, the cost of these regulatory activities is greater than the fees we charge. We have a responsibility to avoid passing on costs to the taxpayer and a commitment to fairness and transparency.

Our proposed changes will reflect the full cost of the chargeable services we provide – ensuring we continue to protect the environment internationally, as well as people’s health, safety and wellbeing.”

The consultation proposes to update charges annually in line with inflation to maintain full cost recovery, using the Office for National Statistics measure of Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation as of 30 September in the immediately

preceding year. Any increase to charges will be equal to or less than this – increases will be lower if the Environment Agency believes its increased costs do not equate to the CPI measure.

The new charges will apply to exports and imports of notified waste from and to England and would come into force on 1 April 2024.

Businesses involved in the shipment of waste are required to take all necessary steps to ensure that the waste they ship is managed in an environmentally sound manner throughout its shipment and during its recycling. Those found to be exporting waste and not complying with legislative requirements can face two years’ imprisonment and an unlimited fine on successful conviction.

The Environment Agency continues to pursue those who blight the lives of overseas communities through illegal exports and have introduced additional measures to tackle them, including by working closely with HM Revenue and Customs, reviewing inconsistencies between customs information and packaging data and creating an investigations team to target serious

offenders.

Waste, waste treatment and especially recycling must be properly managed whether it is processed at home or abroad and the Environment Agency works closely with the waste industry and local authorities to safeguard the environment. It works – England is a much cleaner, greener place because of the Environment Agency’s activities.





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PM redirects HS2 funding to revolutionise transport across the North and Midlands

October

From: Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, Department for Transport, and The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP

A revolution in the country's transport infrastructure will see billions of pounds redirected from spiralling HS2 costs to build the daily connections that people depend on – unlocking potential, driving growth and transforming communities.

- Spiralling HS2 costs redirected to build Network North and fund raft of transport projects across the country, delivering the strong, reliable connections people depend on every day

- Rail, roads and buses to benefit from £36 billion in transport improvements in fundamental shift to how Government invests in transport infrastructure – unlocking potential faster in our towns, cities and rural areas

- A further £12bn is set aside to deliver fast links between Liverpool and Manchester

- Prime Minister prioritises the forms of transport that matter most to people and will deliver for future generations – driving jobs, growing the economy and levelling up the country

A revolution in the country's transport infrastructure will see billions of pounds redirected from spiralling HS2 costs to build the daily connections that people depend on – unlocking potential, driving growth and transforming communities.

The Prime Minister has today [Wednesday 4 October] unveiled his vision to deliver

the forms of transport that people use the most. The new plans will radically improve travel between and within our cities and towns, and around our local areas – benefitting more people in more places, more quickly.

The cornerstone of this plan will be Network North which will drive better connectivity across the North and Midlands with faster journey times, increased capacity and more frequent, reliable services across rail, buses and roads. £36 billion will be invested in hundreds of transport projects across the country – with every region set to receive the same or more transport investment on an unprecedented scale as a result of the change. A further £12 billion on top of this figure will be set aside for faster connectivity between Liverpool and Manchester.

This represents a fundamental shift in investment towards the people's transport priorities, consistent with



the Prime Minister's pledge to grow the economy while ensuring value for money and demonstrating responsibility with taxpayers' money.

More than four million people in cities in the North cannot currently reach their city centre by public transport within half an hour, which is detrimental to productivity and economic growth. And rail accounts for just 8 per cent of distances travelled and 2 per cent of all journeys.

Yet the HS2 project currently accounts for over one-third of all Government's transport investments, preventing the Government from spending on people's genuine priorities and doing little to improve the journeys that people make the most.

Therefore, the Government will deliver HS2 between Euston in central London and the West Midlands as planned, with a station at Old Oak Common and Birmingham Interchange and branches to central Birmingham and Handsacre, near Lichfield – where HS2 trains for Manchester, Liverpool and Scotland will join the West Coast Main Line.

HS2 trains will run from Euston to central Birmingham in 49 minutes, 30 minutes faster than now; from Euston to

Manchester in 1 hr 40 minutes, 27 minutes faster than now; from Euston to Liverpool in 1 hr 45 minutes, 26 minutes faster than now; and also to Lancashire, Cumbria and Scotland, saving significantly on current journey times.

Rather than delivering HS2 Phase 2 new line between Birmingham and Manchester, the Prime Minister is taking action to deliver greater frequency and quality of transport infrastructure across the whole country.

Communities in towns, cities and rural areas will see improved transport infrastructure far sooner through £19.8 billion reinvested in the North, including:

- £2 billion for a new station at Bradford and a new connection to Manchester;
- £2.5 billion to deliver a new mass transit system in West Yorkshire;
- £3 billion for upgraded and electrified lines between Manchester and Sheffield, Sheffield and Leeds, Sheffield and Hull,



and Hull-Leeds.

- Nearly £4 billion more funding for local transport in the North's six city regions.
- A new £2.5 billion fund for local transport across all areas in the North outside the six city regions – smaller cities, counties, towns and countryside.
- A new £3.3 billion fund for road resurfacing.
- Landmark investments in roads, reopened train lines and new stations;

We will also invest a further £12 billion to better connect Manchester to Liverpool. This would allow the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail as previously planned, including high-speed lines. But we will work with local leaders to agree whether they wish to suggest other ways to achieve the objectives within that cost envelope.

£9.6 billion reinvested in the Midlands:

- Funding the Midlands Rail Hub in full with £1.75 billion, connecting 50 stations and over 7 million people – doubling capacity and frequency;
- Over £1.5 billion guaranteed local transport funding for the new East Midlands Mayor;
- Over £1 billion extra local transport funding for West Midlands City Region;

- A new £2.2 billion fund for local transport across all areas in the West and East Midlands outside the city regions – smaller cities, counties, towns and countryside.
- Reopened train lines and new stations such as the Ivanhoe Line;
- The development of Midlands road schemes to benefit businesses and their employees at Rolls Royce, Toyota, and Magna Park, generating over £12 billion for the local economy.

£6.5 billion for the rest of the country:

- Rail improvements in the Southwest;
- Keeping the £2 bus fare until the end of December 2024;
- Ensuring the delivery of road schemes;
- Transforming Ely Junction; and billions to fix potholes on the country's roads;
- Greater connectivity for both Scotland and Wales with improvements to the A75 between Gretna and Stranraer, and £1 billion to fund the electrification of the North Wales Main Line.

To ensure regions are best equipped to reach their productivity potential, local authorities and Metro Mayors will be empowered to create the public transport networks that their communities want to see. We will also set out a broader package of infrastructure planning reforms in the coming months to remove burdens to building to ensure these projects are

delivered and benefits felt in communities more quickly.

Originally, every pound spent on HS2 was set to deliver £2.30 worth of benefits back to the taxpayer. Despite revising the scope, benefits could fall as low as 80 pence for every £1 spent.

Meanwhile, the original benefits-cost ratio for HS2 was underpinned by assumptions which are no longer valid. Covid-19 has completely changed travel patterns and business rail travel is currently around half of 2019 levels while the majority of public transport journeys continue to be taken by bus – at three billion a year.

However, we will complete Phase 1 of HS2 where significant construction is already underway, cutting journey times from Birmingham to central London from around 80 minutes to 49 minutes. This will have a transformative effect on rail capacity, nearly allowing up to 250,000 passengers to travel every day – supporting growth for decades to come.

To unlock growth potential for London and deliver thousands of additional homes at Euston, the Government will oversee a change in leadership of the project to ensure maximum value for the taxpayer, while attracting private investment to

build a world-class station. This will release more than £6 billion to invest in transport projects right across the country, delivering road, rail and bus upgrades in communities that were never set to benefit from HS2.

So, the Prime Minister has today drawn a line under the spiralling costs of delivering HS2 in full, in recognition of the changed economic context and modern transport demands. Instead, the redirected funding will deliver the vital transport links that people want and need to get to work, take their children to school, access doctors' appointments and visit friends and family – connecting our great towns and cities while delivering real change to benefit the country and future generations.



