

## UK Head of Mission ends two-day visit to South Lebanon

Dr. Longden met the Mayor of Saida Mohamad Saoudi and visited two UK- funded community projects benefiting the residents of the city and their livelihoods. Longden saw how the rehabilitation of Saida's Fish Market supported local fishermen, joined by Ziad Hakawati, municipality focal point on the fish market project. He also saw how the installation of 160 solar-powered streetlights across the city's 7km coastline helped boost tourism and livelihoods. Since 2014, the UK has provided over \$105 million support to its Lebanon Host Communities Support Programme, reaching over 220 municipalities in collaboration with UNDP and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

At a roundtable discussion with Palestinian men and women from the Saida's refugee camps and neighbourhoods, participants presented their initiatives for increasing recycling projects, championing women's empowerment, and supporting the Palestinian communities through Civil Defence representation. Thanks to the UK's Conflict Security and Stability Fund (CSSF), the project has benefited the resilience of tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees and facilitated social integration despite the immense challenges.

In Tyre, Dr. Longden visited the Imam Sadr Foundation with its Director General Nijad Charafeddine and saw a project focusing on vocational training for 18-25 year olds. He visited the Papyrus project previously funded by the UK embassy, which employs vulnerable Lebanese, and refugee women to collect, recycle and convert waste paper into eco-friendly handicraft, and saw the handwoven carpets made by women and vulnerable refugees.

Paying tribute to Becky Dykes's life and the values she upheld, an olive tree was planted in her memory in Qana by UN Women. The tree planting was part of a ceremony to mark the end of a Rebecca Dyke's foundation and UN Women project training women community mediators in conflict prevention. Dr. Longden thanked the women for their touching tribute to an excellent colleague and humanitarian.

The visit to South Lebanon was an opportunity to highlight the impact of climate change on our daily lives and the importance of protecting fragile ecosystems. The British delegation benefited from a guided tour at Tyre Coast Nature Reserve by Dr. Nahed Msayleb head of the Tyre Natural Reserve NGO, and heard about its unique biodiversity providing a safe haven for fauna and flora to flourish.

On day two of his visit, Dr. Longden met in Bint Jbeil's Social Development Centre (SDC) women and girls from various backgrounds who found a safe space to learn and gain skills, benefit from psychosocial support, and integrated Gender Based Violence-Youth programme activities. The safe space in the SDC is part of the UK's No Lost Generation Initiative and provides services to over 1100 beneficiaries every year. It is one of 12 safe spaces set up in SDCs in Lebanon run by the Ministry of Social Affairs in collaboration with

UNICEF Lebanon and local NGOs. With the No Lost Generation Initiative (£92m – 2016-2022) the UK has reached more than 134,000 boys and girls with child protection, Gender-Based Violence services and psychosocial support services to prevent and respond to violence.

At Kfarhatta's Secondary Public School, part of the British Council's Connecting Classrooms Programme, Dr. Longden saw four interactive projects by 48 students and their teachers focusing on Mental health and wellbeing, Media literacy, Climate change, Build back greener and Embrace diversity. The connecting classrooms Programme engages over 100 schools in Lebanon reaching over one hundred thousand boys and girls of all ages.

Dr. Longden also met with MP Bahia Hariri, and visited Beaufort castle.

At the end of his visit, Dr. Martin Longden said from Bint Jbeil:

It has been great to escape the Beirut bubble and come down and meet with people and communities here. And my programme has been really varied, busy which reflects the very special agenda that underpins the UK-Lebanon relationship.

I am really proud to see the transformational impact of British aid programmes here in Southern Lebanon. So from education programmes and protection for women and girls here in Bint Jbeil to support for Lebanese livelihoods in Saida and help to refugees in Tyre. These programmes are making a real difference.

These are truly difficult times for Lebanon. And although the UK will always do what it can to stand by the people of this country, we cannot make the difference without a serious and a credible Lebanese government, that can be a partner to take the reforms necessary to really turn the situation around. How long must the people suffer before Lebanon's politicians come together and take collective action to deal with this crisis?

But on a positive note, I see here in Southern Lebanon as elsewhere in the country people with a real passion and talent and commitment to really make a positive difference to people's lives. And to me these are the true leaders of Lebanon the ones who are getting on and doing what they can to make this country a better place and the UK is really proud to stand with you and support you in this. Thank you.

