

Faith minister joins London church leaders to show support for Ukrainians

Faith Minister Kemi Badenoch and London church leaders today (9 March 2022) met at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in London to demonstrate solidarity and support for the Ukrainian people and the role the Christian church can play in welcoming newly arrived Ukrainians in the UK.

The minister met leaders, including Rector of the Ukrainian Cathedral and Archbishop of Westminster, and said the government and faith leaders stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with the Ukrainian community, which has a 'deep and long-standing connection' with the UK.

Faith Minister, Kemi Badenoch MP, said:

The UK and Ukraine have a deep, long-standing connection, with the first Ukrainians arriving in Manchester over a century ago. Today, in 2022, tens of thousands of people born in Ukraine now call the UK home – and I hope they will continue to call it home long into the future.

Since the conflict began, people in this country have been in awe of the determination and courage Ukrainians have shown.

It has sparked a wave of support across the UK with people up and down the country making donations to help the humanitarian effort and attending vigils to show solidarity.

As ever, the church and other faith communities have been at the heart of these humanitarian efforts, and I stand together with faith leaders in calling for peace and offering our full support.

Those who attended the meeting included:

- Rector of the Ukrainian Cathedral, Archpriest Mykola Matwijiwskyj
- Cardinal Vincent Nichols – RC – Archbishop of Westminster
- Archbishop Nikitas (Archbishop of Thyateira and Britain)
- Archdeacon Luke Miller, Archdeacon of London
- The Very Reverend Archimandrite Nephon Tsimalis (Archimandrite of Thyateira and Britain)
- Archbishop Fidelia Onyuku-Opukiri (Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches)
- Archbishop Angaelos (Coptic Orthodox Archdiocese of London)

The Bishop of London, The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, said:

Church leaders of all denominations across London have been

horrified by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine as it continues to unfold. Today, we stand together in praying for peace.

As millions of Ukrainians are being forced from their homes, families torn apart by a senseless conflict, we, as Christians and as a community, must do all we can to support those fleeing from war and those who remain in Ukraine.

Very Rev Fr Mykola Matwijiwskyj, Cathedral Rector, Vicar General of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London, said

Church leaders have gathered at the Ukrainian Cathedral in central London to stand with Ukraine and its God-loving people as they suffer the atrocities of war and crimes against humanity.

Today, leaders of all denominations across London unite to pray for peace and to work together to ensure the safety and welfare of those fleeing, so that those displaced may find solace and peace of soul in their traditional churches.

DLUHC is launching a new [sponsorship scheme](#) to make sure Ukrainians forced to flee their homes due to this terrible conflict have a route to safety.

The scheme will match charities, businesses and individuals to those who do not have family ties to the UK, allowing them to come here for an initial 12 months, with the ability to work and access public services.

This is alongside the extended family route and changes to visas for people already in the UK which we have been brought in following extensive engagement with Ukrainian partners on what support is needed now, which will allow tens of thousands of people to be reunited with their families and stay here safely.

[Defence Secretary statement to the House of Commons on Ukraine: 9 March 2022](#)

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the situation in Ukraine and Her Majesty's Government's support to the Government in Kyiv.

The situation on the ground is grave. As we can recall, on 24 February, forces of the Russian army, unprovoked, crossed into Ukraine's sovereign

territory. Along three main axes, Russian armour has attempted to occupy Ukraine. Its plan was to reach and encircle Kyiv, encircle Ukrainian forces near the border and invade from the south to link up with its forces via Mariupol.

Russian high command committed 65% of its entire land forces, which are indisputably in possession of overwhelming firepower and armour. It is estimated that at the start of the invasion they had between 110 and 120 battalion tactical groups dedicated to the task, compared with approximately 65 in Ukraine. Their missile stocks gave them even greater strength to reach Ukraine at distance. However, what they did not and still do not possess is the moral component so often needed for victory.

