

[UK condemns Iranian attacks on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#)

Press release

Minister of State for the Middle East calls on Iran to cease indiscriminate bombardment of Kurdish towns



Commenting on Iranian attacks on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Minister of State for the Middle East, South Asia, UN and the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, said:

Iran must cease its indiscriminate bombardment of Kurdish towns which has led to the loss of innocent lives and damaged civilian infrastructure. These attacks are a violation of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity and are wholly unacceptable. They demonstrate a repeated pattern of Iranian destabilising activity in the region.

We stand with the Kurdistan Regional Government in condemning these attacks and will continue to support the sovereignty and security of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region.

Published 28 September 2022

[PM call with President Zelenskyy: 28](#)

September 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Liz Truss spoke to President Zelenskyy this afternoon.



The Prime Minister spoke to President Zelenskyy this afternoon to underline the UK's steadfast support in light of Russia's sham referendums in Ukraine.

The Prime Minister made clear that the UK would never recognise Russian attempts to annexe sovereign territory. She reiterated that Ukraine could depend on the UK's support until President Putin was defeated.

President Zelenskyy updated the Prime Minister on the current military situation, and welcomed her strong backing, including at the UN General Assembly last week.

The Prime Minister thanked President Zelenskyy for his work in securing the release of five British nationals held by Russian-backed proxies in eastern Ukraine.

The leaders also discussed how the UK and Ukraine could work together to secure Ukraine's gas supplies in the long term.

Both agreed to stay in close touch in the coming days and weeks.

Published 28 September 2022

UK Trade Commissioner Jonathan Knott travels to Guatemala

Commissioner Knott is visiting Guatemala as part of a tour to Central America

to champion UK trade with economic partners in the region.

With this visit, the Commissioner seeks to strengthen bilateral trade relations between the UK and Guatemala, understand the priorities of Guatemala and the projects it has in the pipeline in order to identify key areas where the UK can offer its expertise. During these meetings, the Commissioner will highlight the United Kingdom's interest in continuing to work with Guatemala to create more opportunities that help build closer commercial ties that promote prosperity for both countries.

For that purpose, the Trade Commissioner will meet with senior representatives of the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Infrastructure, Municipality of Guatemala City, the Central American Bank of Economic Integration –CABEI-, British multinationals established in Guatemala and Guatemalan companies looking to invest into the UK.

The Trade Commissioner will also remark the opportunities that the Association Agreement between the UK and Central America brings to foster the trade relation with Guatemala and promote business possibilities to UK companies looking to expand overseas. He will stress the importance to promote a level-playing field for British companies trying to do more business in Guatemala and strengthen the rule of law to attract more trade and investors to the country.

Commissioner Knott will also stress the need to boosting economic security, by reducing economic dependency on aggressors and creating stronger trade, investment, science and tech ties among allies and partners. He will also present the case to promote a greener economy.

During his visit, the UK Export Finance (UKEF) Regional Head for Central America & the Caribbean will accompany the Trade Commissioner. UKEF is the UK's export credit agency that offers finance options to projects where UK companies are involved. This will provide an opportunity for Guatemala and the UK to explore ways to help deliver infrastructure and development projects in Guatemala.

According to UK statistics, total trade between the UK and Guatemala was USD 236 million in 2021. Total UK exports to Guatemala amounted USD 88 million; these included cars, beverages, chemicals and specialised machinery. Total UK imports from Guatemala were USD 148 million and included vegetables, fruits, coffee, sugar and beverages.

Multi-million pound Stokesley flood scheme is complete

Over £3.7million has been spent boosting defences in Stokesley with the aim

of managing the impacts of climate change and the flow of the River Leven through and around the town.

Work on the new defences has included:

- The construction of a new upstream flow control structure. When water levels in the River Leven are high, the upstream structure will automatically divert flows down the flood diversion channel around Stokesley. The new structure will also provide significantly improved fish passage and allows greater flows down the Leven into Stokesley, under normal water conditions, improving the River Leven's health.
- A re-profiled flood diversion channel which is easier to maintain and has greater capacity to contain the flow of flood water, which is diverted from the Leven by the upstream flow control structure.
- The construction of a new downstream flow control structure. The new structure has side hung doors which close during high flows, stopping the Eller Beck flowing back up the Leven into Stokesley.
- River restoration on the Levenside, delivered in collaboration with the Tees Rivers Trust. The works here include the installation of a new fish pass and deflectors to create different flow speeds and a more naturalised river.

The Environment Agency appointed Mott MacDonald and BAM Nuttall in a joint venture to design and build the scheme with construction starting in autumn 2020 and work completing in August 2022. The scheme was officially opened on Friday 23rd September by Rishi Sunak, MP for Richmond alongside representatives from the Environment Agency and Tees Rivers Trust.