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# Government continues drive to end rough sleeping, building on success of Everyone In

- Rough sleeping to be combatted through joined-up approach with local partners
- Government, charities and councils to work more closely together to help rough sleepers rebuild lives away from the streets
- Next steps in mission to end rough sleeping, building on successful 'Everyone In' initiative

Rough sleepers are to be helped stay off the streets for good through a joined-up approach to treating the underlying causes of rough sleeping.

Speaking with council and charity leaders today (22 June 2021), Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick set out government plans to build on the hugely successful 'Everyone In' programme through a renewed focus on cross-agency cooperation involving local NHS trusts, Public Health England and councils to tackle the complex root causes of rough sleeping.

Joined-up support services, bringing together central government, councils, charities and welfare groups, will work side-by-side to tackle the underlying issues of rough sleeping, such as healthcare and substance misuse.

This commitment will build on the local partnerships that were developed during the pandemic – providing rough sleepers with a route off the street for good.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick said:

At the beginning of the pandemic we took swift and decisive action to bring rough sleepers in from the streets and settled into longer-term accommodation in record numbers. The results are clear and a huge credit to all involved.

Ending rough sleeping is a personal mission for the Prime Minister and me – and we have made huge progress since he came into No.10, reducing rough sleeping by 43%.

We must ensure we build on this progress as we recover from the pandemic and continue our tight-knit work with partners across the sector to offer all rough sleepers a chance to sustain a life off the streets.

During the pandemic, the government worked hand in hand with partners in local government and charities to support rough sleepers to keep them off the

streets during a period of national emergency.

Today, the Housing Secretary and the Minister for Rough Sleeping, Eddie Hughes, addressed council and charity leaders, praising them for their work since the pandemic began and asking them to continue to work together to cement the achievements of Everyone In, which has supported over 37,000 vulnerable people during the pandemic.

They also heard directly from those working on the frontline and other key partners about the work to end rough sleeping going forward.

The government is focused on learning from what has worked during the pandemic and carefully considering the role of health, justice, immigration and employment alongside housing.

Councils have also been asked to refresh local plans to end rough sleeping and to agree operational targets for reducing rough sleeping in their area this year.

This comes alongside the £750 million committed by the government to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping this year, as part of the commitment to end rough sleeping during this Parliament.

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing, Eddie Hughes MP said:

Today we pay tribute to the tireless efforts of council staff and community groups who, backed by unprecedented government funding, have helped thousands of vulnerable people over the course of the pandemic.

Going forward, it is vital that rough sleeping and health services continue to work together to ensure the necessary support is there when people need it.

Working together we will continue to transform the lives of people sleeping rough on our streets.

Rachael Robathan, leader of Westminster City Council, said:

The reasons why people end up sleeping rough are complex. At Westminster City Council we do everything we can to offer rough sleepers a route into help and safe accommodation, but as a local authority there are limits to what we can do.

That's why I particularly welcome the Secretary of State today setting out a continued approach which draws everyone – central government, councils, charities and welfare groups – together. This policy has already paid dividends in Westminster, where for example the 'Everyone In' policy allowed us to take hundreds of rough sleepers off the streets as the pandemic hit last year.

While the end of the pandemic will no doubt present new challenges, this joint work is getting results and I am happy to support it.

Councils will also be asked to exhaust all options within the law to support rough sleepers not eligible for statutory homelessness assistance due to their immigration status.

This will include working with the voluntary and community sector to support people into employment and accommodation, and working with the Home Office to regularise immigration status through immigration surgeries and the Rough Sleeping Support Service.

The Rough Sleeping Support Service could play a crucial role in this, which is why the Home Office will shortly be reviewing its future operation.

The government's unprecedented Everyone In initiative was launched by the Housing Secretary at the start of the pandemic to protect rough sleepers – some of the most vulnerable people in our communities – and has so far supported over 37,000 individuals, with more than 26,000 already moved on to longer-term accommodation.

The [43% figure](#) refers to annual rough sleeping single night snapshot change between 2018 and autumn 2020.

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## [Highways England digs deep to prepare improvement to vital East Anglia junction](#)

Plans to improve a vital East Anglia junction have taken a step forward with the recent start of preparatory works to help inform the upgrade, which is due to start in 2023.

Highways England is improving the A47 in six places between Peterborough and Great Yarmouth as part of a £450 million-plus investment, including the Thickthorn Interchange with the A11 at Norwich.

Ground investigation work has started, with five holes being gradually drilled up to 120 feet deep to help the project team understand the existing rock and soil types, and therefore inform their work to improve the junction.

