

Foreign Secretary statement on Afghanistan response

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Mr Speaker, with your permission I will update the House on the UK's international response to the situation in Afghanistan.

As my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister has set out, over the last three weeks, through a shared effort right across government and our armed forces, we have delivered the largest and most complex evacuation in living memory.

Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan.

That includes: over 8,000 British Nationals, close to 5,000 Afghans who loyally served the UK, along with their dependents, and around 500 special cases of particularly vulnerable Afghans, including Chevening scholars, journalists, human rights defenders, campaigners for women's rights, judges and many others.

Of course, the work to get people out did not start on 15 August.

The FCD0 advised British Nationals to leave the country in April, and then again on 6 August. We estimate that around 500 did so.

At the same time, the government launched the ARAP scheme for interpreters and other Afghan staff, getting over 1,900 out before the airlift began on 15 August.

Now as the security situation deteriorated, we accelerated that process throughout July and early August. In total since April, we have helped over 17,000 people leave.

And I want to place on record my thanks, and pay tribute to the Herculean efforts of our troops, our diplomats, our civil servants who have done an incredible job in the toughest of conditions.

And as we remember their efforts we also remember those of UK armed forces who paid the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan trying to make that country a better place for the Afghan people.

Mr Speaker, now that the evacuation has ended, we have moved into a new phase.

We stand by our commitment to support those who have worked for us, and to take all remaining eligible cases. Securing their safe passage out of the country is an immediate priority. We are working through our diplomatic channels to that end.

And of course the Taliban have given assurances that they will provide safe passage for foreign nationals and those eligible Afghans who wish to leave.

On 30 August the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2593. Driven by the UK alongside the US and France, affirming the international community's expectation requirement that the Taliban should follow through on the assurances that they have given.

Last, week I visited Qatar and Pakistan. In Qatar, I met with the Emir and the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed, to discuss safe passage alongside the international community's wider approach to dealing with the Taliban.

We discussed ongoing efforts to re-establish flights at Kabul airport, where Qatari technical staff are working on the ground, and see how we can cooperate in handling the organisation of future flights.

I also announced our new non-resident Chargé d'Affaires for Afghanistan, Martin Longden, who is now working out of Doha.

In Pakistan, I met with Prime Minister Khan and Foreign Minister Qureshi to discuss safe passage via third countries, and the importance of holding the Taliban to its commitments.

I also announced that we are sending £30 million of support to Afghanistan's neighbours.

This will provide life-saving support for refugees including shelters, household necessities, sanitation and other hygiene facilities.

At the same time I dispatched last week a new Rapid Deployment Team to the region, with an extra 22 staff in total.

They will reinforce our Embassy teams, our High Commission teams in those neighbouring countries, processing British nationals or eligible Afghans who are seeking to leave via third countries, which we want to do just as fast as we possibly can, once they can leave, and subject to the necessary security checks.

I also spoke to the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan earlier today, and the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan last week. And the Minister for South Asia, Lord Ahmad, last week visited Tajikistan and will return to the region shortly.

Mr Speaker turning to the wider international strategy. The international

community is adjusting and it must adjust to the new reality in Afghanistan and recalibrate its approach.

The UK is playing a leading role.

My Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister convened G7 leaders on 24 August to discuss a shared response to the situation. That followed a G7 Foreign Ministers meeting.

And we are building a global coalition around four key priorities set out in a UK G7 paper that we have shared with those partners.

First, we must prevent Afghanistan from ever becoming a safe haven or harbour for terrorists ever again.

Second, we must prevent a humanitarian disaster and support refugees – wherever possible in the region.

The UK has allocated £286 million in aid for Afghanistan this year.

We are supporting Afghanistan's neighbours, as I have already set out, and the Home Secretary has set out our resettlement scheme.

We are leading by example, which enables us to encourage others to step up in what will inevitably have to be an international team effort.

Third, we must preserve regional stability, which risks being shattered by the combination of renewed terrorist threat and an exodus of refugees.

Fourth, we must hold the Taliban and other factions to account for their conduct, including in particular on human rights and their treatment of women and girls.

I am taking this forward through our bilateral partners and we have a G7-plus meeting later this week.

The UK is also pressing for further discussions amongst the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, and we plan to host an event at the UN General Assembly later this month as indicated by the Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, we will not recognise the Taliban, but we will engage, and we will carefully calibrate our actions to the choices that they make and the actions that they take.

Given our strategic priorities, the ones that I've set out, we must also set some credible tests to hold the Taliban to the undertakings they have made on safe passage, on terrorism, on humanitarian access, and a more inclusive government.

And we stand ready to use all the levers at our disposal in that effort – political, economic and diplomatic.

Mr Speaker, we continue to galvanise the international community, and bring

together the widest possible group of influential countries, to deliver on those strategic priorities and exercise the maximum moderating influence on the Taliban that we possibly can.

I commend this statement to the House.

[Small Fishing Vessel Code enters into force](#)

The Maritime & Coastguard Agency Code of Practice for Small Fishing Vessels now includes a requirement for fishing boats to be inspected both in and out of the water every five years.

[Small Fishing Vessel Code enters into force](#)

Proposals designed to make the fishing industry safer come into force today [6 September].

The Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) Code of Practice for Small Fishing Vessels (less than 15 metres length overall) now includes a requirement for fishing boats to be inspected both in and out of the water every five years.