[Stokesley Flood Alleviation Scheme](#)

Residents 'will be reassured'

Rishi Sunak, MP for Richmond (North Yorkshire), said:

Many Stokesley residents and business will be reassured by this work which maintains and improves flood protection – saving many people from the heartache of dealing with the devastating impact flooding can have.

The environmental improvements are a welcome additional bonus. Levenside is a beautiful part of the town and this work only enhances its attraction. I'd also like to thank the many volunteers who helped with the river works.

Jamie Fletcher, the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Operations Manager for the North East, said:

The community of Stokesley have seen first-hand how devastating flooding can be. That's why I'm so pleased to see the completion of these vital defences ahead of winter.

This new £3.7 million investment will better protect 509 homes and businesses, giving peace of mind to residents for many years to come, while also bringing benefits for wildlife in the wider area. It is also a great example of how we work with partners to make communities more resilient to the escalating impacts of the climate emergency.

River 'is a great asset for the town'

Ben Lamb, CEO at the Tees Rivers Trust said:

The Trust have been working in and around the Leven Catchment for 12 years and have talked with Stokesley residents and interest groups about improving the river through the town on many occasions. Therefore, it has been a great opportunity to finally get in and give the river some TLC and make some improvements to flow, habitat and fish passage.

We had an enormous amount of help from volunteers who tirelessly shifted over 50 tons of gravel into the new meander area in town and enjoyed being treated to coffee and chips from neighbouring businesses in the heat! The river is a great asset for the town, and we are getting regular reports of wildlife in and around the river since we completed the work.

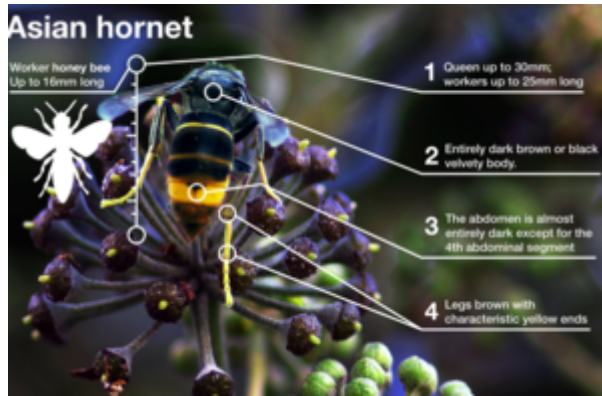
The Stokesley scheme is just one of many across the North East that better protects properties and businesses as part of a £132million six year investment programme to create or improve flood and coastal defences in the region.

Last year's record government investment announcement of £5.2 billion to better protect 336,000 properties across England by 2027 includes a further £193million investment in North East defences.

Asian hornets identified in Essex

Press release

Public asked to be vigilant after sightings of Asian hornets, an invasive species which are harmful to native wasps and hornets, are confirmed in Essex



Credit: Defra

Beekeepers and members of the public are today (Wednesday 28 September) being asked to remain vigilant after Asian hornets were spotted in the Rayleigh area of Essex.

The National Bee Unit has confirmed the sighting and monitoring is underway to detect further Asian hornets in the vicinity.

The Asian hornet is smaller than our native hornet and poses no greater risk to human health than our native wasps and hornets. However, they do pose a risk to honey bees and work is already underway to monitor for any hornet activity and to identify any nests nearby.

This is the first confirmed UK sighting since April 2022, when a single Asian hornet was captured in Felixstowe, Suffolk.

Defra's Chief Plant and Bee Health Officer Nicola Spence said:

By ensuring we are alerted to possible sightings as early as possible, we can take swift and effective action to stamp out the threat posed by Asian hornets. That's why we are working at speed to locate and investigate any nests in the area following this confirmed sighting.

While the Asian hornet poses no greater risk to human health than other wasps or hornets, we recognise the damage they can cause to honey bee colonies and other beneficial insects.

Please continue to look out for any Asian hornets and if you think you've spotted one, report your sighting through the Asian hornet app or online.

It is important to take care not to approach or disturb a nest. Asian hornets are not generally aggressive towards people but an exception to this is when they perceive a threat to their nest.

If you suspect you have seen an Asian hornet you should report this using the iPhone and Android app 'Asian Hornet Watch' or by using our [online report](#)

[form](#). Alternatively, e-mail alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

Please include a photograph if you can safely obtain one.

[Identification guides and more information are available](#) and if you keep bees you should keep up to date with the latest situation on the [gov.uk sightings page](#) and on [BeeBase](#).

- The cost of eradication on private land will be met by APHA.
- The Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat is a joint venture between Defra, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government to tackle the threat of invasive species. More information can be found on their [website](#).
- For details on the appearance of an Asian hornet, please refer to the [BeeBase](#) guide or the [non-native species identification guide](#).
- Photographs of the Asian hornet are available on our [Flickr account](#).
- The Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) is not to be confused with the Asian giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*) which has been found in North America.

Published 28 September 2022