

Kabul evacuation enters its final stages

Press release

The UK Armed Forces have now entered the final stages of the evacuation from Hamid Karzai Airport (HKIA) in Kabul.



A member of the RAF escorts Afghan refugees at RAF Brize Norton

Following our pre-planned timetable, processing facilities inside the Baron Hotel in Kabul have been closed. This will enable us to focus our efforts on evacuating the British nationals and others we have processed and who are at the airport awaiting departure.

The UK's ability to process further cases is now extremely reduced and additional numbers will be limited. No further people will be called forward to the airport for evacuation. Evacuating all those civilians we have already processed will free up the capacity needed on UK military aircraft to bring out our remaining diplomats and military personnel.

The decision to close the evacuating handling centre was made by the Chief of Joint Operations and authorised by the Defence Secretary. It reflects the latest understanding of the situation on the ground.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Our top priority as we move through this process will be the protection of all those involved who are operating in a heightened threat environment.

It is with deep regret that not everyone has been able to be evacuated during this process. But I am proud of this remarkable achievement from our Border Force, Armed Forces, MOD, FCDO, Home Office who have evacuated over 13,000 people in 14 days during Operation Pitting. We will continue to honour our debt to all those

who have not yet been able to leave Afghanistan. We will do all that we can to ensure they reach safety.

Published 27 August 2021

[National Data Guardian publishes new guidance about the appointment of Caldicott Guardians](#)

Press release

The National Data Guardian has published guidance under her statutory powers about the appointment, role and responsibilities of Caldicott Guardians, expanding the types of organisations expected to have one.



The National Data Guardian (NDG) has today [published guidance](#) under her statutory powers about the appointment, role and responsibilities of Caldicott Guardians in respect of data processing activities undertaken within their organisations.

Caldicott Guardians are senior people within an organisation who protect the confidentiality of people's information by considering the ethical and legal aspects of data sharing. Previously only NHS organisations and local authorities were required to have one, but this guidance introduces a requirement that widens the type and number of organisations that are expected to have a Caldicott Guardian, whether by appointing a member of their own staff or through other arrangements.

The guidance applies to all public bodies within the health service, adult social care or adult carer support sectors in England that handle confidential information about patients or service users. This also includes

organisations contracted by public bodies to deliver health or adult social care services that handle such information.

As this guidance is published under the National Data Guardian's power to issue guidance described within the [Health and Social Care \(National Data Guardian\) Act 2018](#), those organisations it applies to must have regard to it, and are encouraged to become compliant by 30 June 2023.

This change has been introduced in response to a [public consultation held by the NDG in 2020](#) about the Caldicott Principles and Caldicott Guardians. People who responded to the consultation felt the role needed stronger emphasis across the whole of health and social care, and so the NDG's proposal to expand the types of organisations that are expected to have a Caldicott Guardian received strong support.

National Data Guardian Dr Nicola Byrne said:

"My past experience as a Caldicott Guardian gives me a deep understanding of the vital role that they play in ensuring that health and social care data is used responsibly and ethically to support the delivery of better care. Caldicott Guardians are central to ensuring that confidentiality is protected and that wise decisions are made about the information their organisations hold. For this reason, introducing Caldicott Guardians into more settings is an important step in the right direction when it comes to maintaining people's trust in a confidential health and social care system. We are very pleased to be sharing this guidance today and will be working with partners and colleagues over the coming weeks to ensure that those who need to take action are aware of what is required of them."

Note to editor

Help and resources for those in scope is available on the [UK Caldicott Guardian Council \(UKCGC\) website](#). The UKCGC provide support for Caldicott Guardians and others fulfilling the Caldicott function within their organisation.

Published 27 August 2021

[Thousands of hectares of vital peatland to be restored to help tackle climate change and protect](#)

biodiversity

Thousands of hectares of vital peatland will be restored under ambitious proposals launched today (Friday 27 August) to help tackle climate change and protect biodiversity.

Five new landmark projects to restore England's peatlands to a natural and healthy state will benefit from millions of pounds through the Government's Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme.

The Government intends to invest over £50 million in peat restoration, building on its pledge to restore approximately 35,000 hectares of peatland in England by the end of this Parliament.