UK announces £10 million humanitarian aid for civilians in Occupied Palestinian Territories

October

From: Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, and The Rt Hon James Cleverly MP

£10 million of humanitarian aid announced by the Prime Minister to support civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in response to escalating conflict.

- Prime Minister announces £10 million package of support for Palestinian civilians in response to escalating conflict
- funding is an increase of a third on existing aid and will provide essential relief items and services, such as food, water and emergency shelter to meet needs on the ground
- in statement to Parliament, PM makes clear the UK's unequivocal condemnation of Hamas' actions and support for Israel's right to self-defence in line with international law

Today [Monday 16 October] the Prime Minister has announced a further £10 million in humanitarian aid funding for civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), in response to the escalating conflict.

He made the announcement in a statement to the House of Commons,



in which he also reiterated the UK's condemnation of Hamas' actions in both Israel and Gaza, and called for immediate access for humanitarian organisations to be allowed to deliver life-saving aid.

This latest commitment is in response to the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, including shortages of key goods and widespread displacement due to the conflict.

This funding will allow trusted partners, including key UN agencies to provide essential relief items and services. These could include food, water and emergency shelter, depending on the needs on the ground.

The UK is also exploring options for moving humanitarian supplies closer to the region and is liaising with aid agencies in the region to ensure relief

supplies can be distributed as quickly and effectively as possible.

Speaking in Parliament, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said:

“I’m proud that we are a longstanding and significant provider of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. And I can announce today that we are increasing our aid by a third, with an additional £10 million of support.

An acute humanitarian crisis is unfolding, to which we must respond. We must support the Palestinian people – because they’re victims of Hamas too.”

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

“We are committed to supporting the Palestinian people – they are victims of Hamas too.

This funding will provide vital, lifesaving support to Palestinian civilians who are caught up in this conflict and are in desperate need of help.”

The UN estimates that over 1 million Palestinians have been displaced so far. Prior to the recent escalation of hostilities, the UN estimated that nearly 60% of people in Gaza already needed

humanitarian assistance, including over 1.5 million people in need of food assistance and 1.6 million in need of health and nutrition assistance.

Today’s announcement is a 37% uplift to the existing £27 million of UK funding this year which is already providing critical support to the region, including an extra £10 million announced by the Foreign Secretary during his visit last month. We will consider further support depending on the changing humanitarian needs on the ground.

The UK remains committed to mitigating

the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza while standing alongside the people of Israel against the terrorist group Hamas.

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have spoken to Israel, Egypt and other international partners about opening the Rafah crossing to allow urgent humanitarian aid into Gaza.

All UK aid funding to the OPTs undergoes rigorous oversight, and no funding goes to Hamas.



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Government announces support for flood-hit areas

October

From: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, and The Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP

Thousands of pounds of government funding to help communities recover from the impact of Storm Babet.

Communities impacted by flooding will benefit from thousands of pounds of government funding to help them recover from the impact of Storm Babet.

The Communities Secretary Michael Gove and Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey have announced support will be available to areas in England that have experienced exceptional localised flooding.

Under the measures announced today:

- Flooded households in affected areas can apply for up to £500 to give cash quickly to help with immediate costs.
- Households and businesses significantly affected by recent flooding will be eligible

for 100% council tax and business rates relief for at least 3 months.

- Small-to-medium sized businesses in affected areas will be eligible for up to £2,500 from the Business Recovery Grant to help them return quickly to business as usual.

- Eligible flood-hit property owners will be able to apply for up to £5,000 to help make their homes and businesses more resilient to future flooding via the Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant Scheme.

The support will be made available through a scheme known as the Flood Recovery Framework, which is used in exceptional circumstances to support

councils and communities following severe flooding.

Communities Secretary, Michael Gove MP said:

“The support I am announcing today will give those impacted by these terrible floods a helping hand so they can get back on their feet and recover from Storm Babet.

I will continue to work closely with our partners across government and councils to make sure we are doing all we can to support businesses and families who have had to face such challenging and upsetting circumstances.”



Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey said:

“My sympathies are with everyone who has experienced the devastating effects of flooding. I would like to thank our Environment Agency teams and first responders, with 62,000 properties already protected thanks to our flood defences.

Our Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant Scheme will soon be open to help residents better protect their property in the future, giving some peace of mind as they rebuild and repair.”

Environment Agency teams and first responders have been working round the clock on the ground with local partners to manage the risk of flooding, including operating flood defences, flood storage reservoirs and putting up temporary barriers where needed to help protect our communities. Around 62,000 properties have been protected thanks to the defences in place.

Funding for flood defences has increased with over 374,000 homes better protected since 2015 thanks to this investment, and the government is going even further by delivering a record £5.2 billion investment to better protect hundreds of thousands of properties.

Forests fit for the future – government funding announced for new forest research

November

From: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Forest Research, Forestry Commission, and Rebecca Pow MP

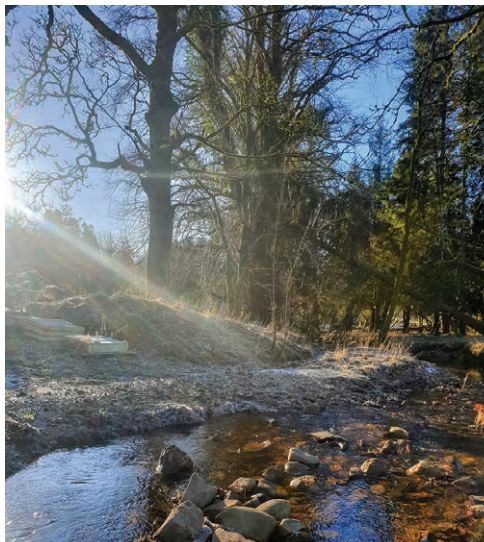
Healthy and resilient woodlands supported through new £16 million government funding.

UK research into climate and pest resilient woodlands is set to be boosted today with the announcement of £16 million government funding for our world-leading forest scientists.

Our trees are facing unprecedented challenges from the impacts of climate change to an increased risk of tree disease and pests – including ips beetles, Dutch elm disease and ash dieback. These kinds of diseases threaten valuable habitats for thousands of species of wildlife.

This funding will support vital research into ways to mitigate and prevent these impacts, helping to protect woodlands and plant more trees in the long term.

It comes ahead of Environment Secretary Steve Barclay setting out plans this week to improve access to green space, including a competition for a new National Forest and the unveiling of two new Community Forests – in



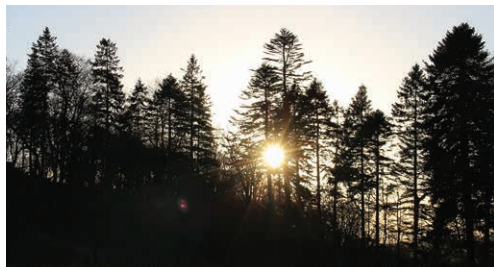
Derbyshire and the Tees.

The Forest Research programme will back 30 projects, working with 27 partner organisations. It will also support efforts to increase England's tree canopy – one of the government's key environment targets.

Projects benefiting from the funding include:

- Studying the complex networks of soil nutrients and plant roots to see how they help boost woodlands.
- Work to better understand how tree seeds can fall naturally and plant themselves
- Developing our understanding of how drought is impacting tree growth
- Examining the barriers to agroforestry, where trees and agricultural crops grow on the same piece of land

Forestry Minister Rebecca Pow said: "Not only do we need to plant trees, for tomorrow, we also need to support their long-term protection from the host of threats they face due a changing climate.



Today we are investing a further £16 million in vital research to help support the resilience of our trees and woodland as part of our ambitious plans to increase tree planting across the country."

Professor James Pendlebury, Chief Executive, Forest Research said: "This is a significant and welcome investment in the forest science and evidence needed to underpin the creation of resilient woodlands and their future management and protection. It is also a huge investment in the next generation of forest scientists who will support the development of forests and woodlands fit for the future."

