

Press release: Opening access to the countryside

The country's first ever specialist centre to open up access to the countryside for wheelchair users and those with mobility needs as well as disabled and able-bodied horse riders, cyclists and walkers was launched today at Oxfordshire's Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve.

The new National Land Access Centre, located in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, has been designed to demonstrate the use, maintenance and installation of gaps, gates and stiles meeting the new British Standard for improved countryside access.

The centre has been developed by Natural England, in partnership with The British Horse Society, Centrewire and the Pittecroft Trust, to ensure those who usually struggle with access to the countryside can access the natural environment and enjoy England's beautiful countryside.

Natural England research shows there are around 519 million visits to paths, cycleways and bridleways in England each year.

However, mobility issues can be a major barrier to people heading to the countryside. Over 20% of England's population cannot use public rights of way, either because they cannot use stiles or kissing gates themselves, or they are accompanying someone who can't.

Deputy Chair of Natural England Lord Blencathra said:

This project is the culmination of many years of partnership working and determination to ensure that our countryside can rightfully be enjoyed by everyone.

Improved access will help to connect more people with their natural environment, giving them a chance to enjoy our countryside, its open space and fascinating wildlife— all key aspects of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

I am delighted that Natural England has played a key role in the partnership responsible for developing the National Land Access Centre, which has the potential to make such a difference to people's lives.

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work Sarah Newton said:

Getting out into the countryside is an experience that many of us take for granted, but for disabled people it can often be much more difficult to access nature. The National Land Access Centre will

play an important role in ensuring everyone can enjoy the outstanding natural beauty our country has to offer.

John Cuthbertson, Chairman for the Disabled Ramblers, said:

I'm over the moon at the spirit of co-ordination and co-operation which has led to the development of the new National Land Access Centre.

Open access has got the ability to transform lives. We look forward to using the centre to test the new structures, helping to shape the future of access to the countryside.

Mark Weston, Director of Access for The British Horse Society, said:

We're very pleased to see the launch of the new National Land Access Centre, which builds on recommendations of the Bridlegate Trial started in partnership with Natural England in 2015.

The Centre will help to ensure the new British Standard becomes a reality, securing safe open access to the countryside not only for horse riders but for all users of the outdoors.

Today's launch of the National Land Access Centre also marks the 60th anniversary of Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, one of the first National Nature Reserves in the country to offer wider public access.

Since 1994, members of the public have actively been encouraged to explore the reserve through the removal of unnecessary stiles, gates and fences and the installation of easy-access gates. This is key to the National Nature Reserve Strategy, itself a year old in September, which seeks to see England's nature restored, enriched and reconnected to people.

Landowners, land managers, rights of way officers and other users will be able to book onto training courses at the National Land Access Centre to aid understanding of the new standard and its application. This will involve testing new equipment with a view to installing it across the nation.

The British Standard 5709:2018 for Gaps, Gates and Stiles requires 'the least restrictive option' to be made available to users. Its implementation will help ensure that everyone can access and enjoy the countryside.

Visitors to the centre will be able to access specialist equipment, try out new designs and touch and test real examples in situ to fully understand this new equipment in operation. They can learn about its installation and maintenance, and see what compliance with the British Standard looks like in practice.

More information is available about Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve,

Oxfordshire's National Nature Reserves and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

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More information is available about Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, Oxfordshire's National Nature Reserves and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

[Speech: Advancing Peace and Stability in Somalia](#)

Thank you Madam President and may I thank all three of our briefers for their very informative briefings today. But if I may, can I particularly thank Michael Keating for his work and commitment during this historic period in Somalia's state-building process, for his resilience whilst holding this challenging and dynamic portfolio. Michael, you have been an exemplary SRSG and I think the whole Council wishes you well in your future.

As Michael set out in the nearly three years he's represented the Secretary-General, there's been real progress to advance peace, stability and state-building in Somalia. But there have also been and remain significant challenges, and we have seen both in recent months. I think the biggest single positive, if we start with the positives, must surely be in the overall regional dynamic. It has been exciting, it has been inspirational to see the rapprochement brought about in the Horn of Africa in particular led by Ethiopia and Eritrea. And I want to take the opportunity to welcome to the Council the new Ambassador of Ethiopia, you're very welcome here sir. And to pay tribute, if I may, also to your predecessor who was such an influential member of this Council. I've known him for a decade. I learnt so much from him, and I count him as a friend. So I just want to welcome you and thank your predecessor for all he did for us here and for Africa in this Council.

