

# [Russia's deeply irresponsible veto will have a tragic impact on 4.1 million Syrians](#)

Thank you President.

I'd like to start by expressing the UK's deep condolences following the deaths of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and former President José Eduardo dos Santos.

I'd like to start by thanking Ireland and Norway for their sterling efforts and masterful diplomacy as penholders to find a reasonable compromise on this text.

It is deeply regrettable that Russia has yet again vetoed a humanitarian resolution on Syria. This is a deeply irresponsible veto that will have a tragic impact.

The UN and humanitarian organisations have repeatedly described a 12-month renewal as essential, not least to provide operational hope for the 4.1 million Syrians who desperately rely on the support provided by the cross-border mechanism.

The penholders consulted Council members extensively and their balanced text also provided important support for early recovery, resilience and livelihoods planning, reflected in the widespread support it received.

A renewal for six months will create significant operational challenges for frontline NGOs – to their planning, their procurement, their hiring of staff and ultimately their sustainability.

We will not support the resolution tabled by the Russian Federation, which simply serves to slice in half the fragile certainty we are giving to humanitarian operations, and to bolster the Assad regime.

We do need to find a way forward to preserve this vital humanitarian lifeline and the penholders have our full support as they seek to do that.

Thank you Mr President.

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## [Monkeypox: continuing transmission in](#)

# interconnected sexual networks

The latest UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) [technical briefing](#) on the current UK monkeypox outbreak shows no signs of a decline in the outbreak. In line with global observations, there is no evidence of sustained transmission beyond these networks.

The outbreak continues to grow and information from cases strongly suggests the virus is passing primarily via close or sexual contact. UKHSA Health Protection teams in all regions of England continue to identify and risk assess close contacts of confirmed cases.

The majority of people with monkeypox can be safely managed at home and there have been no deaths in the UK. Most people experience mild disease but it can cause a significant illness in some that requires hospitalisation, including severe pain.

A vaccination programme is beginning, and sexual health services will offer the vaccine to anyone considered to be at higher risk of exposure. This includes people with a recent history of multiple partners, participating in group sex, attending sex on premises venues, or have recently had a bacterial sexually transmitted infection.

Up to 6 July 2022, there were 1,517 laboratory confirmed cases in the UK. The median age of confirmed cases in the UK was 36 years old. In England, 99% of cases are male and 74% are known to be London residents. 16% (226) of England cases reported recent foreign travel, with 176 of these reporting travel within Europe.

The briefing includes a breakdown of events that cases reported attending, 572 in total. 17% of those who provided information had been to a sex-on-premises venue and while this does not confirm transmission occurred there, UKHSA continues to conduct outreach work with event organisers and to provide guidance on how to minimise risk across a range of settings.

Dr Meera Chand, Director of Clinical and Emerging Infections, UKHSA said:

It's concerning that we are continuing to see the outbreak grow and we urge the public to do all they can to help us slow the spread.

If you've recently had new or multiple sexual partners, please be vigilant to the symptoms of monkeypox, and be aware that many of the cases we're seeing are finding only a single, or few, lesions.

If you are concerned that you may have monkeypox, take a break from events, meeting with friends or having sexual contact. Instead, stay at home and contact 111 or your local sexual health service for advice. Please contact the clinic ahead of your visit and avoid close contact with others until you've been reviewed by a clinician.

To assist with our contact tracing, we encourage everyone to ensure they exchange contact details with sexual partners.

If you are called forward for vaccination, we strongly recommend that you take it.

UKHSA will continue to publish regular technical briefings as the response to the outbreak continues.

Latest UK case numbers are available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

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## [Official opening for Romsey Flood Alleviation Scheme](#)

Romsey Flood Alleviation Scheme, which will better protect 127 properties, was officially unveiled today (Friday 8 July) by Caroline Nokes MP for Romsey and Southampton North.

The scheme that became operational in autumn 2021, reduces flooding from the River Test and surface water. Costing approximately £9.5 million to build, of which the Environment Agency contributed approximately £6.4 million through government grant in aid.

Romsey has a history of flooding in the 1960s, 1995, 2000 and 2001. In the winter of 2013/2014, water overtopped Fishlake Stream and the Barge Canal, badly flooding 36 homes and 44 commercial properties with devastating consequences for families and businesses.