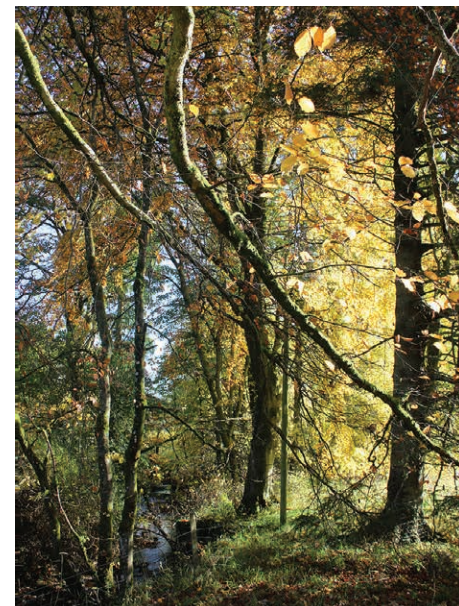
Forestry Commission Chair, Sir William Worsley, said: "Trees can only help mitigate the impact of a changing climate if they are resilient to those challenges themselves.

Forest Research will be vital to supporting tree planting activity through building the evidence base to inform and improve our management of trees and selection of resilient species for the future to increase woodland cover for future generations."

The Forest Research Trees and Forestry evidence programme will leave a lasting legacy, by providing strong scientific evidence to underpin our future forestry

policy and support long term action for expanding and managing our treescapes.

Our England Trees Action Plan and Environmental Improvement Plan set out ambitious targets to treble tree planting rates by the end of this Parliament and to achieve at least 16.5% of tree and woodland cover by 2050. Today's announcement supports the delivery of this ambitious programme and make sure we are using cutting edge science to make decisions.





Tree of Life fountain & static features incorporating inscribed leaf tributes to loved ones



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New UK and Germany partnership to boost renewable energy and bolster energy security

November

From: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
and The Rt Hon Claire Coutinho MP

UK Energy Security Secretary and German Vice Chancellor boost cooperation between nations on path to net zero.

- Agreement provides blueprint for cooperation on energy and climate, including clean technologies and security, between Europe's 2 largest economies
- partnership will bolster cooperation and remove regulatory barriers on renewables, especially offshore wind and North Sea electricity interconnection
- UK and Germany will share knowledge on industrial and buildings decarbonisation

A new partnership between the UK and German governments has been agreed today (Friday 3 November 2023) to help secure safe, affordable and clean energy for consumers in both nations for the long term and bolster energy security.

Under the new partnership signed in London by Energy Security Secretary Claire Coutinho and Germany's Vice Chancellor, Robert Habeck, the UK and Germany have reaffirmed their shared ambition and commitment to net zero and progressing the energy transition.

Europe's 2 largest economies have also doubled down on commitments made under the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.

The energy and climate partnership sees both countries commit to:

- enhance cooperation in renewables, notably offshore wind and electricity interconnection, to remove regulatory barriers and accelerate deployment of offshore hybrid projects
- share industry knowledge and expertise to improve the exploration of carbon capture, utilisation and storage, including the cross-border transport of CO₂

- strengthen and promote regional and global energy security, including discussions on winter preparedness, security of infrastructure and supply chains
 - share best practices and lessons learned on industrial, buildings and heat decarbonisation, energy efficiency and net zero policies and strategies
- Energy Security Secretary Claire Coutinho said:



“The UK and Germany agree on the importance of clean, affordable energy and we both recognise its crucial role in growing our economies and guaranteeing national and global energy security.

We are already working together in the North Sea to deliver our world-leading offshore wind ambitions, as well as linking our countries with subsea electricity cables.

Today’s agreement will see us extend and deepen our partnership to ensure we continue to lead Europe and the world in making the green transition.”

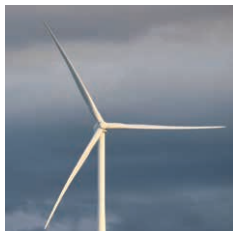
German Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action Robert Habeck said:

“Germany and the UK face similar challenges. We have made good progress regarding the transition towards climate neutrality, but there is still a long path ahead of us. Cooperation with reliable partners can help all partners to advance not only faster, but better.

We can learn from each other’s experiences, share knowledge and work together to reach our common goals. The joint declaration signed today builds upon a long history of cooperation and provides a sound framework for successfully working together in future.”

The energy and climate partnership incorporates the UK-Germany hydrogen partnership signed by Lord Callanan in September. This aims to accelerate the role of low carbon hydrogen - in particular from renewable sources – in both nations’ energy mix and commits to working together to develop the global hydrogen economy.

Germany was the UK’s second largest trading partner in the 4 quarters to the end of Q1 2023, accounting for 8% of total UK trade. British and German companies are already collaborating on joint projects in the North Sea and both countries have committed to maximise its renewables potential, most recently at the Ostend North Sea Summit.



In the field of offshore wind, around 75% of installed offshore wind capacity in the North Sea is in German and British waters. This is helping to drive the

UK’s ambition for up to 50GW of offshore wind, including up to 5GW of floating offshore wind, by 2030. Germany is aiming at installing 30GW by 2030.

The first phase of major construction of

the £2.4 billion NeuConnect project, the first subsea electricity cable between the UK and Germany, was completed this week. The project, once operational in 2028, has the potential to power up to 1.5 million homes in the UK and Germany over its lifetime with reliable, affordable and clean energy. When completed, it will be the second longest UK electricity power line with approximately 725km of land and subsea cables, connecting Kent and Wilhelmshaven.

Another interconnector project connecting the UK to Germany is currently in development and awaiting regulatory approval from Ofgem.

Beverley Cornaby, Director, Policy and Systems Change Collaborations, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL):

“Clean power generation is front-and-centre of the UK’s strategy to reach net zero by 2050. This partnership will support these aims by providing a blueprint on energy and climate between Europe’s 2 largest economies – helping the UK and Germany to bolster cooperation, remove regulatory barriers on renewables and share knowledge on industrial decarbonisation.”

Formal warning to council over four-day working week

November

From: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Lee Rowley MP

Serious concerns raised by the Government over how council is offering value for money.

A formal notice has been issued to South Cambridgeshire District Council to ensure taxpayers' money is well spent after concerns were raised over its four-day working week trial.

A Best Value Notice, issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, formally sets out government concerns around the council and whether the trial offers value for money, including the removal of up to a fifth of the authority's capacity.

It requests evidence on the trial to consider whether the council is meeting its Best Value Duty, including on: staffing; costs; service delivery; resident feedback;

overall performance since the start of the trial; should a four-day working week continue.

The Notice follows repeated requests from the Local Government Minister, Lee Rowley to end the trial, as well as the publication of guidance to the sector

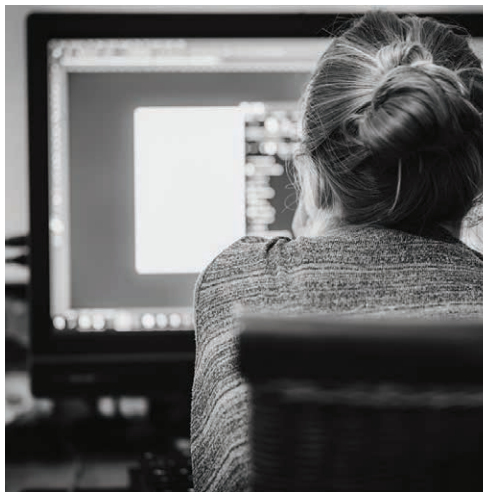
setting out why this practice should not be adopted.

Local Government Minister Lee Rowley said:

"We are extremely concerned South Cambridgeshire District Council continues to experiment with taxpayers' money by offering full time pay for part time work.

"We have been clear that the Government does not support the so-called four-day working week and, despite issuing clear guidance, this council has chosen to ignore it. The Government is making clear this needs to end and, although we hope not to have to, we will take further action should that prove to be necessary."

The Best Value Notice is a formal notification of South Cambridgeshire



District Council's compliance with its Best Value Duty under the Local Government Act 1999, and will remain in place for six months to cover the remainder of the trial and allow for further analysis.

The Department will review the Notice and determine whether further action is needed. It may be ended early or escalated at any point based on the available evidence. This could include the use of additional powers that the Secretary of State has to request information, or to inspect or intervene in the council.

