

News story: Chairman of Natural England speaks at the Game Fair

Andrew Sells today (Friday 26 July) welcomed efforts by the shooting community to safeguard and conserve hundreds of hectares of land for wildlife, when he spoke at the Game Fair. The Chair of Natural England said despite this work “more needs to be done to ensure there is a balance between shooting and conservation.”

He said:

Sustainably-managed shoots are safeguarding wildlife like curlews and lapwings, reducing flood risk and storing carbon.

Natural England will sign a second agreement with the British Association for Shooting and Conservation this weekend placing sustainable land management at the heart of BASC’s mission and recognising that 70 per cent of land managed by those affiliated to the shooting organisation are Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI).

However, he sounded a note of caution arguing that not all shoots are doing enough to protect the environment from damage.

He said:

Too many shoots seem to have lost sight of the balance between shooting and conservation and the natural environment. Has the size of the day’s bag become the dominant consideration? Are some shoots damaging, rather than enhancing, our natural environment? If so, I hope we can work together to eliminate any such practices.

And the recent terrible wildfires near Manchester have shown moorland managers and keepers bravely joining forces with firefighters to limit environmental damage. I applaud their tireless efforts.

We are also seeing more estates coming into partnership agreements with NE, voluntarily finding ways to enhance environment. These deepening relationships will be vital in joining up prime wildlife sites and achieving goals of 25 Year Environment Plan.

Press release: New parents could miss out on almost £500 from their tax credits

Thousands of parents could be at risk of missing out on hundreds of pounds from their tax credits by accidentally reporting their income incorrectly.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is urging parents to check their income to avoid potentially missing out on an average of £495 a year. Many tax credits claimants who receive statutory maternity pay do not realise that some of this pay should be deducted from their gross pay when their tax credits awards are calculated.

As well as maternity pay, parents can deduct any payments they have received for statutory paternity, shared parental or adoption pay up to a value of £100 a week.

HMRC estimates that parents who did not deduct their statutory maternity pay from their income could have been entitled to on average an extra £495 across the year. Around 35,000 people could potentially be missing out. [A full list of what can be deducted is available on GOV.UK.](#)

Parents need to make sure they renew their claim before the 31 July deadline for tax credits renewals.

Tax credits help working families with targeted support and more than 65,000 customers this year have already used the app to renew their tax credits, compared to 38,411 customers in 2017.

All online customers can now log into GOV.UK to check the progress of their renewal so they can be reassured it's being worked on and know when they'll hear back from HMRC.

Angela MacDonald, HMRC's Director General for Customer Services, said:

We want to make sure all our customers get all the help they're entitled to when they renew their tax credits.

As the 31 July deadline for tax credits renewals approaches, we want to ensure nobody misses out. That's why we're urging parents to make sure they remember to deduct payments for statutory maternity pay, paternity pay, and adoption pay.

Online help and information on renewing tax credits is available on [GOV.UK](#) and via HMRC's customer service Twitter feed [@HMRCcustomers](#). Support is also available on the tax credits helpline.

Further information

1. The deadline for people to renew their tax credits is 31 July 2018. Failure to renew before the deadline will mean payments are stopped and customers may have to repay the money they have received since April.
2. This only applies to current awards. HMRC is unable to adjust finalised awards made in previous years.
3. Claimants can get help and information on renewing tax credits:
4. Follow HMRC's Press Office on [Twitter](#)
5. [HMRC's Flickr channel](#)

Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on the Pakistan election

I congratulate the millions of voters who participated in Pakistan's elections on 25 July. The people of Pakistan have shown they will not be cowed by the terrorists who seek to disrupt the democratic process. I extend my deepest condolences to those affected by recent attacks.

This is an important moment for democracy in Pakistan, marking an unprecedented second successive transfer of power from one full-term civilian government to another.

I welcome the initial findings from international and domestic observers. Running elections in a country of 208 million people is a challenging and complex task. The Election Commission of Pakistan should be commended for its work to improve accountability, transparency and inclusiveness.

Like the election observation missions, we are also concerned about reports of pressure on the media and the number of parties with links to proscribed groups who preach violence and intolerance. Jinnah's vision of a tolerant, pluralist Pakistan remains central to a stable and cohesive society.

It is now for Pakistan's elected representatives to work together to ensure a successful transition. I hope all sides will resolve any disputed results peacefully and in accordance with Pakistan's electoral laws.

The UK and Pakistan enjoy a longstanding partnership, underpinned by strong

links between our people. We look forward to continuing our work with the new federal and provincial governments. The people of Pakistan can be certain of UK support to build the democratic, secure and prosperous future they deserve.

Press release: UK to double support for Palestinian economy to advance peace with Israel

The UK Government is set to more than double its support for economic development in Gaza and the West Bank to create the necessary conditions for lasting peace between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The new UK aid programme will help create hundreds of jobs, install vital water and electricity infrastructure, and boost exports to Israel, the UK and beyond, Middle East Minister Alistair Burt announced today (Friday 27 July). The announcement will see the UK provide up to £38 million over five years (2018-2023) to support economic activity in Gaza and the West Bank.

