

Chief Vet warns rescue charities to follow documentation requirements

Animal rehoming charities were today urged to ensure any rescued animals enter the country with the necessary vaccination paperwork after an illegal movement of Ukrainian dogs was discovered by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), risking the UK's rabies-free status.

Follow-up border checks by the APHA showed a shipment of 19 animals imported by a rescue charity travelled on falsified rabies documentation. The dogs had been rehomed and fostered by families across Great Britain, but local authorities and APHA are now tracing the animals to protect public health and ensure we remain rabies free. The animals are being placed in quarantine while a further decision is made on their disease risk level.

The UK's strict animal control strategies are central to our animal health standards which are second to none. We have long been rabies-free and wish to remain so and to protect the public from diseases and pathogens which can be brought to the UK by animals which have not received the correct health preparations to travel.

UK Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss said:

Checks have confirmed that these animals did not receive the necessary blood tests to enter the UK. We are taking quick action to limit the risk of disease spreading by quarantining all animals involved in this case until further notice. We are grateful for the cooperation of the households involved and would encourage the public to contact us with any information they may have.

Animals without the correct vaccinations pose a real disease threat to both our own beloved animals and to people whilst also impacting the rabies-free status we have held for many years.

Earlier this month, the Government confirmed new emergency support for those fleeing Ukraine with their pets. Using an emergency licence, people fleeing the country can bring their pets to the UK with any quarantine costs fully covered.

There is a limited amount of quarantine facilities in the UK and we will prioritise those fleeing Ukraine who wish to bring their pets with them, rather than animals being brought over on a commercial basis, including rescue imports. [Commercial imports](#), including rescue imports, must follow the [usual process](#) and ensure correct vaccination documents are in place.

Before arrival, people leaving Ukraine or their carrier should contact the Animal and Plant Health Agency at pettravel@apha.gov.uk or call +44 3000 200

301 option 2. They will then be able to confirm their approval for their emergency licence and organise any necessary stay in quarantine which is required to complete the rabies risk management process.

If you believe you have taken in a Ukrainian pet from this charity, please contact the APHA helpline on 03000 200 301 to help ensure they can be quarantined as soon as possible.

[UK Alumni Awards 2021/22 in Lahore showcase impact of UK higher education](#)

Head of Communications and Public Diplomacy at the BHC, Fouzia Younis along with British Council's Director Punjab Michael Houlgate attended the event and presented the awards to alumni from UK universities who have made significant business, scientific or social impact on Pakistani communities. The Alumni Awards celebrate the achievements of outstanding Pakistanis who have studied in the UK and are using their education to make a positive impact in Pakistan.

They also distributed certificates to Chevening alumni who participated in the recently concluded Chevening Mentoring Scheme as mentors, helping mentees through a bespoke training programme. The scheme is designed to support women and minorities in law and entrepreneurship, helping them navigate challenges in their respective professions, particularly on gender rights and inclusion.

Head of Communications and Public Diplomacy, British High Commission, Fouzia Younis, said:

I am delighted that the alumni are using their experience from the UK to give back to society in Pakistan and transform lives. Today's ceremony recognises their outstanding talent and contribution.

I hope more students especially girls and women will join them in the years to come, including through our flagship Chevening scheme.

The second phase of the Chevening mentoring scheme, 80% of the mentees were women, including 33% from minorities. The British High Commission has recently added journalism to the mentoring scheme to support talented female journalists.

12 finalists were selected for the Study UK Alumni Awards 2021-22 in Pakistan from more than 1,200 applicants from around the world, for their outstanding achievements as business professionals, entrepreneurs and community leaders, and for their important contribution to strengthening collaborative ties

between the UK and Pakistan. Award winners for three award categories: Business and Innovation, Science and Sustainability, and Social Action will be announced at a ceremony in Lahore, and will also be broadcast online on [Facebook](#).

The prestigious international award celebrates UK higher education and the achievements of UK alumni all over the world. Now in its eighth year, international UK alumni applied from more than 140 countries, representing alumni from more than 80 per cent of all UK higher education institutions.

Director Punjab of British Council, Michael Houlgate said:

The remarkable individuals selected as finalists for the Study UK Alumni Awards in Pakistan have all taken their UK education as a starting point to excel in their chosen careers and shape the world around them. This year's finalists are testimony not only to the diversity of UK alumni and their endeavours, but also to the transformative impact of a UK education.

[UK to provide vital food supplies to encircled Ukrainian cities](#)

The UK is set to provide £2 million in vital food supplies for areas of Ukraine encircled by Russian forces, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss confirmed today (26 March).

The announcement comes following a direct request from the government of Ukraine, with the UK funding a rapid donation of dried food, tinned goods and water.