Guidance issued to the sector last week set out the Government's position that removing 20% of a local authority's potential capacity does not offer value for money for residents. It makes clear that value for money for taxpayers is paramount and no further focus should be given by councils on this issue.

The Government continues to support an individual's right to request flexible working, which allows individual employees to apply for changes to the hours, timing, or location of work, which is clearly different to a blanket four-day working week on a full salary, across the whole organisation.

£74m investment to reduce water and air pollution from slurry

November

From: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and The Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP

A further £74 million is being made available to help farmers invest in improved slurry infrastructure to tackle water pollution, improve air quality and make better use of organic nutrients, the government has announced today (21 November 2023).

Applications are now open for the second round of the Slurry Infrastructure Grant which forms part of a total £200 million being invested in infrastructure and equipment to tackle agricultural pollution



from slurry over the agricultural transition period.

The second round has more than double the funding on offer than the first round of the scheme to help meet increased demand. Based on feedback from farmers, we are also making several improvements to the scheme, including how much storage pig farms can apply for, offering grants towards a slurry separator, and the option to retrofit covers onto existing stores.

Under the Slurry Infrastructure Grant, farmers can apply for grants of £25,000 to £250,000 to replace, expand, build extra and cover slurry stores, and fund equipment such as separators, reception pits and agitators.

The grant forms a key component of the government's Plan for Water

which sets out more investment, stronger regulation and tougher enforcement to tackle every source of water pollution. It also delivers on vital commitments under the Environmental Improvement Plan to reduce air pollution, halt biodiversity decline and support recovery of protected sites.

Farming Minister Mark Spencer said:

“We’re indebted to farmers who work day in day out to ensure we have great British food on our tables while protecting and shaping our countryside.

It’s vital they are supported to make the environmental improvements I know so many want to make. Our Slurry Infrastructure Grant is helping farmers to invest in infrastructure which is often costly but can deliver big benefits for our waterways and air quality, while also cutting their input costs.”

Livestock manure is a vital tool to increase organic matter in soil, supporting crop growth and helping farmers be more productive while reducing the need for artificial fertilisers.

Yet, spreading slurry when there is no crop or soil requirement, often due to insufficient storage capacity, can

cause significant pollution in rivers and waterways, as well as wasting a valuable resource and increasing costs for farmers. Open slurry stores and broadcast spreading also release large amounts of ammonia which harms vulnerable species and damages human health.

The grant will enable more farmers to go beyond existing storage requirements, supporting better compliance with regulation and more effective use of organic nutrients. It is part of the government’s commitment to tackle nutrient pollution at source and grants will continue to be prioritised in areas near protected sites with ammonia pressures in nutrient neutrality catchments. This comes as Defra and Natural England continue to support developers and local planning authorities to mitigate the impact of nutrient pollution from wastewater from new housing developments and enable sustainable development to proceed.



Joe Dewhirst, a recipient of the first round of the Slurry Infrastructure Grant, said:

“The Slurry Infrastructure Grant is helping me replace my old earth banked slurry lagoon with a new precast circular slurry store, which will help me manage my slurry better and reduce emissions from the farm.”

This grant comes ahead of the launch of two further rounds of the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund in early 2024 and 2025, offering £21 million for smaller items of equipment to help farmers manage slurry, from nutrient testing kits to low emission spreaders.

The new funding builds on work already being taken forward by farmers in the government’s Countryside Stewardship scheme such as separating dirty water and effluent from rainwater through roofing over manure stores to prevent contamination. Farmers can also apply for complementary options under the Sustainable Farming Incentive, including support to produce a Nutrient Management Plan, establish multi-species winter cover and buffer strips.

Thousands of homes to be kept warm by waste heat from computer data centres in UK first

November

From: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero,
The Rt Hon Claire Coutinho MP, and Lord Callanan

More homes and businesses to benefit from cleaner, low-cost heating - thanks to almost £65 million in government support for 5 green energy projects.

- Five innovative projects receive share of nearly £65 million to deliver cleaner, low-cost heating to thousands of homes and businesses
- low carbon housing estate of the future will use waste heat from data centres to provide heating and hot water to more than 10,000 homes
- new heat networks will create thousands of skilled jobs across England

Thousands of homes will be kept warm by waste heat from nearby data centres for the first time in the UK – thanks to a share of nearly £65 million of government funding for 5 green heating projects across the country.

The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation in the London boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Brent and Ealing will be the first of its kind to recycle waste heat from large computer systems storing internet data to supply heating for the local community.

The heat network, backed by £36 million in government support, will connect 10,000 new homes and 250,000m² of commercial space to a low-carbon energy source that



will help keep bills low and contribute to the UK's drive to reach net zero by 2050.

It is one of 5 innovative green heating projects in London, Watford, Suffolk and Lancaster allocated grants from the Green Heat Network Fund. Together they are expected to create thousands of skilled jobs, helping deliver the government's promise to grow the economy.

One of these successful projects will see Lancaster University fully decarbonise its campus, by receiving over £21 million in support for a new low-carbon heat network. The heat network will supply heat to the university campus using a large heat pump, powered by a new solar farm and existing wind turbine.

Energy Security Secretary Claire Coutinho said:

"Innovative projects, like these

announced today, are another example of why the UK is a world leader in cutting carbon emissions.

We are investing in the technologies of the future so that families across the country will now be able to warm their homes with low-carbon, recycled heat - while creating thousands of new skilled jobs.”

Lord Callanan, Minister for Energy Efficiency and Green Finance, said:

“Keeping homes warm with waste heat from technology is a glimpse into the future - and demonstrates just how innovative this country can be when it comes to reducing our carbon emissions.

The £65 million we’ve awarded today will help spread this success across the country, by rolling out innovative low-carbon heating to help to drive down energy bills and deliver our net zero goal.”

Heat networks supply heating and hot water to homes and businesses via heat pumps or sources from underground, manufacturing, and waste management. They help cut carbon emissions by supplying heat to multiple buildings from a central source, avoiding the need for households and workplaces to rely on individual, energy-intensive heating solutions, such as gas boilers.

The transition to heat networks forms a major part of the UK’s carbon reduction commitment, with heating in buildings making up 30% of all UK emissions.

Today’s round of funding comes on top of £122 million already awarded to support 11 new heat network projects across the country, under the government’s Green Heat Network Fund.

The full list of projects to receive support today are:

- Old Oak Park Royal Development Corporation will receive £36 million to construct a heat network using waste heat from data centres to provide heating to over 10,000 homes and 250,000m2 of commercial space
- a new heat pump housing estate in Chilton Woods, Suffolk will see nearly 1,000 homes and a primary school provided with low carbon heating. The project, which has received £745,000, will also include a thermal store, meaning any excess energy generated from the system will be fed into the wider National Grid
- the London Borough of Brent will receive nearly £5.2 million for the South Kilburn District Heat Network, supplying heat using air source heat pumps combined with back up gas boilers to 34 sites via a 2.79km pipe network, connecting 2,900 customers.

- Watford Community Housing (WCH), a not-for-profit housing association with approximately 5,700 homes, will receive £1.8 million of funding to replace an old gas district heating system with ground source and air source heat pumps. This will provide heat to 252 apartments across 6 blocks

- Lancaster University will receive more than £21 million to fully decarbonise its campus with a low carbon energy centre. The centre will use air source heat pumps, thermal storage and electrical infrastructure works

Matthew Basnett, the Association for Decentralised Energy’s (ADE) Heat Network Policy Lead, said:

“Heat decarbonisation in buildings is



a huge challenge, and one that is often fundamentally misunderstood - heat networks are the only internationally proven route for decarbonising heat at scale, yet most people don't know what they are.

We are excited to see that another round of the Green Heat Network Fund has been successful, and celebrate the news that a first-in-the-UK development will use waste heat from data centres to keep more than 10,000 homes warm, comfortable and affordable in the long term. We now look forward to seeing the government work with industry to raise the profile of heat networks as a versatile solution for heat decarbonisation."

David Lunts, Chief Executive of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC), said:

"Recycling the huge amounts of wasted heat from our local data centres into heat and energy for local residents, a major hospital and other users is an exciting and innovative example of OPDC's support for the mayor's net zero ambitions."

