

Press release: UK aid provides Palestinian refugees, including Gazans, with vital healthcare and education

UK aid is supporting the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) to educate 500,000 children and provide health services for 3 million Palestinian refugees.

The UK will deliver financial support earlier than originally planned to ensure vulnerable Palestinians continue to receive food, education and healthcare. At the UNRWA pledging conference in New York today (Monday 25 June), the UK will confirm that it will be imminently releasing £38.5 million to the agency to help alleviate some of the financial pressures the organisation is under.

Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt said:

The UN Relief and Works Agency is a necessary humanitarian and stabilising force across the Middle-East, providing millions of Palestinian refugees with hope and opportunities every day.

The recent violence on the Gaza border has significantly added to the burden on UNRWA's services, and their vital work delivering food, education and healthcare has never been more critical.

I urge the international community to come together and follow our lead so the Agency can continue its often life-saving work.

Notes to Editors

- The UK will deliver financial support to UNRWA earlier than originally planned, releasing £38.5m to the Agency which includes £10 million on top of the £28.5 million package of support announced by Minister Burt at the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference on UNRWA in Rome in March. This urgent support will ensure vital frontline services remain uninterrupted.
- The announcement will be confirmed at the United Nations in New York by Jonathan Allen, Deputy Permanent Representative for the UK Mission to the UN.

Statement to Parliament: Proposed Swansea Bay tidal lagoon

Mr Speaker,

I would like to make a statement about the proposed Swansea Bay tidal lagoon.

Britain's energy policy towards electricity generation is based on meeting 3 needs:

- ensuring that we can count on secure and dependable supplies of electricity at all times
- minimising the cost of supplies to consumers and taxpayers; and
- meeting our greenhouse gas emission reduction obligations

To these 3 requirements we have added, through our Industrial Strategy, a further ambition:

- to secure long-term economic benefit, in terms of jobs and prosperity, from decisions we make

Our policy has been successful. Britain has one of the most secure and reliable electricity supply sectors in the world. Last winter, one of the coldest in recent years, the margin of capacity in our electricity generating system was over 10%; around twice what it was in 2016 to 2017.

We have the strongest record in the G7 in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. Between 1990 and 2016, the UK reduced its emissions by over 40%.

We have massively increased our deployment of renewable generation. Renewable electricity now makes up almost 30% of our generation, our renewable capacity has quadrupled since 2010, and the auction prices of offshore have fallen from £114 per MWh to £57.50 per MWh within 2 years.

Coal – the most polluting fuel – contributed less to generation in Britain last year than in any since the Industrial Revolution.

This has been achieved while the UK has maintained a position in the overall cost to households of electricity well below the average for major European countries.

But the cost of electricity is nevertheless a significant one for households and for businesses, and the policy related-costs have been growing. We have made a clear commitment to bear down on costs.

It is in this context that the government has assessed whether it should commit consumer or taxpayer funds to the programme of 6 tidal lagoons proposed by Tidal Lagoon Power Limited, the first being the proposed project

at Swansea.

We believe in renewable energy and we believe in the benefits of innovation.

The conclusion of this analysis – which has been shared with the Welsh Government – is that the project and proposed programme of lagoons do not meet the requirements for value for money, and so it would not be appropriate to lead the company to believe that public funds can be justified.

The proposal for the Swansea tidal lagoon would cost £1.3 billion to build. If successful to its maximum ambition, it would provide around 0.15% of the electricity we use each year.

The same power generated by the lagoon, over 60 years, for £1.3 billion, would cost around £400 million for offshore wind even at today's prices, which have fallen rapidly, and we expect to be cheaper still in future.

At £1.3 billion, the capital cost per unit of electricity generated each year would be 3 times that of the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station.

If a full programme of 6 lagoons were constructed, the Hendry Review found that the cost would be more than £50 billion, and be 2 and a half times the cost of Hinkley to generate a similar output of electricity.

Enough offshore wind to provide the same generation as a programme of lagoons is estimated to cost at least £31.5 billion less to build.

Taking all the costs together, I have been advised by analysts that, by 2050, the proposal that has been made – which would generate around 30 TWh per year of electricity – could cost up to £20 billion more to produce compared to generating that same electricity through a mix of offshore wind and nuclear, once financing, operating, and system costs have been taken into account.

That could cost the average British household consumer up to an additional £700 between 2031 and 2050, or the equivalent of £15,000 for every household in Wales.

However, in recognition of the potential local economic benefits that might result from a lagoon in Swansea, I asked officials to go back and consider what additional benefit could be ascribed to a number of other factors, including a beneficial impact on the local economy.

For £1.3 billion a Swansea lagoon would support, according to the Hendry Review, only 28 jobs directly associated with operating and maintaining the lagoon in the long term.

Officials were also asked to make an assessment of the potential for valuable innovation and cost reductions for later lagoons that might come from embarking on a programme of construction.

Independent advice concluded that the civil engineering used in Swansea Bay offers limited scope for innovation and capital cost reduction – estimated at 5% – in the construction of subsequent facilities.

I asked for an assessment of the export potential of embarking on a programme of implementing the technology, but the Hendry Review concluded that it would take a “leap of faith to believe that the UK would be the main industrial beneficiary” of any such programme.

In terms of energy reliability, the generation of electricity would be variable rather than constant with a load factor of 19% compared to around 50% for offshore wind and 90% for nuclear.

The inescapable conclusion of an extensive analysis is that however novel and appealing the proposal that has been made is, even with these factors taken into account, the costs that would be incurred by consumers and taxpayers would be so much higher than alternative sources of low carbon power, that it would be irresponsible to enter into a contract with the provider.