Previously, the requirement was only for fishing boats to be inspected in the water when first joining the UK Ship Register and after that inspected either in or out of the water once every five years.

This is part of ongoing work by the MCA and its partners in the Fishing Industry Safety Group to help reduce the number of deaths in the industry.

Between 2012-2020 there were 52 fishing fatalities which translates to a figure of 50 fishermen in every 100,000 losing their lives at work. To put it in perspective, the national average across all sectors is 0.5 fatalities per 100,000.

There are about 12,000 fishermen and 5,400 fishing vessels in the UK fleet.

David Fenner, who heads up the fishing safety section at the MCA, said: "Fishing is one of the most dangerous industries with the rate of fatalities being approximately 100 times higher than that of the UK general workforce. These requirements are about making and bringing about changes that improve safety for those working at sea."

The new code addresses crew protection and man overboard recovery, construction, watertight and weathertight integrity, stability, machinery, electrical installations and in and out of water inspections.

He added: "These proposed requirements will bring big changes and safety improvements, there are now stability requirements for new and existing vessels, whilst vessels built to a standard have to be maintained to that standard and those that were not have to demonstrate they are safe and fit for purpose. We know that the fishing industry faces a number of challenges to comply with this code but it's been written so that responsible owners will already be complying with many aspects of it.

"Ultimately though, there have been too many deaths and we want to make sure we've done all we can to reduce that risk with an enforceable code. The sea is dangerous and we want to make sure we do all we can to protect those who work in it."

Fishing is the most dangerous industry with the rate of fatalities being approximately 100 times higher than that of the UK general workforce.

Approximately 65 per cent of deaths to fishing vessel crew and 69 per cent of fishing vessel losses between 2009 and 2020 were on vessels under 15 metres; these are most likely to be small and micro businesses.

[MSN 1871 Amendment 2](#)

[The Code of Practice for the Safety of Small Fishing Vessels of less than 15m Length Overall](#)

[Homes England revolutionises procurement process with launch of new land disposal approach](#)

From today, housebuilders of all sizes will find it easier than ever to access Homes England land, with the launch of the new Delivery Partner Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).

This new system replaces the Delivery Partner Panel 3 (DPP3), transforming the way Homes England procures housebuilders and disposes of land. Switching to a dynamic purchasing system means that housebuilders can now apply to join the agency's list of preferred developers at any time, rather than having to wait until the list is renewed once every four years. This is the biggest DPS of its kind, and, valued at £20bn, is Homes England's largest procurement exercise to date.

Stephen Kinsella, Chief Land and Development Officer at Homes England, said: "This marks a significant step forward in the way we work with developers to build homes. The flexibility of the DPS means that housebuilders can apply to join when it suits them, or when they see a relevant site on our [Land Hub](#).

"We've also simplified the application process, so whether you're a large, nationwide housebuilder, or a small local developer, it will be easier for you to access land you want to build on. We encourage all housebuilders interested in working with us to monitor our recently updated [Land Hub](#), and apply to join the DPS when they see a site of interest."

Local authorities and housing associations can also rely on the DPS as a procurement-compliant solution for finding housebuilders, making it easier for them to build homes on the land they own.

Initial applications opened earlier this year, and 66 housebuilders have now been appointed to the DPS, of which 24 are SMEs.

Housing Minister RT Hon Christopher Pincher MP notes the beneficial impact the flexibility of the DPS will offer SMEs and new entrants, commenting: "This Government is making great progress in building new homes and we are keen to continue delivering the homes this country needs. We welcome this change which will support SMEs while providing more opportunities for home ownership to hard-working people across the country."

Applications to join are now open on an ongoing basis, and housebuilders are encouraged to apply as and when they see sites of interest on Homes England's [Land Hub](#), the agency's interactive tool used to advertise sites it is bringing to market.

The application process is proportionate, and depends on the size of the sites that a developer wishes to bid for, making it more accessible for smaller developers. In addition, during the application process housebuilders can express interest in the locations and types of sites they want to develop.

Homes England has a number of sites that it is planning to issue expressions of interest for via the DPS in the coming months. This includes a 14-acre site on Homes England's Northern Arc scheme in Burgess Hill, which will support around 350 homes, 30% of which will be affordable homes. The site will be divided into two or three sub plots, making it particularly suited to SME developers.

Another site soon to be marketed via the DPS is in Cradley Heath, Dudley. Over the last couple of years Homes England has cleared disused industrial buildings from the site, and it now has outline planning permission for 89 homes.

Information on how to apply to join the DPS can be found on our [guidance page](#).

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Developers are encouraged to monitor Homes England's Land Hub, its interactive tool to advertise sites that are coming to market, and apply to join the Delivery Partner DPS as and when they see sites that are of interest.
- The Delivery Partner DPS introduces different categories of membership to meet different partner needs with simpler criteria for SME developers.
- Housebuilders will be able to tailor their membership to express interest in specific locations or types of development to give the agency the ability to more effectively market opportunities to partners.
- The Delivery Partner DPS will also be available to other public sector land owners, including local authorities and Registered Providers, to procure a housebuilder or contractor to build homes on their land.
- Other public sector bodies made very significant use of the Delivery Partner Panel and we will continue to encourage and support their use of the Delivery Partner DPS.