We are excited to be leading the way in developing low carbon infrastructure, supporting current and future generations of Londoners in Old Oak and Park Royal to live more sustainably."

UK government leads the way towards decarbonising air travel as new global agreement takes flight

November

From: Department for Transport and Anthony Browne MP

Framework agreed by the international aviation sector to reduce aviation fuel emissions by 5% by 2030.

- the UK government has helped lead the global community to agreement to reduce emissions from aviation fuel by 5% by 2030 to help drive international aviation to a sustainable future

- the UK continues to be a leader in the transition towards cleaner flying and today's agreement is a further step towards defining how sustainable aviation



fuel helps us achieve net zero by 2050

- as the world looks to COP28 in Dubai next week, a new framework will enable countries across the world to develop their own SAF industries, turning cleaner flying into a reality worldwide

The world's aviation community has come together in Dubai this week and agreed a key next step today (24 November 2023) towards the decarbonisation of our skies.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) reached a compromise agreement, at its Third Conference on Aviation Alternative Fuels (CAAF/3) to a framework to reduce emissions from aviation fuel by 5% by 2030. Contributing to the global aviation sector's aim to reach net zero emissions by 2050, today's agreement confirms countries'

commitment to scale up the use of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF).

Today's agreement outlines the support available to those countries at the beginning of their SAF journey and enables them to take part in the global aviation energy transition. It's only through a shared global ambition that we can scale up and build the industry we need for the future.

The framework includes a new global target to reduce emissions by 5% by 2030 using cleaner fuels. This is underpinned by a comprehensive package of policies and supporting measures to ensure all regions of the world can start producing and using SAF as soon as possible.

The UK played a leading role in the negotiations and, working with our allies, stressed the importance of achieving our collective global aspirations on decarbonisation.

The UK remains committed to further action in this area, with our domestic SAF mandate requiring 10% SAF in the UK fuel mix by 2030, delivering a 7% reduction in carbon emissions. Last week, we announced a further £53 million from our Advanced Fuels Fund to scale up the UK SAF industry and

help see 5 commercial SAF plants under construction by 2025. We also launched the UK Clearing House, a national hub to support the testing and approval of new advanced fuels for aviation.

UK Aviation Minister, Anthony Browne, said:

"Sustainable aviation is a promise that the global sector wants to make a reality – that's why today's agreement is so important – not only giving a renewed commitment to delivering a net zero future, but outlining the next steps in the industry's flightpath towards it.

While the UK sought to secure greater ambition, this is a significant moment in our path to sustainable flying. The UK remains steadfast in its commitment to decarbonise international aviation.

This deal shows that, when the world comes together and cooperates, we can bring about real change."

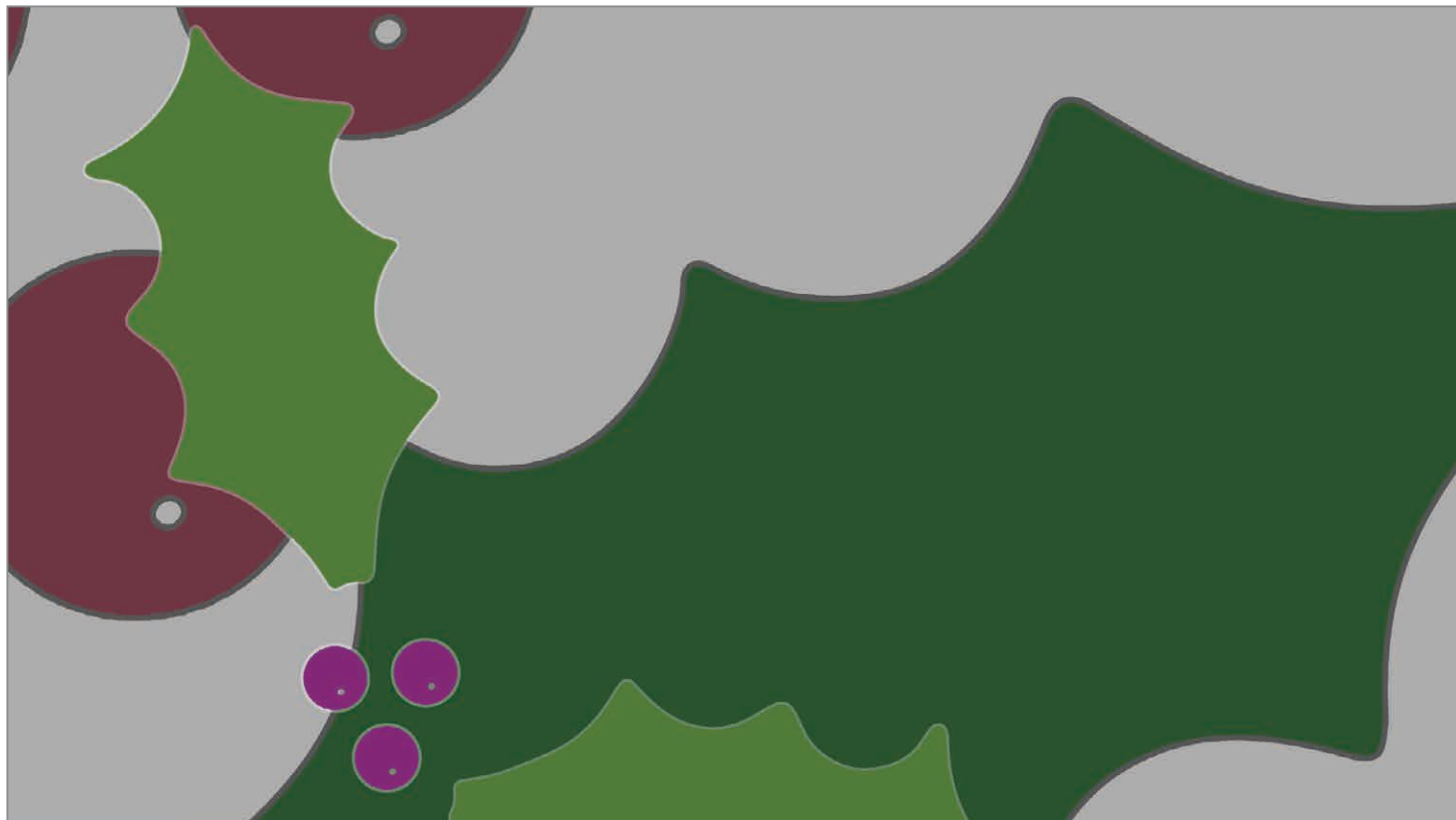
Demonstrating the UK's climate leadership, Aviation Minister Anthony Browne chaired a meeting of the UK-convened International Aviation Climate Ambition Coalition and addressed the conference on the opening day. The coalition has a diverse membership of

62 governments and organisations committed to leading the way to net zero aviation by 2050.

The agreement reached provides clear, short-term direction for both investors and operators who are already transitioning and gives confidence to those looking to invest in cleaner aviation fuels. ICAO will reconvene by 2028 to further bolster and build upon the agreements set out today.

A future of sustainable flying is already becoming a reality as the industry gears up for the first 100% SAF-powered transatlantic flight, with up to £1 million of support from government. The flight, operated by Virgin Atlantic in partnership with technical partners, will fly from London Heathrow to John F. Kennedy International Airport on 28 November 2023.





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UK leads global action to protect rainforests, cut methane emissions and advance low carbon technologies

December

From: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and The Rt Hon Claire Coutinho MP

UK commits more than £85 million funding at COP28 to tackle deforestation and cut methane emissions.

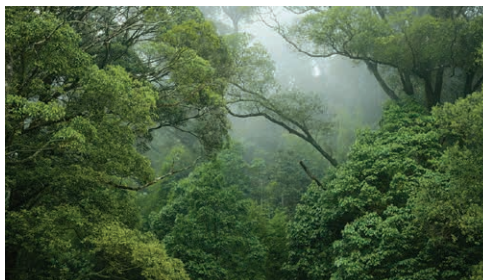
- Energy Security Secretary Claire Coutinho announces over £85 million dedicated funding to tackle climate change at COP28 in Dubai
- package includes support for developing countries to cut carbon emissions
- UK to sign unique partnerships with Brazil on hydrogen and decarbonising heavy industry
- new international pledge on nuclear signed alongside US and France

The UK will today announce a multi-million pound package of measures to protect the world's rainforests, encourage investment in clean energy technologies and help

developing countries cut their carbon emissions.