After 14 days of the war, according to the Ukrainian general staff, at 6 March, Russian casualties were assessed to include 285 tanks, 985 armoured fighting vehicles, 109 artillery systems, 50 multiple launch rocket systems, 44 aircraft, 48 helicopters and 11,000 soldiers, who have lost their lives needlessly. There are numerous reports of surrenders and desertions by the ever-growingly disillusioned Russian army. To be clear, those are Ukrainian figures; I have to caution the House that we have not verified them by defence intelligence or other means.

I can announce to the House our assessment that, of the initial Russian objectives, only one has been successfully achieved. While Russian forces are in control of Kherson, Melitopol and Berdyansk in southern Ukraine, they currently encircle the cities of Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Mariupol but are not in control of them. In addition, their first day objective of targeting Ukrainian air defence has failed, preventing total air dominance. The Ukrainian armed forces have put up a strong defence while mobilising the whole population. President Putin's arrogant assumption that he would be welcomed as a liberator has deservedly crumbled as fast as his troops' morale.

For our part, the United Kingdom continues to play a leading role in supporting Ukraine. On 17 January, I announced to the House the Government's intention to supply military aid to the Ukrainian armed forces. The aid took the form of body armour, helmets, boots, ear defenders, ration packs, rangefinders and communication equipment, and for the first time it also included weapons systems. The initial supply was to be 2,000 new light anti-tank weapons (NLAWs), small arms and ammunition.

In response to further acts of aggression by Russia, we have now increased that supply. I can update the House that, as of today, we have delivered 3,615 NLAWs and continue to deliver more. We will shortly be starting the delivery of a small consignment of anti-tank Javelin missiles as well. I want to assure the House that everything we do is bound by the decision to supply defensive systems and is calibrated not to escalate to a strategic level.

Britain was the first European country to supply lethal aid. I was pleased that not long after a military aid donor conference I held on 25 February, many more countries decided to do the same. From right across Europe, the donations came. In particular, I want to highlight the Netherlands, Sweden,

Finland, Denmark, Poland, Romania, the Baltic states, Belgium and Slovenia for their leadership, and we should not ignore the significance of the German Government joining us, in a change of stance, and donating such aid.

Donations are not enough; the delivery of aid to the front line is just as important. Here, again, Britain is leading, because alongside Canada, the United States and Sweden, we have invested in building Ukrainian military capacity since 2015, and we find ourselves able to co-ordinate the delivery alongside our partners.

As the conflict intensifies, the Russians are changing their tactics, so the Ukrainians need to, too. We can all see the horrific devastation inflicted on civilian areas by Russian artillery and airstrikes, which have been indiscriminate and murderous. It is therefore vital that Ukraine maintains its ability to fly and to suppress Russian air attack.

To date, the international community has donated more than 900 man-portable air defence missiles and thousands of anti-tank guided weapons of varying types, as well as various small arms. However, the capability needs strengthening, so in response to Ukrainian requests the Government have taken the decision to explore the donation of Starstreak high-velocity, man-portable anti-air missiles. We believe that this system will remain within the definition of defensive weapons, but will allow the Ukrainian forces to better defend their skies. We shall also be increasing supplies of rations, medical equipment, and other non-lethal military aid.

As with any war, the civilian population is suffering horrendous hardships. According to the Ukrainian Minister of Education, 211 schools have been damaged or destroyed, and media footage shows Russian strikes hitting kindergartens. The Chernihiv regional administration reported that the Russian air force was employing FAB-500 unguided bombs against targets in the city, and according to Human Rights Watch, civilians in Mariupol have now been without water and power for almost a week. President Zelenskyy talked of children dying of thirst. Today the estimated number of Ukrainian civilians killed or injured stands at more than 1,000, but the true figure is expected to be much higher, and I am afraid that worse is likely to come. It is for that reason that the UK will increase its funding for Ukraine to £220 million, which includes £120 million of humanitarian aid. That will make the United Kingdom the single biggest bilateral humanitarian donor to Ukraine. We are also supporting humanitarian work with the Polish and Romanian Governments on the borders.