Simon Moody, Area Director, Environment Agency, said:

The climate emergency is bringing greater risks. We're seeing more extreme weather, with an increase in flooding. Our response must be to protect our communities as best we can, make them more resilient, and to tackle both the causes and consequences of climate change. We can make a difference if we all work together, like we have done on this scheme.

The flood alleviation scheme includes a tilting weir structure used to control the flows of Fishlake Stream and earth embankments to contain the excess water within a flood plain. At the Causeway, more earth embankments have been built to manage flood water as well as a new bridge and a spillway to enable the flood plain to drain into the River Test.

The risk of surface water flooding has been reduced by improvements to the

existing drainage system including ditches, pipes and road drainage at Mainstone junction and Middlebridge Street.

As well as reducing flooding, there are additional ecological benefits from the scheme. Some 150 metres of new water vole habitat have been created and 150 metres of river environment have been enhanced by managing vegetation and improving the structure that controls water flow in the Barge Canal. The London plane trees, some of the oldest in the country, were also carefully preserved during construction.

Members of the local community were consulted throughout the scheme's development to ensure they were happy with the design. As a result, the new bridge on the Causeway is a Dutch, carbon-friendly design made of glass-reinforced plastic and is covered in timber to blend in with the picturesque surroundings.

The scheme, which took 3.5 years to build, has been developed through partnership working with Hampshire County Council and Test Valley Borough Council.

Councillor Edward Heron, Executive Lead Member for Transport and Environment Strategy at Hampshire County Council, said:

This is an important scheme and we have been delighted to play our part in helping protect residents in Romsey. We contributed £1.5 million towards the total cost and worked in partnership with the Environment Agency, the Borough Council and other local stakeholders on the planning, design and construction of the scheme.

While there will always be a risk of flooding, thanks to the work that has been completed, residents' properties, businesses, roads and other infrastructure are now much better protected and more resilient.

In addition to building and maintaining flood defences the Environment Agency also runs a free flood warning service. You can sign up for free flood warnings in minutes on gov.uk at [Check for flooding – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/check-for-flooding) or call Floodline free on 0345 988 1188.

The scheme was funded from flood and coastal erosion risk management grant in aid (£6.4 million), local levy from the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (£1.2 million), Hampshire County Council contribution (£1.5 million), Test Valley Borough Council contribution (£0.3 million) and EU funding (£0.1 million).

Photos of the flooding, the scheme and its opening are available on request.

In the 2020 Budget the Government doubled its investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management in England by committing a record £5.2bn in 2021-27. This long-term commitment will better protect hundreds of thousands of

properties, including homes, businesses, schools and hospitals from the risk of flooding.

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## [Northern Ireland Secretary meets young people in Belfast](#)

Press release

Northern Ireland Secretary of State Shailesh Vara MP met with young people during his first visit to Belfast since his appointment.



Mr Vara visited The Prince's Trust centre in the city to learn more about the charity's work with disadvantaged young people building skills and employability.

Earlier on Friday, the Secretary of State met with staff at Erskine House, the Northern Ireland Office's headquarters in the city centre.

### **Speaking afterwards, the Secretary of State said:**

"It was fantastic to visit the Prince's Trust on my first visit to Northern Ireland as Secretary of State today and learn more about how the charity supports young people by developing their confidence and the skills needed to succeed through education, training and employment.

"As we build a fairer, more equal, and tolerant society in Northern Ireland, the Government remains committed to increasing respect, understanding and reconciliation between communities in Northern Ireland, and helping to build a better environment for future generations."

### **Chair of The Prince's Trust in Northern Ireland, Lord Caledon, said:**

"We were very pleased to welcome the Secretary of State to our Belfast

headquarters on his first day in Northern Ireland. The Prince's Trust does valuable work with our young people, and it was fantastic for the Secretary of State to hear about their experience, and the impact The Trust has had on them."

Mr Vara added:

"I was also delighted to meet with civil servants at the department's new headquarters in the city centre, ensuring the Northern Ireland Office is more accessible than ever to the wider community. Our new hub represents part of our mission to make Northern Ireland a better place to live, work and invest.

"I look forward to meeting with more people from across Northern Ireland in the days and weeks ahead."