At COP28 in Dubai, Energy Security Secretary Claire Coutinho will commit over £85 million funding for initiatives ranging from combating deforestation to cutting methane emissions and will sign new clean energy agreements with international partners, including Brazil, the US and countries across Europe.

The funding includes up to £35 million to protect the Amazon rainforest through Brazil's dedicated Amazon Fund, agreed on Friday. This would be on top of £80



million announced by the Prime Minister earlier this year, placing the UK among the fund's top 3 contributors.

Other measures include:

- **backing green enterprise** – up to £40 million new funding to expand the UK's Climate Finance Accelerator. The Accelerator aims to provide practical ways to help countries finance and deliver their climate commitments under the Paris Agreement. For example, this has helped start-up company Source Global attract £79 million of investment to make hydropanels that use solar energy to produce drinking water from air moisture. The extra funding, agreed on Friday, will support up to 750 new low carbon projects in up to 16 countries across Latin America, Africa and Asia between now and 2029
- **cutting emissions** – £2 million

support for President Biden's Methane Finance Sprint, alongside the European Union, Canada, and other international partners. Contributions to the Sprint will support projects in developing countries, helping them to reduce emissions in major methane emitting sectors such as energy, agriculture, and waste. This is part of a wider £12 million package for the International Energy Agency's programme to accelerate the transition to clean energy

- **Brazil partnerships** – 2 unique partnerships between the UK and Brazil to speed up the South American country's transition to clean technologies. The agreements will help Brazil cut emissions from heavy industry, support the development of hydrogen technologies and leverage the strength of both countries by bringing together a global package of financial, technical and other specialist assistance

- **nuclear pledge** – the UK will endorse a global ambition to treble civil nuclear power capacity between 2020 and 2050, alongside other like-minded nations including the US and France, helping combat climate change and improve energy security. This builds on the government's commitment for a quarter of the UK's power to come from nuclear by 2050

Energy Security Secretary Claire Coutinho said:

The UK is a world leader in the drive to net zero, so it is vital we support our international allies like Brazil in meeting their climate ambitions.

That's why we have pledged up to £35 million to help stop deforestation in the Amazon, making the UK one of the largest contributors to the Amazon Fund.

We will also partner with Brazil at COP28 and draw on our combined strengths to develop alternative fuels like hydrogen, advance green technologies and drive global action to cut emissions.

The first agreement with Brazil will boost efforts to cut carbon emissions from heavy industries including steel, cement and chemicals – which are set to become responsible for the largest share of global emissions in the 2030s. Measures to do this will include implementing new



technologies, piloting the use of alternative fuels and enhancing energy efficiency.

The second will see the UK support Brazil's National Hydrogen Programme, which is aiming for a sevenfold increase in research and development in clean hydrogen-related technologies between 2020 and 2025. This could support multiple sector transitions to net zero including heavy industry and maritime.

The COP28 President Dr Sultan Al Jaber is also expected to launch a 12-month Action Plan under the UK's COP26-initiated Breakthrough Agenda – which has become an established part of the international COP framework.

Alongside a coalition of 56 governments, led by the United Arab Emirates, the UK, the US, India, Morocco, Canada, Germany, Egypt and France, the global Action Plan is designed to accelerate international collaborative action to lower the cost of clean technologies in the power, road transport, steel, hydrogen, and agriculture sectors – and ensure the world is on track to halve emissions by 2030.

New legislation set to ban live animal exports

December

From: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP

New legislation will put an end to the export of live animals for slaughter and fattening from Great Britain.

The Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill – which has been introduced in Parliament today (4 December 2023) – delivers on a key manifesto commitment to ban the export of live animals including cattle, sheep, and pigs.

This legislation is only possible now we have left the European Union and will stop animals enduring unnecessary

stress, exhaustion and injury on long journeys.

As the highest ranked G7 nation according to World Animal Protection's Index, the Government is committed to high animal welfare standards and ensuring all animals are treated kindly at all stages of life. We have been clear that animals should only be transported when necessary, and if possible should not travel long distances to be slaughtered.

The Bill will ensure that animals are slaughtered domestically in high welfare UK slaughterhouses, reinforcing our position as a world leader on animal welfare, boosting the value of British meat and helping to grow the economy.

Environment Secretary Steve Barclay said:

We have some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world.

This Bill makes use of post-Brexit freedoms to strengthen these standards by preventing the export of live animals for slaughter and fattening, which we know causes animals unnecessary stress and injury.

The legislation follows a 2020 consultation on ending live animal exports in which 87% of respondents agreed that livestock should not be exported for slaughter and fattening. This Bill also follows a manifesto commitment and Action Plan for Animal Welfare pledge to ban the export of live animals for slaughter and fattening.

Kerry Postlewhite, assistant director of campaigns and prevention at the RSPCA, said:
After fifty years of campaigning to end live exports, it is so important, and welcome, that the UK Government is



acting to ban the live export of animals - outlawing the long, crowded journeys, mental exhaustion, physical injury, dehydration and stress that are a reality for farm animals on these unnecessary journeys.

It is great that the new Defra Secretary of State has shown such strong and enthusiastic support previously for a ban on live exports - and we look forward to this policy becoming a reality.

Philip Lymbery, Compassion in World Farming's Global CEO, said:
We greatly welcome the publication of legislation to ban live exports. This is an historic moment which we hope will finally see an end to the unnecessary export trade in cattle and sheep for slaughter or fattening from Great Britain. We urge a speedy passage for this long-awaited measure, to ensure that the export of unweaned calves on journeys often lasting 60 hours or more will finally be banned. And that a line will be drawn

under the practice of sending sheep on journeys that can last many days, simply to be slaughtered on arrival.

We have campaigned relentlessly for over 50 years to make this cruel and outdated practice illegal, so we are delighted the Government is taking action to end this trade, finally consigning it to the history books.

Roly Owers, Chief Executive of World Horse Welfare, said:
We are delighted that the government has introduced this Bill and will put its muscle behind making it law. We know horses are being exported for slaughter 'under the radar' despite none being officially declared for this purpose. This Bill will finally make it illegal, something we have been campaigning for since our charity's foundation almost 100 years ago. We look forward to working with Defra to ensure that the right measures are put in place to enforce this hugely significant piece of legislation.

Live exports in other specific circumstances, for example, for breeding and competitions, will still be allowed provided animals are transported in line with legal requirements aimed at protecting their welfare.

The Bill is just one part of a wider Government effort to enhance our existing world-leading standards. For farm animals, we have introduced new statutory welfare codes for pigs, laying hens and meat chickens, banned the use of conventional battery cages for laying hens and made CCTV mandatory in slaughterhouses.

Since publishing the Action Plan for Animal Welfare in 2021, we have: brought in new laws to recognise animals sentience, introduced tougher penalties for animal cruelty offences, backed a ban on glue traps, introduced legislation on compulsory cat microchipping, and brought the ivory ban into force and announced an extension to cover other ivory bearing species.

The full list of animals covered by the Bill is: cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and horses.



Low-income households to receive over £2 billion in further cost of living support

December

From: Department for Work and Pensions

- Around 8 million households to receive £299 Cost of Living payment between Tuesday 6 February and Thursday 22 February

- Follows Autumn Statement where Chancellor delivered additional cost of living support to most vulnerable as well as tax cuts for hardworking families

- Comes as Government turns a corner on the economy and Work and Pensions Secretary ushers in next generation of welfare reforms

Around 8 million eligible households across the UK are set to receive a £299 Cost of Living Payment in February, as the Government unveiled its plans to reward work, reform welfare and grow the economy.

The third of up to three Cost of Living

Payments will be made to eligible people on means-tested benefits between 6 February and 22 February and is part of a support package that has helped millions of households since July 2022.