As I said in my last statement, we still believe that it is worth trying to build diplomatic pressure on Russia. This week, my good friend the Prime Minister met the Prime Ministers of Canada, the Netherlands and Poland. He also spoke to the leaders of France, Germany and the United States, and the Prime Ministers of Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The Foreign Secretary is in Washington at the G7, and also attended the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting earlier this month. I myself met the Ukrainian Ambassador just this morning. President Putin should be and can be in no doubt that the international community is united against his actions. It remains strong, and will not back down.

As well as giving direct military support to Ukraine, we continue to bolster our contribution towards NATO's collective security. NATO Defence Ministers will gather next week in Brussels to discuss the next steps. The UK is doing its bit in giving military support and reassurance to its allies. We are currently supplying significant air power to NATO, including increased air patrols, with both Typhoons and F-35s for NATO air policing. We have also deployed four additional Typhoons to Cyprus to patrol NATO's eastern border, and have sent an additional 800 troops to Estonia. Over the last week, Apache and Chinook helicopters were involved in exercises in Estonia. Meanwhile, HMS Diamond has sailed to the eastern Mediterranean, HMS Northumberland is taking part in a northern deployment, and HMS Grimsby is in the Norwegian sea supporting NATO mine countermeasures.

On Monday HMS Prince of Wales, RFA Tidesurge and HMS Defender joined HMS Albion and RFA Mounts Bay for Exercise Cold Response, a multinational exercise off the coast of Norway, and HMS Richmond will be exercising with the Joint Expeditionary Force. We have put over 1,000 more British troops on readiness to support humanitarian responses in the bordering countries. Britain's contribution to NATO is significant and enduring. It is important at this time that, in order to maximise our reassurance and resilience effect, we co-ordinate through NATO and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

Few of us will not have been moved by President Zelenskyy's speech yesterday. His people are fighting for their very survival. His country is united against this aggression, and it is indeed his country's darkest hour. Yesterday I saw footage of a Russian armoured train, bristling with guns, heading towards Mariupol. A single brave Ukrainian woman ran to the train and shouted "Slava Ukraini"—unmoved, unintimidated by the guns. That woman's bravery should inspire us all.

I know that many of our constituents, and our colleagues, are fearful of what will happen next. President Putin and the Kremlin continue to threaten countries that offer help to Ukraine. Their military campaign will, I am afraid, become more brutal and more indiscriminate, but it is my firm belief that our strength to stand up to such bullying comes from our alliances. As long as we stand united, both as a House and as the international community, the Kremlin's threats cannot hurt us. We should take strength from the peoples right across Europe who are standing shoulder to shoulder to protect our values—our freedom, our tolerance, our democracy and our free press. That is our shield.

[The work of the Environment Agency](#)

The current priorities of the Environment Agency

The job of the Environment Agency is to create a better place. We do many things to that end, but the two biggest are reducing flood risk and

protecting the environment. Following the recent Spending Review we have just got our financial settlement from the government for the next three years, and it will be those two things on which we spend most of our time and money over that period.

We will reduce flood risk by building more new flood defences and maintaining our existing ones; by warning and informing people when flooding threatens; by responding to flood incidents to protect and support communities when it happens; and by providing planning advice to reduce any flood risk from new development.

Flood defence works. Last month the nation faced something we have not seen before – three named storms inside a week. While some 400 properties did sadly flood over that period, our flood defences meant that over 40,000 homes and businesses which would also have flooded did not. And nobody died. Compare that with 1953, when an East Coast storm surge killed over 300 people.