In Somalia, I think the other positives we've seen are the agreement in principle on an electoral model and on resource sharing signed in June, and we welcome and need to see further progress to take these forward. And it's been extremely encouraging to see the strong progress on economic recovery, including efforts to tackle corruption, improve public financial management and commitments to ambitious reforms under the recently agreed third IMF program. We commend these efforts and their results and I agree very much with Michael on the economic potential of Somalia, which requires of course political commitment and courage if we're to get there.

We also warmly welcome the much needed improvement in the humanitarian situation following both the strong humanitarian response and the better than average rainfall. Recovery remains fragile. We must not be complacent and the

situation is still concerning with 2.6 million internally displaced persons in urgent need of assistance.

Madam President, unfortunately though, as our briefers set out, significant challenges remain. The current political difficulties between the Federal Government and the Federal Member States urgently needs to be resolved. This is critical across all areas of state-building. A failure to resolve this challenge would seriously limit the opportunity for further progress. Co-operation between the parties is needed to meet the December timeframe for passing an electoral law, in particular to agree the final outstanding issue of constituency size; it is needed to complete the constitutional review process and to strengthen the federal system, and it is needed to take forward the vital work of Security reform so we must have cooperation.

Now onto security. Let me start by condemning in the strongest terms the attacks in Mogadishu on the 2nd and 10th of September and sending my deepest condolences to all those affected. Security reform is at a critical juncture. Implementation of the national security architecture, including integration of and support for regional forces, is vital, and faster progress is needed. The national security architecture is the critical underpinning of a successful transition to Somalia-led security. So we welcome the development of a transition plan and we pay tribute to the ongoing commitment and sacrifices of AMISOM and the troop-contributing countries in the fight against Al-Shabab, and that was made very clear I thought by Francisco in his briefing.

It is important that the transition plan is delivered in a managed and coordinated way with close engagement from AMISOM, the Federal Member States and other partners. Support the practical requirements of transition AMISOM needs to reconfigure accordingly. And we all as international partners must play our part, and that's by coordinating the assistance we give as part of a comprehensive approach to security structures. And Michael again set out the importance of us coordinating together and ensuring we don't end up in a situation where essentially we are accidentally funding a set of different and private armies. We must bring together one army.

We must ensure the transition is sustainably financed. The United Kingdom announced in recent weeks an additional \$9 million in funding for AMISOM. I expect there will be a number of calls today around this table for predictable, sustainable funding for AMISOM, and I urge all those who make those calls to ensure that they also make similar contributions.

Madam President may I welcome here to the Security Council table and I hope to see how even more often Mrs. Mlambo-Ngcuka and I would just like to welcome very much her briefing. The rise to 73 female MPs elected to Parliament in 2016 was a significant change and really worthy of commendment. The country must build on this to support and strengthen the role of women as decision-makers and in leadership roles by strengthening the position of women, along with young people, people with disabilities, displaced people, and minority groups in the upcoming electoral law and constitutional review, I agree wholeheartedly with Phumzile that sustainable development and sustainable peace requires inclusion. And inclusion requires the inclusion

particularly of women. Legislation is important to strengthen the protection for women and girls and ensure perpetrators of abuses are held to account, including for sexual and gender-based violence, and we look forward to further progress on the sexual offences bill and commend the progress made in Somaliland.

Madam President, overall, we believe that we are on the right side of the ledger in Somalia but we cannot be complacent. We must continue to work and we must work harder. I hope the remarkable and exciting progress in the Horn of Africa also has an impact in Somalia. The key is dialogue and cooperation. All Somali leaders must work together and find ways to set aside short-term interest and gain in favor of longer term stability which will be a far higher political security and economic benefit to all in Somalia. That is the only way also to ensure the continuing international support. Thank you Madam President.

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[Policy paper: The future for food, farming and the environment: policy statement \(2018\)](#)

Updated: Replaced the policy statement with a HTML version and added the timeline as a separate document.

This policy statement sets out our expectations for agricultural policy for England over the next 10 years. It also outlines how the [Agriculture Bill](#) will set the foundations to achieve this.

This document focuses on policy for England. We will be working with the rest of the UK to develop any necessary UK-wide legislation and administrative common frameworks.