The payments come as the Government announced £104 billion will be spent on cost of living support between 2022 and 2025 in November's Autumn Statement – worth around £3,700 per household.



Measures include:

- Up-rating benefits by 6.7%
- Increasing the state pension by 8.5%
- Increasing the Local Housing Allowance by £7 billion

Our economy has turned a corner, and we are moving away from the big government, high spending, high borrowing, and high tax approach that was necessary before, and focusing on the long-term decisions required to strengthen our economy and give people the opportunity to build a wealthier, more secure life for themselves and their family.

As part of this, we announced that millions of the most in need will benefit from DWP's next generation welfare reforms, including unprecedented employment and health support.

Mel Stride, Secretary of State for Work



We will always protect the most vulnerable, while ensuring fairness for the taxpayer. We know that the best way to secure long-term financial security is through employment, so we're rolling out the next generation of welfare reforms to put thousands more people on a pathway off benefits and into work."

Jeremy Hunt, Chancellor of the Exchequer, added:

"Inflation has halved, but I know some families are particularly vulnerable to cost of living pressures, which is why these payments are so important."

The best way we can help families is by getting more people into good jobs, including through our Back to Work Plan

This government's drive to help the most vulnerable has seen 1.7 million fewer households in poverty than in 2010. As part of this support, the Local Housing Allowance increase, which will benefit thousands, comes into force in April 2024. The £7 billion investment over five years will benefit around 1.6 million households who will be around £800 a year better off.

The DWP also continues to encourage low-income pensioners not already getting Pension Credit to check their eligibility, as they could still qualify for the cost-of-living payment in February.



Eligible people urged to get vaccinated as flu cases rise

December

From: UK Health Security Agency

This week's UKHSA surveillance data shows the sharpest weekly increase in flu activity so far this winter, signalling flu season is officially underway.

All those eligible for the flu vaccine are being urged to come forward as the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) published data showing a significant increase in the number of recorded flu cases.

The latest UKHSA data also shows there has been an increase in emergency department flu attendances and hospital admissions in the last week.

So far this year, flu vaccine uptake in eligible groups is similar to the last couple of years, although there is a particular need for pre-schoolers, pregnant women and those in the health and social care workforces to take up the offer.

From 4 to 10 December 2023, the UKHSA national influenza and COVID-19 surveillance report showed that:

- there was a notable increase in influenza positivity to 5.6%, up from 2.4% in the previous week, based on data from Respiratory DataMart
- primary care surveillance indicated a rise in influenza-like-illness (ILI) consultations to 5.3 per 100,000, compared to 4.6 per 100,000 in the previous week



• influenza hospitalisations increased, including a rise in emergency department attendances across the country. There was also an uptick in intensive care unit (ICU) or high dependency unit (HDU) admissions, with 35 new admissions in week 49

• weekly influenza vaccine uptake for the 2023 to 2024 season showed higher rates for those aged 2 years, comparable rates for those aged 3 years and lower rates for those aged 65 years and over, pregnant women, and those under 65 years in clinical risk groups compared to the equivalent week in the previous season (2022 to 2023)

Those aged 2 and 3 years are eligible for nasal spray flu vaccines, with parents and guardians also urged to book appointments to ensure the younger age group is protected.

With both flu and COVID-19 cases both circulating this winter, it is also vital all those eligible get both vaccines as soon as possible.

Due to the increase in levels of flu circulating in the community, UKHSA has recommended that it is now appropriate for antiviral medicines to be prescribed in primary care settings.

Those eligible for antivirals if they have flu include patients in clinical at-risk groups as well as any who are at risk of severe illness and complications from flu if not treated. This includes people in those groups who present with symptoms of flu and those who have been exposed to flu-like illnesses from someone they live with, including residents of care homes.

As has happened in flu seasons before the pandemic, following an UKHSA recommendation, the Chief Medical Officer together with the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer have issued an alert to the NHS notifying the healthcare system that antiviral medicines can now be prescribed and supplied for cases of community acquired influenza.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Director for Immunisation and Programmes at UKHSA, said:

“Flu levels are on the rise, so get your vaccine now to make sure that you are Winter Strong, and before pharmacies and surgeries begin to close for the Christmas period. Pregnant women, their unborn babies and those in clinical risk groups are at higher risk of complication from flu. Taking up both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines provides the best protection for both pregnant women and their baby, reducing the risk of severe complications, intensive care needs, stillbirth, and prematurity.

If you are the parent of a child aged 2 or 3 years, don't forget that they are also eligible for the flu vaccine and this can be booked via your GP – the nasal spray will help prevent hospitalisations, reduce the spread of flu in the community and avoid you having to juggle a sick child with work and other commitments.



The NHS national booking system is closed. But eligible persons can still continue to speak to their GP, or alternatively a local pharmacist about getting their vaccination.

Flu antivirals are effective in helping to keep people out of hospital and preventing the virus spreading to other more vulnerable household and family members. Now that we are seeing flu increasing it's important that GPs consider the possibility of flu in respiratory patients and the use of antivirals in line with national guidance, particularly if they have ruled out COVID-19.

You can help reduce the spread of these infections by avoiding mixing with others where possible when showing signs of a respiratory illness like flu and COVID-19, particularly those who are more vulnerable.”

Deputy Chief Medical Officer
Professor Thomas Waite said:

“The latest data indicates the flu season is very much underway and COVID-19 infections are increasing.

The use of antivirals against flu in primary care will help protect the

most vulnerable over the winter. If you are eligible and have not managed to get vaccinated yet, now is the time.”

Health Minister Maria Caulfield said:

“Authorising the use of antivirals indicates that flu is reaching more serious levels so it is important that we take care. I’d encourage anyone eligible who is yet to come forward for the vaccine to book an appointment and get protected as soon as possible.

These additional tools will help us relieve the pressure on our NHS as they cope with the busy Christmas and New Year periods and will provide extra protection not just for you but also for your loved ones.”

The alert concerning flu antiviral medicine has been issued to primary care settings including GPs and community pharmacies in England.

The Department of Health and Social Care continues to work closely with the manufacturers of antiviral medicines, used in the treatment of flu, to monitor stocks and ensure that there are adequate supplies of these medicines available to meet UK demand.

Compensation paid to over 2,700 claimants across Post Office compensation schemes

December

From: Department for Business and Trade and Kevin Hollinrake MP

- New data reveals 27 overturned conviction claimants from Horizon Scandal have agreed full and final settlements
- 100% of original Horizon Shortfall Scheme claimants have also now been issued offers
- The Post Office Compensation Bill continues expedited passage through Parliament

The government has today [Tuesday 19 December] announced that circa £138m has so far been paid out to over 2,700 claimants across the three Post Office compensation schemes.

These figures have been announced as part of the government’s Post Office Compensation Bill which is expected to conclude its passage through the House of Commons today.

So far, 93 convictions have been overturned and it has been confirmed that the first 27 claims have agreed full and final settlements.

There has also been progress made on payments made for the 500 trailblazing postmasters who took the Post Office to court and exposed the Horizon Scandal has already paid out £27 million across 475 claimants. This includes 11 full and final settlements. A further 10 full and final settlements have been accepted, bringing the total number of accepted full and final settlements to 21.

The full 2,417 postmasters who claimed through the original Horizon Shortfall Scheme have now all had offers of compensation. £87 million has been paid out. The Post Office is now dealing with late applications and with those cases where the initial offer was not accepted.



Minister for Postal Affairs Kevin Hollinrake said:

“Today’s new data on Post Office compensation is a step in the right direction to making sure every postmaster gets the justice and compensation that they have waited too long for.

It is important that everyone knows the truth about what happened, and that steps are being taken to right the wrongs of the past. Truth and accountability are one part of providing justice, and the other part is compensation.”

The Post Office Horizon Scandal started in the 1990s and its impacts are still felt today.

This government is committed to delivering justice for all Horizon victims, which is why it set up the statutory inquiry chaired by Sir Wyn Williams.

We have also created the Horizon Compensation Advisory Board to help make sure all compensation is fair and just. Reports from the Advisory Board are published on gov.uk.