Warehouses in Poland and Slovakia are being readied to supply these goods to the government of Ukraine from early next week. Around 25 truckloads will then be transported by road and rail to the local Ukrainian communities in greatest need.

It is estimated over 12 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance across Ukraine, with the actual figure likely to be much higher.

This rapid donation is essential, with the window to reach towns and cities already encircled, as well as those at high risk, closing.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

This vital donation of food and supplies will help support the

Ukrainian people in the face of Russia's barbaric invasion.

Our teams are working day and night with our Polish and Slovakian friends and the government of Ukraine to ensure those at most risk get the essential supplies they so badly need.

Alice Hooper, FCDO Humanitarian Adviser said:

The need on the ground in Ukraine is clear, with so many people in encircled areas trapped in basements without access to food or water. Nearly 6 million children remain in Ukraine, many sheltering inside buildings which are coming under attack.

We are working with partners at the borders to ensure these vital UK supplies reach the places they are needed most as quickly as possible.

Access to food, water and cooking facilities for those trapped by Russian advances is becoming increasingly difficult, with people taking refuge in basements from shelling.

This latest donation comes as part of the £400 million committed by the UK, with £220 million of this on humanitarian aid. The Foreign Secretary today announced the allocation of the first tranche of this funding, which will be shared amongst trusted humanitarian delivery partners on the ground, including:

- £25 million to the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR to support surrounding countries to receive and care for refugees from the conflict
- £20 million to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the OCHA-managed Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF), to provide coordinated lifesaving humanitarian assistance, protection and basic services to those remaining in Ukraine
- £10 million to International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to deliver healthcare and water, sanitation and hygiene provision amongst other support

1. The UK announced [nearly £400 million of aid for urgent economic and humanitarian support](#) since the invasion. This includes a £220 million package for aid agencies on the ground to provide medical supplies and basic necessities, saving lives and protecting vulnerable people.
2. UK bilateral food assistance will support efforts by the UN World Food Programme and Red Cross to scale up alternative food assistance while maintaining the safety and security of staff on the ground.

Search launched for the next UNESCO World Heritage Sites

- Potential locations have the chance to join the likes of Machu Picchu, the Taj Mahal and The Tower of London for this prestigious award
- Successful sites will progress to formal nomination stage for World Heritage Status

Heritage Minister Nigel Huddleston has today launched a call for the UK's next nominations for UNESCO World Heritage Status.

Open to sites in the UK, Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, nominations are reviewed every ten years and is a chance for sites to receive international recognition for the important role they have played in the world's history.

The successful sites could join the UK's 33 other UNESCO World Heritage Sites including Stonehenge, Saltaire, The Tower of London and Hadrian's Wall. Last year the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales was the most recent UK location to receive UNESCO status. 2021 also saw the City of Bath – originally named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987 – awarded a special dual designation with 11 other European Spa towns including Baden-Baden in Germany and Vichy in France.

Heritage Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

UNESCO World Heritage Status has a transformative impact on places bestowed with this honour. As well as international acclaim, UNESCO status boosts tourism and creates employment and economic growth opportunities.

The UK and Overseas Territories have many potential contenders and I can't wait to see what fantastic sites and stories we uncover in our search.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will form an independent panel of heritage experts to review nominations. Nominations will be assessed against rigorous criteria and only locations with the potential to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List will be put forward to formal nomination.

Notes to editors:

The UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is

responsible for meeting the requirements of the World Heritage Convention within the UK. This includes maintaining and reviewing the Tentative List of sites, formally nominating new sites, and ensuring existing sites are conserved and protected.

The new Tentative List will be published by DCMS later this year.

The UK's next nominations, drawn from the current Tentative List will be examined by the World Heritage Committee in 2024. They are the Scottish Flow Country and Gracehill in Northern Ireland. Gracehill – a Moravian Church settlement dating from 1759 – will be nominated as part of a joint bid led by the US and Germany to add a number of Moravian Church settlements to the existing UNESCO World Heritage Site in Denmark.

The UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the UK and Overseas Territories are:

Cultural Sites

- Blaenavon Industrial Landscape (2000) *Blenheim Palace (1987)
- Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey, and St Martin's Church (1988)
- Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd (1986)
- City of Bath (1987)
- Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape (2006)
- Derwent Valley Mills (2001)
- Durham Castle and Cathedral (1986)
- Frontiers of the Roman Empire (1987, 2005, 2008)
- Gorham's Cave Complex (2016)
- Heart of Neolithic Orkney (1999)
- Historic Town of St George and Related Fortifications, Bermuda (2000)
- Ironbridge Gorge (1986)
- Jodrell Bank Observatory (2019)
- Maritime Greenwich (1997)
- New Lanark (2001)
- Old and New Towns of Edinburgh (1995)
- Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey (1987)
- Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal (2009)
- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (2003)
- Saltaire (2001)
- Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites (1986)
- Studley Royal Park including the Ruins of Fountains Abbey (1986)
- The English Lake District (2017)
- The Forth Bridge (2015)
- The Great Spa Towns of Europe (2021)
- The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales (2021)
- Tower of London (1988)