And over the last decade, while storms and rainfall have progressively worsened due to climate change, we have actually seen a reduction in the numbers of properties flooded as a direct result of the government's investment in flood defence. That is why the EA is proud to have completed on time, on target and on budget our last six year flood defence building programme which has better protected 300,000 homes, and why we are now embarking on a new six year programme that is twice the size in terms of cost, more than 50% bigger in terms of the numbers of flood defence schemes we will build, and which will better protect well over 300,000 additional homes and businesses as well as a lot of vital national infrastructure.

As for our other major role, protecting and enhancing the environment, we will do that over the next few years by monitoring the state of our air, water and soils, by regulating the industries which pose the biggest pollution risks, by enforcing the regulations which protect the environment, and by responding to significant pollution incidents to help stop the damage, clear up the mess, identify the cause and if necessary take action against those responsible.

With the new money we have got from the Spending Review we will also step up our efforts to improve water quality, including by increasing the number of inspections of the two main sources of water pollution – farms and sewage works; and by investing in the big water transfer schemes the EA runs which help reduce drought risk.

The impacts of climate change for the UK and the challenges these present

Underpinning everything we do is the biggest issue of our age: the climate emergency.

Climate change is driving heavier and more violent rainfall, which is overloading our sewage systems more frequently, leading to more discharges into rivers; overwhelming urban drainage systems more often, causing more

surface water flooding in our towns and cities; raising sea levels, causing higher risks of the most dangerous kind of flooding – coastal flooding; washing more soils into our rivers, damaging farmers' livelihoods and increasing flood risk; washing more contaminants into our rivers, causing greater pollution; and driving hotter temperatures and lower summer rainfall, causing higher drought risk, harm to water quality and death to wildlife.

So if we want to protect and enhance the environment, we need to tackle climate change. The Environment Agency is playing its part in that, by regulating down the emissions of greenhouse gas that cause it, by running the government's new UK Emissions Trading Scheme, by helping communities adapt to the effects of climate change by building more flood defences and by creating places which are more resilient to its effects through our planning role. We are also trying to walk the walk ourselves with our own commitment to make the EA a net zero carbon emitter by 2030.

The challenges and opportunities around tackling water pollution from sewage

Let's start with the state of our waters. The picture is mixed. Some things are better than they were. Largely down to tougher regulation, there are now far fewer serious pollution incidents damaging our waters than three decades ago, sewage treatment works now discharge much lower amounts of harmful chemicals into our rivers, and the bathing waters around our coasts are in the best condition they have been since we started monitoring them. As our waters have improved, nature has recovered. Otters, which were almost extinct by the 1960s due to the pesticides then in our rivers, have now returned to every county of England.

But the state of our waters is not nearly good enough. Only 14% of our rivers meet the criteria for good ecological status, and that figure has stayed the same for the last several years. That's because we are still seeing too much pollution from sewage, farming, industry and road-run off. And some things are getting worse, with new threats to our waters, including microplastics and so-called forever chemicals.

The way to get our water quality to the state we want is to start by recognising that everyone has a role to play. The polluters – largely water companies and farmers – need to obey the law, stop polluting, and pay the full cost of cleaning up any damage they do. The politicians, the public and the media need to keep up the pressure on the polluters to clean up their act. The EA and the other regulators need to regulate robustly and have the powers and resources to do so. And all of us need to treat water better and use it wisely.

Over the last couple of years the issue of sewage pollution in our rivers has shot up the agenda. Most of the sewerage systems in England are combined sewers: they carry both sewage and rainwater in the form of runoff from roofs and drains. At times of heavy rainfall the system can become overloaded, and that risks sewage backing up into homes and streets or clogging the treatment works. The system is designed to prevent that by discharging diluted sewage to rivers or the sea when the system risks being overwhelmed during heavy

rain. But a growing population and climate change means these combined sewers are discharging more often, and people are increasingly reluctant to tolerate that.