After today, the Post Office Compensation Bill, which will allow compensation to be paid under the Group Litigation Order (GLO) scheme past the 2024 deadline if needed, is expected to progress to the House of Lords for debate before securing Royal Assent in the new year.

England among highest performing western countries in education

December

From: Department for Education and The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP

Pupils in England have risen up the international rankings for maths, placing England as one of the top performing countries in the western world.



A worldwide education study published today (5 December 2023) shows England has significantly outperformed the international average and risen from 17th for maths in 2018 to 11th, and from 27th in 2009.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international assessment of 15-year-olds’ mathematics, reading and science ability. Conducted by the OECD, it is widely accepted as the international benchmark for academic attainment for secondary school pupils.

These strong results demonstrate that the government has made real progress in driving up standards. We are determined to build on this success and take the long-term decisions necessary to improve

attainment for generations to come.

This is why in October, the Prime Minister set out a bold new plan to introduce a new baccalaureate style qualification – the advanced British standard (ABS) – that we will see every student in England study some form of maths and English to age 18, giving them the skills they need to succeed. As part of this, the government has already announced an investment of £60 million over two years to further improve maths education and help lay the groundwork for the introduction of the ABS.

Today's results also show that England has ranked 13th for both reading and science, having been placed at 14th and 13th respectively in 2018 and 25th and



16th in 2009.

They build on England's significantly improved position for 9- to 10-year-olds reading ability in a separate international study earlier this year, PIRLS, in which English children were ranked fourth out of 43 comparable countries – making them the best in the West.

Education standards have risen sharply since 2010, with 89% of schools now rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, up from just 68% 13 years ago.

Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan, said:

"These results are a testament to our incredible teachers, the hard work of students and to the government's unrelenting drive to raise school standards over the past 13 years.

"Taken together with our children being named 'Best in the West' for reading earlier this year, England is now firmly cemented as one of the top performing countries for education in the western world.

"Our teachers, head teachers and support staff should be incredibly proud of their role, day in and day out,

transforming education standards in this country and giving our children the platform to build successful careers and compete for the best jobs in world."

Aside from attainment, the report has also highlighted other positives findings, including that England's education system is more equitable that most– meaning that all children all have access to a brilliant education and a chance of success, no matter their background.

Additionally, the report found that pupils in England were generally more



positive about the quality of their maths lessons and the support given by their teachers, than the OECD average.

The government has enjoyed considerable success for maths over the years, with England achieving our highest ever score in primary school maths in TIMSS 2019. Over £100 million has been invested in the Maths Hubs programme, whose flagship Teaching for Mastery offer will have reached 65% of secondary schools by 2025. To help boost maths attainment further, the Government also announced the creation of a new National Professional Qualification in April to help embed best practice in their schools.

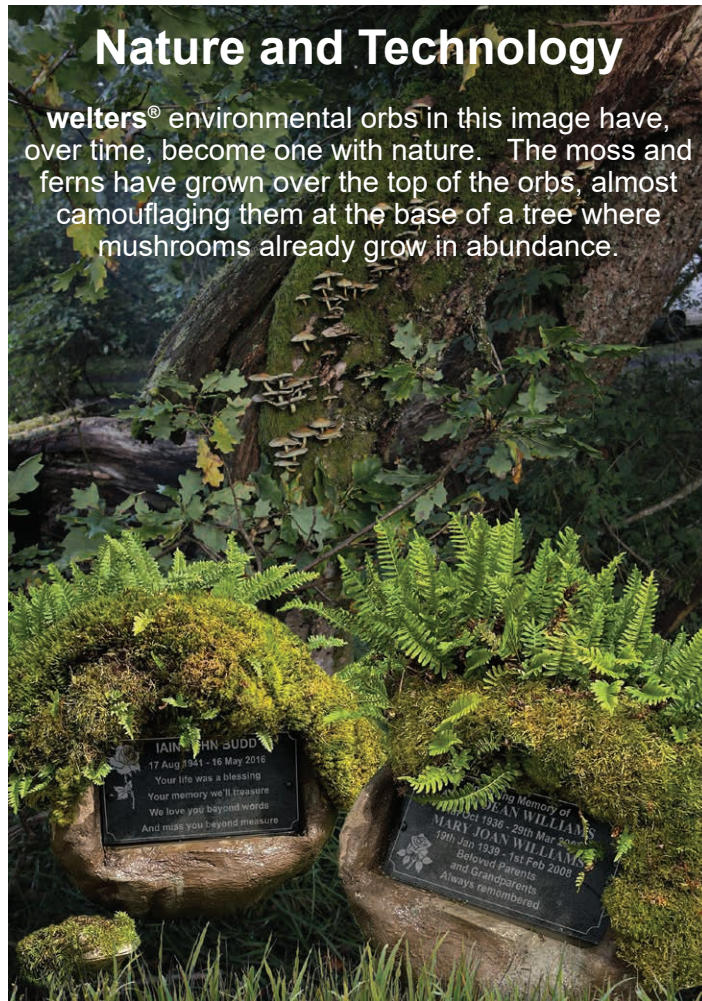
The report does highlight the challenge of the pandemic. In England, pupils have been supported to catch up with almost £5 billion available for education recovery measures, including more than £1 billion for the National Tutoring Programme alone, which has revolutionised the way targeted support is provided for the children and young people who need it most.

The report also found that the majority of pupils in England reported feeling safe in their schools.



Nature and Technology

welters® environmental orbs in this image have, over time, become one with nature. The moss and ferns have grown over the top of the orbs, almost camouflaging them at the base of a tree where mushrooms already grow in abundance.



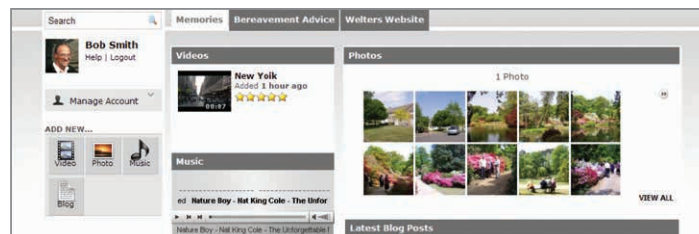


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Timber Harvesting - what is happening?

This is the final opportunity for our readership to submit their own experiences of the timber trade as it applies to afforestation.



Mass quantities of felled logs on cleared land



The remains of felled trees on now barren land



The increased use of timber quite appropriately has an extremely positive effect in the global climate consideration but the implication to us all of this enhanced growth and distribution traffic must be considered.

New article due to be released in the next edition of Welters World.



Felled logs in front of full grown trees



Transportation by rail for biomass and other uses



Transportation on rural roads



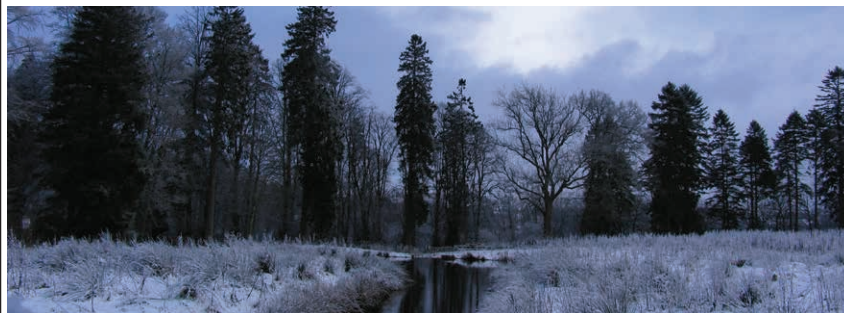
Logs being moved and stored for further use



Logs being prepared for cutting and shaping into planks for sale

Forthcoming articles under consideration

- What is really happening to our recycled waste?
- How are new technologies being introduced to improve the NHS?
- Levelling up. What exactly does it mean and how will it affect us personally?
- Mr Bates vs The Post Office. How are those affected by the Horizon scandal doing now and have they/will they get their money back?
- Climate change. What can we really do at home to help?



considered by our Editorial Department for the Autumn edition as alternatives to the final chosen cover

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