UK aid support will promote Israeli-Palestinian cooperation by lowering barriers to economic growth and improving the financial sustainability of the Palestinian Authority. This will include delivering significant reforms to increase the Palestinian Authority's ability to raise millions of pounds in uncollected revenues and taxes. These measures will help the Palestinian Authority to invest in vital services such as healthcare and education.

The new UK aid programme will:

- help construct the Gaza Central Desalination Plant, which will increase access to clean piped water and help replenish the Gaza aquifer, and in turn help all Gazans access clean water;
- provide finances to install solar panels for households, businesses, hospitals and public buildings so they can have a reliable, affordable and clean source of electricity;
- connect Palestinian IT firms and UK businesses to create jobs for Palestinians;
- fund experts to help the Palestinian Authority work with the Government of Israel to unblock the transfer of taxes and custom revenues estimated to be worth £220m per year from the Government of Israel to the Palestinian Authority; and
- provide technical support to help Palestinian businesses export more, including by reducing logistics costs, removing barriers to exporting and helping them meet international standards.

Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, said:

A thriving Palestinian economy is crucial to achieving peace with Israel but wages in Gaza are now lower than two decades ago and Palestinians could slide even deeper into poverty without urgent action.

Our new approach to supporting the economy in Gaza and the West Bank will help create desperately needed jobs, boost exports and collect taxes so that the Palestinian Authority can invest properly in vital services such as education and healthcare. Our work will also help to create reliable electricity and clean water supplies.

As well as alleviating the urgent pressures on the Palestinian economy, this will help to create the necessary conditions for a peaceful two-state solution, which would allow Palestinians to truly prosper.

For a truly sustainable economic recovery in Gaza, we urge all parties to refrain from actions which make peace more difficult and cause unnecessary suffering. That means Hamas and other terrorist groups must cease all violent and provocative actions and Israel must reverse its punitive measures and work with the international community to ease the difficult conditions in Gaza.

Currently only 4% of the water in Gaza is safe to drink, and insufficient sewage treatment facilities put residents at greater risk of water borne diseases – over 40 swimming pools worth of raw sewage are directed into the Mediterranean Sea every day.

The lack of affordable and reliable water supplies also has a direct impact on the economy, including by limiting the growth of the agricultural sector which has reduced the amount of available jobs and increased the cost of food.

UK aid will help to import construction materials for the Gaza Central Desalination Plant, as well as upgrading water infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank to improve drinking water supplies and reduce pollution. This will result in 55 billion litres of safe drinking being pumped into Palestinian homes and businesses in Gaza every year.

On top of this, Gazans currently receive just five hours of electricity per day on average, putting further strain on hospitals and other vital services that rely on unsustainable fuel supplies.

UK aid will help to finance solar panels for hospitals, businesses and households, increasing the availability of power as well as cleaner and cheaper alternatives to fuel-based generators.

To reduce subsidies in the electricity sector – around 5 per cent of GDP in Gaza – UK aid will help Palestinian electricity authorities to be self-sufficient by increasing the number of paying customers. This will reduce the amount spent on public subsidies and allow the Palestinian Authority to invest more in public services, such as education and healthcare.

To further boost the economy, the UK will work closely with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to make it easier for Palestinians to sell their goods – including food, marble, stone and plastic products – to Israel and other countries in the region. The UK will also provide direct assistance to help Palestinian businesses reach new export markets around the world.

As well as helping the Palestinian Authority to work with Israel to unlock £220m worth of annual taxes and revenues, we will work with the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Finance and Planning so that it can take control of the collection of its own customs revenue.

Notes to editors

- The UK will provide up to £38 million over five years (2018-2023) to support economic activity in Gaza and the West Bank. This is more than double the amount of UK aid support previously provided for economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which totalled £16 million in the last five years (2013-2018).

Press release: PM meeting with Emir of Qatar: 24 July 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister held bilateral talks earlier today with the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at Downing Street, covering mutual prosperity, defence and security cooperation, regional stability, and wider foreign policy issues.

They agreed that the trade and investment relationship between the UK and Qatar was already strong, welcoming the fact that half of Qatar's 2017 £5 billion investment commitment had already been allocated to projects in the UK. They agreed a shared desire to see investment flows both ways continuing to grow, noting the significant commercial opportunities on offer for both countries across a wide range of sectors. The Prime Minister welcomed Qatar's commitment to continue to invest not just in London but across the country.

They agreed the bilateral defence and security relationship was also strong and growing, noting the recent £6 billion Typhoon deal. They discussed how the UK could continue to support Qatar to

deliver a safe and successful World Cup 2022, with the Prime Minister highlighting our particular expertise in this area. They agreed to intensify joint counter-terrorism work, recognising the importance of tackling the root causes of terrorism including the ideology that underpins it.

They discussed a range of regional security issues and the Prime Minister reiterated our strong desire to see Gulf Cooperation Council unity restored at the earliest possible opportunity, observing that Gulf security is our security.

They also discussed Russia, agreeing on the importance of continuing to approach Russia from a position of strength and unity. They noted the particular importance of the international community continuing to work together to stand firm against malign activity, and to protect the global rules and norms.