As England's largest carbon store on land, peatlands play a vital role in trapping carbon and also provide a wealth of wider benefits such as improved ecosystems and biodiversity, better water quality and natural flood management. However, only 13% of England's peatlands are in a near-natural state. These new projects mark a big step towards achieving our goal to reverse the decline of England's peatlands and will contribute to the ambitious Nature Recovery Network.

The successful projects include:

- Northumberland – Led by Forestry England in partnership with the Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Northumberland National Park Authority, Natural England, Newcastle University and the Ministry of Defence, this project aims to restore 827 hectares of peatland on nine closely connected sites in the Border Mires.
- Lancashire and Cumbria – Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Cumbria Wildlife Trust will collaborate to carry out important restoration works on 16 degraded lowland raised bog sites stretching from Merseyside up to the Scottish border. This encompasses former extensive areas of the Solway Plains, Witherslack Mosses, Lancashire plain and Pilling Mosses, Manchester Mosses, to the Mersey floodplain, and is aiming to restore 227 hectares over the scheme's duration.
- Greater Manchester – The RSPB, in partnership with United Utilities, will deliver a peatland restoration project that aims to restore degraded blanket bog on their partnership site at Dove Stone, aiming to restore 941 hectares of peatland restoration.
- Cornwall, Devon and Somerset – Led by South West Water, this project will restore some of the UK's most southerly blanket bogs on a total of 42 sites, including Bodmin Moor, Penwith, Dartmoor and Exmoor, aiming to restore approximately 2,634 hectares of peatland.
- Yorkshire, Manchester and Durham – Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, together with the North Pennines AONB Partnership and Manchester University, will carry out restoration work on degraded blanket bog across 15 sites in a new collaboration called the Great North Bog Initiative. This project expects to deliver 3,510 hectares of peatland restoration in the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks as well as the

Nidderdale and North Pennines AONBs

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

Our peatlands are remarkable habitats which provide homes for many precious species and hold enormous amounts of carbon. By restoring 35,000 ha of damaged and degraded peatlands in England, 9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide would be prevented from being released by 2050 which would make a significant contribution to combatting the devastating impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss.

The projects being awarded funding today will bring about much-needed peatland restoration across the country. We have committed to triple our historic average annual peat restoration figures and these landscape-scale projects will provide a great contribution to achieving this and accessing the wealth of benefits healthy peatlands offer.

Natural England Chair Tony Juniper said:

Our peatlands exemplify the multiple benefits society can reap from healthy natural systems. They store a vast quantity of carbon, captured from the atmosphere by plants living long ago, they purify and store water, enabling rivers to run steady and clear while at the same time reducing flood risk.

They are also wonderful wildlife habitats, supporting some of our most iconic species, and peat covers some of our most beautiful landscapes, including in the National Parks that we hope even more people will enjoy during the years ahead. By restoring peatlands, we can protect and increase all of these valuable benefits.

I am delighted to see grants being awarded to ambitious and extensive proposals to restore the integrity and quality of peat systems across large landscape areas, contributing to a wider Nature Recovery Network. I am looking forward to seeing how the projects get started and progress.

Applications for restoration grants opened in April, as part of the [Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme](#), a great step towards reversing the current decline in England's peatlands. The recently announced England Peat Action Plan also sets out a host of further actions we will take to ensure our peatlands are functioning healthily for the needs of the planet.

There are also [Discovery Grants](#) available for organisations to scope sites and develop plans for peatland restoration, enabling them to bid for future Restoration Grants. The [application window](#) for the first round of Discovery Grants is currently open, closing Wednesday 1 September.

The second round of Peatland Restoration Grant applications are due to be launched in early 2022.

[Further information on the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme can be read here.](#)

Natural England's Peatland Grant Scheme team can be contacted at peatlandscheme@naturalengland.org.uk

Delivering free, fair and inclusive elections, combatting terrorism and implementing durable solutions for the internally displaced in Iraq

The United Kingdom commends the continued work of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq and the work of SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert. Thank you for your briefing. I'd like to join others in welcoming the Representative of Iraq here today.

I'd like to make four points:

First, the elections on 10 October are critical for Iraq's stability and security. They follow the calls for reform by ordinary Iraqis across the country in 2019. We remain committed to Iraq's democratic progress and welcome the efforts of the UN to support Iraq's High Electoral Commission to deliver a free, fair and credible vote in October.

