

As Israel's friend, I urge you not to annex: PM Boris Johnson

My first real experience of Israel came when I was 18, and spent several weeks working in the kitchens at kibbutz Kfar HaNassi. My fellow kibbutzniks managed to survive my contribution to their diet. I took away a profound attachment to the state of Israel.

My many visits in recent years have left a deep impression – whether the solemnity and dignity of Yad Vashem, memorial to a unique crime in world history; the extraordinary gathering of world leaders for the funeral of an old friend, Shimon Peres; or cycling down Rothschild Boulevard with the Mayor of Tel Aviv, marvelling at the vibrancy of the White City.

I am a passionate defender of Israel. Few causes are closer to my heart than ensuring its people are protected from the menace of terrorism and anti-Semitic incitement. The UK has always stood by Israel and its right to live as any nation should be able to, in peace and security. Our commitment to Israel's security will be unshakeable while I am Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

So it is with sadness that I have followed the proposals to annex Palestinian territory. As a life-long friend, admirer and supporter of Israel, I am fearful that these proposals will fail in their objective of securing Israel's borders and will be contrary to Israel's own long-term interests.

Annexation would put in jeopardy the progress that Israel has made in improving relationships with the Arab and Muslim world. I have never been more convinced that Israel's interests overlap with those of our closest partners in the Arab world, including potential security cooperation against shared threats.

But however strong their interest in a different kind of relationship with Israel, annexation would inevitably set back these opportunities and constrain potential Arab partners. Israel's enemies would seize upon it, and use it against those in the Middle East who want to see progress.

I want to see an outcome that delivers justice for both Israelis and Palestinians. The UK has often stood in a small minority at the UN in defending Israel against unwarranted and wholly disproportionate criticism.

Annexation would represent a violation of international law. It would also be a gift to those who want to perpetuate the old stories about Israel.

I profoundly hope that annexation does not go ahead. If it does, the UK will not recognise any changes to the 1967 lines, except those agreed between both parties.

There is another way. Like many Israelis, I am frustrated that peace talks have ended in failure. While I understand the frustration felt by both sides,

we must now use the energy of this moment to once more come back to the table and strive to hammer out a solution. This will require compromise on all sides.

I do not underestimate the challenges in achieving lasting peace. So many efforts have been made. So many have paid the ultimate price, including of course Yitzhak Rabin.

But I still believe the only way to achieve true, lasting security for Israel, the homeland for the Jewish people, is through a solution that allows justice and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. I refuse to believe that this is impossible.

I welcome the commitment that President Trump has made to find a way forward. We will work tirelessly with the US – and other partners in the Arab world and Europe – to try to make peace a reality.

I am immensely proud of the UK's contribution to the birth of Israel with the 1917 Balfour Declaration. But it will remain unfinished business until there is a solution which provides justice and lasting peace for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The only way it can be achieved is for both sides to return to the negotiating table. That must be our goal. Annexation would only take us further away from it.

[Improved access to MasterMap data and core location identifiers](#)

All of us interact with address and street information on a regular basis via electoral rolls, council tax, waste collections, insurance and utilities, school places and emergency responses. Accurate and standardised information is essential for these critical services to run effectively.

From today, [Ordnance Survey \(OS\) MasterMap](#) will be made available for free up to a threshold through a range of new application programming interface (API) services to support innovators, start-ups, and business.

The Geospatial Commission, working with [Ordnance Survey](#), [Geoplace](#), [Improvement Service Scotland](#), and the [Local Government Association](#), has released on open terms for the first time core location identifiers – Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRNs), Unique Street Reference Numbers (USRN), and the Topographic Object Identifier (TOID) and their associated geometry.

Improved access to data is at the heart of the [UK's Geospatial Strategy](#).

In addition, [HM Land Registry](#) and [Registers of Scotland](#) have also today published their [INSPIRE spatial polygon data](#), which will also better support the housing, land and planning sector to provide authoritative property extents.

Director of the Geospatial Commission, [Thalia Baldwin](#), said:

Better data and improved access is crucial to our recovery and growth. Improving access to Ordnance Survey's MasterMap, combined with the release of the core UPRN and USRN location data identifiers that form the golden thread links activity across sectors – from housing, transport and retail to emergency response, public health and environmental impacts – to support productivity and economic value.

Image Credit: K303/Shutterstock.com

[Near miss with a track worker at Leighton Buzzard](#)

News story

Near miss with a track worker at Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, 16 June 2020.