Natural Sites

- Dorset and East Devon Coast (2001)
- Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast (1986)
- Gough and Inaccessible Islands (1995, 2004)

- Henderson Island (1988)

Mixed Cultural / Natural

- St Kilda (1986, 2004, 2005)

England's largest ever seagrass planting hits new milestone

England's largest ever seagrass restoration project has reached a new milestone by planting around 70,000 seed bags spanning 3.5 hectares of seabed, which will provide vital habitat for marine life.

The £2.5 million LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES partnership to ['Save Our Seabed'](#) led by Natural England and funded by the EU LIFE Programme, was launched in July 2019. It is seeking to protect and restore sensitive seabed habitats which are at risk.

Habitats such as seagrass meadows, mangroves and tidal marshes, are increasingly being recognised for their essential carbon capture abilities – seagrass can be as effective at absorbing and storing carbon as our woodlands. It also provides habitat for sea life including juvenile fish, seahorses and jellyfish, cleans surrounding seawater and helps to stabilise the seabed which can help to reduce coastal erosion. However, research shows the UK has lost at least 44% of its seagrass since 1936.

The UK seabed is threatened by a variety of factors, from seagrass wasting disease (SWD) to pollution and physical disturbance from activities such as the anchoring, launching and mooring of leisure boats.

Natural England is leading efforts to combat UK seagrass losses, in partnership with other organisations including the [Ocean Conservation Trust](#), covering five Special Areas of Conservation in Southern England. To support seagrass recovery in these areas, partners are surveying and mapping seagrass beds to help inform recreational marine users; undertaking studies to better understand how these recreational activities impact seagrass and introducing voluntary No-Anchor Zones. Advanced Mooring Systems are also being trialled, which are designed to interact less with the seabed.

The ReMEDIES partnership has been planting seagrass in the Plymouth Sound and Solent Maritime Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) with its restoration partner Ocean Conservation Trust. The partnership aims to plant a total of eight hectares of seagrass across these two SACs.

Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, said:

Seagrasses are a precious part of our marine ecosystem, providing a habitat for a wide variety of species from juvenile fish to our seahorse populations. They are an essential mechanism for carbon capture and a healthy marine environment.

Seagrasses are vital but they are also very delicate. With their existence threatened by disease, pollution, and human activity, we must all work together to support the recovery of seagrasses – and harness their power to combat climate change and restore our natural environment.

Mark Parry, Development Officer at the Ocean Conservation Trust, said:

Seagrass meadows are one of the most valuable and biodiverse habitats on the planet. By restoring seagrass, we are ensuring they will continue to provide vital environmental benefits to both people and the planet.

We are very proud to be the restoration lead in this project and are grateful for communities in both Plymouth and the Solent volunteering their time to help us restore such an important habitat.

Following further seagrass planting efforts this week, an impressive total of 3.5 hectares of seabed has now been planted, comprising 2.5 hectares in Plymouth Sound and 1 hectare in Solent Maritime. It takes about 10,000 seagrass seed bags per half a hectare, and approximately 70,000 seed bags have been packed by volunteers and deployed into the sea overall.

Later this year, sea dives are due to take place at healthy seagrass meadows in the Solent and Cornwall to collect seagrass seeds. The seeds will then be sent to the ReMEDIES cultivation laboratory at the National Marine Aquarium (NMA) in Plymouth and cared for until they are ready to be planted.

As part of ReMEDIES, the Ocean Conservation Trust is also trialling methods of planting seedlings directly into the seabed. They are currently growing square 'pillows' of multiple seedlings in the lab of the NMA which will be transferred to the seabed at the Plymouth Sound site using divers.

Information and key learnings from ReMEDIES will be shared with other marine conservation projects to help benefit seabed habitats across the UK and Europe.

Further information:

- ReMEDIES is funded by the EU LIFE programme and led by Natural England in partnership with the Ocean Conservation Trust (OCT), Marine Conservation Society, Royal Yachting Association, and Plymouth City Council/Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum.
- The project covers five Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which are

designated areas under the European Union's Habitats Directive in place to protect special habitats and species. The five areas are: Isles of Scilly Complex (SAC), Fal and Helford (SAC), Plymouth Sound and Estuaries (SAC), Solent Maritime (SAC), and Essex Estuaries (SAC).

- Find out more about LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES by following on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook @EULIFERemedies, or visiting www.saveourseabed.co.uk.