However, we remain concerned by the continued reports of threats and violence against independent candidates and activists, and the possibility of a low turnout. We urge the Iraqi government and the UN mission to enhance their efforts to communicate the electoral commission's progress in preparing for elections in order to boost turnout and increase credibility. We call on all stakeholders to redouble their efforts and support for a peaceful electoral process, in which Iraqis are able to participate without fear.

Second, the UK welcomes the outcome of the US-Iraq Strategic Dialogue and the joint statement confirming a continued basis for Global Coalition work in supporting the fight against Daesh. We call on the international community to continue its close collaboration to secure Daesh's lasting defeat. The UK continues to support the Government of Iraq, the Global Coalition, and NATO to tackle the Daesh threat.

Third, we remain concerned by the humanitarian situation in Iraq and in particular the 1.2 million Iraqis who remain internally displaced. We urge the Iraqi government to continue working closely with the UN to ensure

internally displaced people are able access assistance and return voluntarily, and in a safe and dignified manner. The leadership of the Iraqi government, working closely with the international community, is essential to finding durable solutions to displacement in Iraq and addressing longer term drivers of instability.

Finally, we welcome the ongoing cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait in the search for missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals. The identification of the remains of a further ten Kuwaiti missing persons is a significant step. The United Kingdom stands alongside the Government of Iraq as it seeks to deliver free, fair and inclusive elections, to combat terrorism and to implement durable solutions for its internally displaced population.

Thank you, Mr President.

'Over 400,000 people in Tigray are experiencing famine conditions – more than in the rest of the world combined'

Thank you Mr President. Let me also offer the UK's condolences for all those who lost their lives in today's terrorist attack in Kabul.

I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. You describe a desperate situation, and it is right this Council considers how it can help. So I would like to make three points in response to what we have heard.

First, all parties must cease hostilities and unfettered humanitarian access must be provided to relieve the toll of this conflict on ordinary Ethiopians.

As the Secretary General told us, over 400,000 people in Tigray are experiencing famine conditions. That is more than in the rest of the world combined.

Only a fraction of the 100 trucks of aid required every day are getting into Tigray. Banking, electricity and communications services remain suspended, posing serious obstacles to humanitarian operations.

The spread of fighting into neighbouring Amhara and Afar states, displacing tens of thousands of civilians, will only extend the human suffering and prolong the conflict. We therefore call on Tigrayan forces to immediately cease fighting in Amhara and Afar.

We reiterate that Eritrean troops must withdraw completely from Ethiopia, as

the Government of Ethiopia has requested. And we call upon the Ethiopian Government to fully enable humanitarian access. That includes removing bureaucratic barriers to aid delivery and allowing sufficient cash and fuel into Tigray to enable humanitarian operations.

Secondly, Mr President, I want to emphasise the need for all parties to ensure the protection of civilians and to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law. The Secretary-General's briefing gave further weight to the reports we have been receiving of atrocities from all sides. These include brutal and systematic sexual violence, massacres, and indiscriminate shelling of towns. We have also witnessed an increase in hate speech and attacks on the humanitarian community.

The United Kingdom fully supports the joint investigation by the UN Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. It is crucial to prospects for peace and reconciliation that this investigation is thorough and robust. And perpetrators of atrocities must be held to account.

Thirdly, Mr President, let me underline the urgency of pursuing political dialogue to end this crisis. The United Kingdom is a longstanding friend and partner of Ethiopia. We have been proud to work alongside Ethiopians to support their progress in reducing poverty and building sustainable economic growth. This conflict is already reversing that progress. It now threatens the long term stability and prosperity of the country and of the region.

We want to see Ethiopia return to a positive trajectory. Ten months in it is clear there is no military solution to this conflict. The only way that Ethiopia can return to peace and prosperity is through an inclusive political settlement. That requires talks between the parties – urgently, and without preconditions.

We support the efforts of the Secretary General and Under Secretary-General Griffiths and by the Africa Union to make this possible, and we therefore welcome the announcement today of the appointment of former President Obasanjo as AU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa.

Mr President, it is abundantly clear what the parties need to do now to end the dreadful toll of human suffering in Ethiopia.

The United Kingdom joins the Secretary-General and other members of this Council in calling on all parties to cease hostilities, allow unfettered humanitarian access, comply with international law, and begin a process of dialogue to resolve the conflict.

Thank you, Mr. President.