What is the EA doing about this? We:

- have set clear limits in the water companies' environmental permits on when they can discharge untreated sewage into rivers or the sea (only in the event of heavy rainfall or snow melt) and specified how much sewage their treatment plants must be able to treat in order to avoid as far as possible discharging untreated sewage in times of high flow.
- monitor the performance of the water companies against these permits, and seek to ensure that they stick to them; have required the companies to put monitors on their overflows and their treatment works, and are making that data available to the public, which is putting more pressure on the companies to clean up their act.
- have prosecuted water companies for the premature operation of overflows, and are now running a major criminal investigation into whether the companies' sewage treatment plants are all complying with the rules, which may well lead to prosecutions. We always press for exemplary sentences where there is significant harm or deliberate intent, and recently secured a record breaking £90m fine against Southern Water.

There are opportunities here. In the long term, to create a better sewage system that does less damage to the environment. In the shorter term, to improve the behaviour of the water companies and enlist public support to ensure that our waters are protected. One idea, put forward recently by the House of Commons' Environmental Audit Committee, is to build a network of citizen scientists to help monitor our rivers and inform the action we take to protect them.

I like the concept. I like the principle it embodies: that all of us are responsible for the state of our waters. I like the practical benefits it could deliver: better understanding, in real time, of what's happening in our rivers allowing us to act better and faster. And I like the way it could do a lot with a little: at a time of scarce resources the way to do things better with less is do them together. So we are looking at whether we could do something on those lines.

The implementation of the Environment Act and role it will play

The Environment Act came into force in November. It is a good thing. It is one of the main mechanisms to deliver the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, which has at its heart the ambition that we will be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

To help achieve that, the Act requires the government to set long-term legally binding targets for air quality, biodiversity, water, resource efficiency and waste reduction. Those targets will place a legal obligation on government to deliver them. The EA is playing a central role, both in developing those targets and in delivering them.

There are several other important elements of the Act. To cite just two, it requires the Secretary of State to produce a policy statement on environmental principles (polluter pays, etc) to which Ministers must have due regard when making policy; and it establishes the Office for Environmental Protection which will hold the government and other public authorities (including the EA) to account in complying with environmental law.

We welcome these moves, and will continue to work closely with the government, parliament, businesses and NGOs to create the better place for people and wildlife we all want.

[Swansea's new Arena opens with City Deal funding](#)

Swansea's new £135 million Copr Bay destination has been officially opened.

UK Government Minister David TC Davies was among those present to officially open Swansea's 3,500-capacity venue, called the Digital Arena, which has been part-funded by the £1.3bn Swansea Bay City Deal.

The new facility hosts its first show on 15 March 2022 when stand-up comedian, John Bishop performs there.

The Digital Arena is at the heart of the £135 million Copr Bay development, and is surrounded by a new 1.1 acre coastal park, accessed by a new bridge over Oystermouth Road.

UK Government Minister David TC Davies said:

Copr Bay is a wonderful addition to Swansea and I'm absolutely delighted that the UK Government has contributed £13.7m to the project. It will attract visitors and provide a great leisure destination to Swansea's residents. And it will support jobs and opportunities, as we build back better after the Covid pandemic.

Projects like this one demonstrate what the UK Government means when we talk about Levelling Up and means that Swansea has a great future.

I'd like to thank all our partners for the hard work that has gone into this fantastic project.

Cllr Rob Stewart, Swansea Council Leader, said:

The official opening of Copr Bay phase one is delivering on our promise to the people of Swansea. This shows Swansea is not a city of artist's impressions – we are transforming the city with a £1bn programme of investment.

Copr Bay will create a fantastic new leisure destination and hundreds of jobs and opportunities for local people, while also helping support local businesses and generate more footfall and spending for our city centre.

We've delivered this scheme during a pandemic, so everyone involved deserves enormous credit – from council staff and funding partners to our contractors and Ambassador Theatre Group, who will operate the arena on our behalf and bring world class entertainment to Swansea.

Worth £17.1m a year to Swansea's economy, Copr Bay is already acting as a catalyst for even more jobs and investment, meaning Swansea is very well-placed to quickly bounce back from the economic impact of Covid.