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## [We've overexploited the planet, now we need to change if we're to survive](#)

The relationship between humans and nature is under intense and increasing strain. The report released today by IPBES, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (akin to the [IPCC reports on climate change](#)), provides compelling evidence that humans are overexploiting wild species and habitats. Harmful activities, including habitat destruction, poor farming practices and pollution, have altered ecosystems significantly, driving many species past the point of recovery. In Great Britain alone, of the 8,431 species assessed in the [2019 State of Nature report](#), 1,188 are threatened with extinction. Globally, there are an estimated [1 million at risk](#), with [biodiversity declining at a faster rate than at any time in human history](#).

We cannot ignore biodiversity loss. Biodiversity is the variability that exists among all living organisms, between different species, within species including genetic makeup, and in wider ecosystems. Billions of people rely on wild species for food, clean water, energy, income and health and wellbeing. Annually, crops worth up to [£480 billion](#) are pollinated by a variety of wild animals, and an estimated [4 billion people depend on natural medicines](#) for their healthcare. These vital ecosystem services are fundamentally based on a healthy environment, and this requires biodiversity. Losing biodiversity leaves species and ecosystems less resilient to challenges such as invasive species or pests, meaning there is an increased risk of whole populations being wiped out and destabilising the entire ecological network. Nature is a finite resource, and human self-interest alone should determine that biodiversity must be protected.

Alongside overexploitation, humans are driving biodiversity loss by destroying, polluting and fragmenting habitats across the globe. Many of the UK's important peatlands, which provide a home for rare species such as the hen harrier, have been drained for agricultural use. The Amazon rainforest is being cleared to such an extent that [it may be near a tipping point](#) beyond which it cannot recover.

The climate crisis is exacerbating the issue. Many species simply cannot adapt to the scale and pace of changing temperatures. For example, warming seas and ocean acidification are devastating coral reefs around the world. This year, the [Great Barrier Reef suffered its sixth mass bleaching event](#) since 1998 with more than 90% of reefs affected. In many cases, when an ecosystem loses biodiversity, it becomes less able to store carbon, contributing to further climate change. We have a vicious cycle: climate change leads to biodiversity losses, which in turn leads to further climate change. As governments around the world develop plans to reduce carbon emissions and conserve biodiversity, the message is simple: we must solve both problems together.

What can be done? Just as science has diagnosed the problem, it can provide solutions. Using strong evidence, such as this IPBES report, governments can develop effective policy. Integrated and collaborative planning can deliver sustainable solutions which [address climate change and biodiversity loss simultaneously](#), protecting and enriching human lives.

In southern India, scientists, Indigenous communities and local government have worked collaboratively to [protect and restore mangrove forests](#). The trees' interconnecting large-root systems offer protection against rising sea levels, provide habitats for fish and crustaceans, and clean surrounding water. The trees also draw and store carbon from the atmosphere and encourage carbon-rich sediment deposits. The increase in wildlife has benefited small scale fisheries and tourism. Innovative and effective nature-based initiatives such as these could be implemented throughout different landscapes across the planet.

There are also simple day-to-day things we can do to benefit our environment; for instance, reducing food waste. Currently [about 30% of all food produced globally goes uneaten](#), meaning a significant proportion of the resources, and importantly the land used to grow, process, pack and transport it, is wasted and less able to support biodiversity.

Political will and leadership are needed, and the 15th UN Convention on Biological Diversity conference in December, CBD COP15, provides the next critical opportunity for governments to commit to real ambitious change.

CBD COP15 could deliver landmark action and be as important for biodiversity as the Paris Agreement is proving for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It will set the direction for the next decade of international action and beyond. Governments should agree to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, and develop evidence-based, actionable plans to do so. An important challenge is to define a reliable and simple integrated metric, like carbon emissions have been used for climate goals. At the end of June, negotiators

met in Nairobi for their latest attempt to agree the [Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#), and while progress was made, it did not go far enough.

The last decade's targets were not met; the next decade's must be. Credible delivery plans will be required, and we need a robust mechanism for monitoring progress and holding ourselves to account. CBD COP15 is the time to finalise the framework, and countries must come to the table prepared to make and support ambitious commitments. This is our chance to secure long-lasting agreements to protect our planet.

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