Securing our energy needs into the future has to be done seriously and, when much cheaper alternatives exist, no individual project, and no particular technology, can proceed at any price. That is true for all technologies.

The fact that this proposal has not demonstrated that it could be value for money does not mean that its potential is not recognised.

My department is also in receipt of proposals from other promoters of tidal energy schemes which are said to have lower costs than the Swansea proposal, although these are an earlier stage of development.

Any proposals must be able credibly to demonstrate value for money for consumers and public funds.

I am sure that many people in the House and beyond would wish that we were in a position today to say yes to the Swansea proposals.

I have appreciated the contribution of Charles Hendry, whose constructive report led to this further analysis being made, and to the engagement of the Secretary of State for Wales and members of the Welsh Assembly, including the First Minister and the Leader of the Welsh Conservatives, Andrew RT Davies.

But all of us have a requirement to be responsible stewards of taxpayers’ and consumers’ money and to act at all times in their interests. It is in discharging that responsibility rigorously that I make this statement today, and I commend it to the House.

[Read the value for money assessment.](#)

Statement to Parliament: Proposed

Swansea Bay tidal lagoon

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Press release: Foreign Secretary flies into Kabul to support signs of progress in Afghanistan

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson flew into Kabul today, 25 June, to show support for recent positive developments in Afghanistan. On the back of the

ceasefires over Eid, which saw Government and Taliban forces talking rather than fighting in cities across the country, the Foreign Secretary held talks in Kabul with Afghanistan's President, Chief Executive, and Deputy Foreign Minister.

The Foreign Secretary underlined that Britain was fully committed to helping build a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Afghanistan. He welcomed the National Unity Government's determination to achieve a peaceful political settlement to the conflict with the Taliban, including through holding timely and credible Parliamentary and Presidential elections.

He also highlighted the UK's strong support for girls' education in Afghanistan by meeting Afghan girls who are getting access to sports education through UK funding.

The Foreign Secretary also met General Nicholson, the Commander of Resolute Support, NATO's training and assistance mission in Afghanistan, and had a chance to talk to – and ride in an armoured vehicle with – some of the Welsh Guards helping to mentor the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces.

The Foreign Secretary said:

At this important moment when Afghan-led efforts towards peace and a political settlement have gained considerable impetus, I was proud and inspired to be in Kabul to see how the UK is working in support of the Afghan Government to achieve this goal.

In my meetings with President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, I welcomed their historic offer of unconditional talks earlier this year, and their determined recent efforts towards a political process with the Taliban.

I urge all countries with influence in Afghanistan, especially in the neighbourhood, to use it constructively at this crucial moment.

My visit comes just as the UK is considering the request from the US and NATO to give additional assistance to Resolute Support. I was hugely impressed by the work done by British troops as a part of this NATO mission and I believe there is still a lot the UK could contribute to this vital operation. The Government will be taking a decision very soon.

I was also delighted to meet a talented group of Afghan girls to see how excited they were about their prospects, thanks to British funding and the Afghan Government's determination to do more in this area. A good education for them will help Afghanistan's development and is a big part of the UK's commitment towards a brighter future for Afghanistan. I am proud that UK Aid has helped 300,000 marginalised Afghan girls into education and trained over 10,000 teachers over the last six years.

During his visit the Foreign Secretary met President Dr Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Dr Abdullah Abdullah, and Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Karzai.

This is the Foreign Secretary's second visit to Afghanistan, where the UK is currently investing more than £750m in development assistance to support the Afghan people.

Notes to editors

- The UK is contributing £750m in development spend between 2016 and 2020. UK Aid is helping improve access to education, services and justice for the Afghan people, offering humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable and supporting good governance and anti-corruption efforts.
- The UK has also committed £70m per year until 2020 in non-military support to help sustain the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces. Over 650 UK troops are currently serving in Afghanistan in non-combat roles as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission to help train, assist and advise the Afghan Security Forces

Further information

[News story: New Marine Management Organisation Board members announced](#)

The Government has appointed three new members to the Board of the Marine Management Organisation.

Belinda Howell and Rob Wilson have been appointed for three years commencing on 1 May 2018. William Roberts has also been appointed for three years and his appointment will commence on 1 August 2018.

Board members provide non-executive leadership challenge and support to the executive through regular Board meetings, committees and groups.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) established in April 2010 and given powers under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The MMO has a wide range of responsibilities, which include implementing plan-led marine management, licensing marine works and managing UK fishing fleet capacity and UK fisheries quotas.

All appointments to the Marine Management Organisation are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. The appointments

comply with the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

There is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if significant) to be declared. The following political activity in the past five years has been declared:

Rob Wilson has declared that he held ministerial office for the Conservative party.

Marine Management Organisation Board members receive remuneration of £11,804 per annum based on a time commitment of 3 days per month.

Biographical details:

Belinda Howell is Managing Director of Decarbonize Ltd. She is a Vice President to the Round Table for Responsible Soy Association and sits on the Board of Governors at the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil Association. Belinda was formerly an Independent Sustainability Panel Member for Lafarge Tarmac and Scottish Power; and Chief Executive Officer to Greenstone Carbon Management.

William Roberts is currently a Consulting Director working with companies such as AECOM and BCG. William also chairs the Energy and Natural Resources Group for the Institute of Chartered Accountants. Until 2010, William was the Chief Financial Officer at the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority where he reshaped investment decision making for the UK's £3bn per annum, nuclear clean-up programme.

Rob Wilson is the current Chair of The Community Bank and was previously Chair of an IT company. Until June 2017, Rob was a Minister at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and prior to this was a Minister for Cabinet Office. During his time at the Cabinet Office, Rob was responsible for reforming the charity fundraising and the National Citizen Service as well as implementing the Prime Minister's 'Big Society' agenda.