It's a key part of a £1bn regeneration story that's unfolding in Swansea, transforming our city into the UK's best to live, work, study and visit.

Mark Drakeford, First Minister of Wales, said:

This is a very exciting time for the regeneration of Swansea and I'm delighted that we've been able to invest in these projects which will increase the connectivity between the city centre and the waterfront and provide Swansea with a state-of-the-art facility that will increase its ability to host major cultural and business events. I'd like to congratulate all partners on delivering this project in such difficult circumstances.

[Statement on the phasing out of](#)

Russian oil imports

Introduction

Thank you very much Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to start by saying what a privilege it was for all of us to hear the historic address in the House yesterday by President Zelenskyy. I am sure all Members will join me in thanking him once again for his inspiring words, his great leadership. And it is with those words in mind, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I come here today.

With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the UK phase out of imports of Russian oil in response to Vladimir Putin's brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The UK joins key allies, including the United States, in halting the import of Russian oil, which makes up 44% of Russian exports and 17% of the government revenue through taxation.

This action follows the most punishing set of sanctions the British state has ever imposed on a G20 nation.

Our trade, financial, and personal sanctions are having an effect on the Russian economy, the Ruble as I speak has now fallen by nearly 42% – and the Moscow Exchange's stock trading has been shut since 25 February.

The British government has sent a clear message to Putin's regime and those who support him in his war against Ukraine.

Russian Oil Supply

It is important to remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, Russia produces only a fraction of the fuel products currently imported to the UK. In a competitive global market for oil and petroleum products, demand can be met by alternative sources of supply.

As a result of international revulsion at Putin's action, Russian oil is already being excluded from much of the market and currently it is trading at quite a sharp discount from other crude oil sources.

Measure detail

But we want to go further, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Yesterday I set out that the UK is phasing out imports of Russian oil during the course of the year.

This transition will give the market, it will give businesses and supply chains more than enough time to substitute Russian imports.

UK resilience

Businesses should use this year to ensure as smooth a transition as possible so that consumers will not be affected.

The government will work with companies through a new Taskforce on Oil to support them to make use of this period in finding alternative supplies.

Yesterday, I spoke with businesses, unions and representatives from the sector, and of course I and officials in BEIS will continue to engage and support British business.

Whilst Russian imports account for 8% of total UK oil demand, the UK is also, one should remember, a significant producer of both crude oil and petroleum products. We participate in a global market for these products and we have resources in place in the unlikely event of supply disruption.

Over the course of the year the taskforce we set up will work closely with international partners including the USA, the Netherlands, and the Gulf to ensure alternative supplies of fuel products.

Last week I addressed the International Energy Agency and tomorrow we will have an extraordinary meeting of the G7 Energy Ministers to discuss further steps.

While businesses should do everything they can to source oil from alternative sources, they will still be able, it is important to emphasise this, to import Russian oil during the transition period.

These measures target oil related products imports only. The UK is not dependent on Russian natural gas, making up less than 4% of our supply. However, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be exploring options to end this altogether.

I want to be clear to the House that we fully intend, and we must, end our dependency on all Russian hydrocarbons.

In the meantime, we need more investment in North Sea oil and gas production as we make the move to cheaper and cleaner power.

Turning off domestic production – as some are calling for – at this moment would be completely the wrong thing to do. We're not going to do it.

The Prime Minister has also confirmed that the government will set out an energy strategy to explain the UK's long-term plans for greater energy security, including both renewable and nuclear power – building on our [Ten Point Plan](#).

Wider sanctions

This measure – and those being taken by our allies in terms of the oil phase out – will move the West away from a dependency on Russian oil.

It will take us on a road to building a stronger more resilient British energy system.

It will increase the growing pressure on Russia's economy.

And it will ultimately hamper Russia's ability to impose further misery on the Ukrainian people.