Forward facing CCTV image showing position of track worker within an area of limited clearance (courtesy of Avanti West Coast)

At around 16:28 hrs on 16 June 2020, a passenger train, travelling from London Euston to Liverpool Lime Street, came close to striking a track worker just north of Leighton Buzzard station. The track worker was undertaking a vegetation survey on behalf of a contractor. No one was injured.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances surrounding this incident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will be made available on our website in the next few weeks.

Published 1 July 2020

[Vaccine update: issue 309, June 2020](#)

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[Perceptions of qualifications in England](#)

News story

The results of Ofqual's surveys of perceptions of general qualifications and vocational and technical qualifications in England.



Ofqual has today (1 July 2020) published [Wave 18 of the annual qualifications perceptions survey for general qualifications](#). This information, published annually as Official Statistics, was carried out by the research organisation YouGov on our behalf.

We have also published today, our third survey on the [Perceptions of Vocational and Technical Qualifications](#). The survey was also carried out by YouGov.

These regular survey outputs allow us to understand changes and variations of levels of understanding about qualifications among learners, parents, business groups, teachers, headteachers and the general public.

Please note that the responses presented in these reports do not relate to the exceptional arrangements being put in place this year in response to coronavirus (COVID-19). They refer only to the normal arrangements in place in 2019.

Highlights from the general qualifications survey:

GCSEs, AS and A levels

- the perception of GCSEs being trusted qualifications has increased, with approximately 74% agreeing with this statement in the current wave compared with 71% in wave 17
- consistent with the previous three waves, 41% stakeholders agreed that GCSE standards are maintained year-on-year, and 49% for AS and A level
- the proportion agreeing that AS and A levels are trusted qualifications was 82%, which is consistent with the previous four waves
- the proportion of stakeholders who agreed that the marking of GCSEs, AS and A levels is accurate was consistent with wave 17, with four in ten stakeholders in agreement in wave 18

Applied General qualifications

- in line with wave 17, a quarter agreed that Applied General qualifications are trusted qualifications and that standards are maintained year-on-year, higher than in waves 16 and 17

GCSE 9 to 1 grading

- there has been a sustained increase in knowledge of the 9 to 1 grading scale, with 9 in 10 stakeholders correctly identifying that 9 is the highest grade that students can get, compared to under 7 in 10 stakeholders in wave 14

Special consideration, reasonable adjustments and malpractice

- overall, 8 in 10 teachers and headteachers agreed that they have adequate information about the arrangements that are available for a GCSE or AS/A level student who is eligible for special consideration. This was in line with the previous wave, and an increase in levels of agreement from waves 15 and 16
- consistent with waves 15, 16 and 17, the majority (86%) of teachers and head teachers agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs, AS and A levels

Reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals (ROMMA)

- seven in ten stakeholders were aware that there is a review of marking and moderation, and appeals (ROMMA) system for GCSE, AS and A level results. Consistent with the previous wave, a similar proportion of stakeholders agreed that the ROMMA system is fair for GCSEs and AS/A levels. There was an increase in headteachers' levels of agreement compared to wave 17

Highlights from the Vocational and Technical skills survey:

Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs)

- the vast majority (88%) of training providers, 70% of learners and nearly half of employers said they value VTQs
- approximately two-fifths of employers reported having a very or quite good understanding of VTQs, with large employers being the most likely to see the value of VTQs
- among learners who had started or completed a VTQ, the most frequently

perceived benefit was an increase in confidence using their vocational / technical skills

Functional Skills qualifications (FSQs)

- the majority of training providers (64%) and learners (54%) said that they value FSQs and a significant proportion of these agreed that FSQs offer value for money
- medium-sized and large employers were significantly more likely than smaller employers to agree that their organisation values FSQs

End-point assessments (EPAs)

- overall, there was a strong sense that apprenticeships are good preparation for work – with the majority (84%) of providers, learners (81%) and employers (74%) in agreement on this
- 3 in 5 providers reported having a very or quite good understanding of EPAs of apprenticeships, with two-thirds confirming that they know the difference between apprenticeship frameworks and the new apprenticeship standards
- nearly 8 in 10 providers were aware that EPAs are specific to apprenticeship standards

Please note that YouGov and Ofqual advise against drawing conclusions based on differences in the data in comparison with waves 1 and 2 of the VTQ survey. This is due to key changes in the sampling approach and survey mode made for wave 3.

Published 1 July 2020