Once complete by 2024, the upgraded junction will improve journey times by between four and five minutes for the 53,000 drivers who use the roundabout daily, while also making the junction safer by reducing the number of accidents there.

Highways England programme lead for the A47 Chris Griffin said:

The Thickthorn Interchange connects the A11 to the A47, enabling the growing economic activity around Norwich. The current junction can act as a bottleneck who use the roundabout daily, causing queues and slowing journeys. Our improvements to enlarge the roundabout and provide dedicated free-flow links will reduce delays at the junction, ensuring smoother and safer journeys.

Drilling helps us understand what types of soil, rock, and groundwater are in the area

The work will see a 17-foot long drill being used to gain a better understanding of the ground conditions, which is vital before work can start on the upgrade. Noisy work will only take place during the day, with Cantley Lane South currently closed from the A47 to the railway bridge until Friday 9 July with a clearly signed diversion route in place. One lane is currently closed on the A11 approaching Thickthorn from 8pm to 5.30am on weekdays (opening on Saturday 26 June). Further survey work will continue until October, although no further closures are planned.

The teams will be drilling around 30 foot a day, looking at what lays beneath the road surface. Up to a metre down into the ground of the area is man-made, with the project team needing to understand what types of soil, rock, and groundwater are in the area so they can build the roundabout upgrade swiftly and efficiently.

Highways England announced its preferred option for upgrading the Thickthorn junction in August 2017. Since then, plans have been refined based on feedback from the consultation, with the latest designs shared with road users a year ago.

Latest changes see the previously proposed A47 westbound to A11 southbound free-flow link road replaced with a dedicated free-flow left turn lane at the roundabout, reducing the environmental impact of the proposed scheme whilst still improving journey times. Traffic lights will be installed on the B1172 arm of the Thickthorn roundabout, while a fourth lane will be added to the southern half of the roundabout. The B1172 will also have a reduced speed limit of 40mph between the junction and Hethersett, improving safety. Existing junctions to and from Cantley Lane South to the A11 and A47 will be closed, and replaced with better, safer access via a bridge over the A11 to the B1172.

A footbridge for pedestrians, cyclists and horses has moved closer to its original position, reducing the journey time and providing a safe dedicated crossing of the A47 for those users. The option selected will see a new, free-flowing link road created for drivers heading from the northbound A11 to the eastbound A47. The link road will allow drivers to avoid using the roundabout, which itself will be freed up for drivers making other turns at

the junction.

The Thickthorn upgrade is one of six projects that Highways England is doing to improve the A47. Three sections of the 115-mile stretch of the A47 between Peterborough and Great Yarmouth will be upgraded to dual carriageway. Norfolk sections will be upgraded between Blofield and North Burlingham and from North Tuddenham to Easton, while in Peterborough the A47 between Wansford and Sutton will also be dualled. There will be further junction improvements at the A141 roundabout in Guyhirn, and at Great Yarmouth junctions.

For more information about this work, please visit our [A47 Thickthorn junction web page](#).

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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# **[Have your say on A12 Essex upgrade](#)**

Drivers, local people and business owners are being invited to share their views on plans to upgrade the A12 in Essex to three lanes as an eight-week consultation begins on Tuesday (22 June).

Highways England announced its preferred option for adding an extra lane to the 15 miles of the A12 between Chelmsford and Marks Tey in 2019 and 2020 as part of a billion-pound upgrade of the road.

Overall, the proposed changes to this stretch of the A12 road will include:

- improvements to junctions 19 and 25
- widening the dual carriageway from two to three lanes in each direction from Hatfield Peverel to Marks Tey
- removal of existing junctions 20a, 20b and 23
- construction of new junctions 21, 22 and 24 providing access to the A12 in both directions
- creation of two bypasses, one between junctions 22 and 23 and another between junctions 24 and junction 25
- new and improved existing walking, cycling and horse-riding routes.

This preferred route was based on factors including environmental impact, journey times, complexity, affordability, and feedback from the public and

public authorities.

Stephen Elderkin, Project Director, said:

The A12 is a key route connecting London and the Port of Felixstowe, and upgrading this section to three lanes will help with economic growth of the region and keep the county connected. The upgraded road will improve safety by connecting local roads via the new junctions rather than turning directly on to the A12, and increase capacity, making journey times shorter and more reliable. The existing A12 will be kept open for local traffic, and there will be new routes and crossings for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

We have used feedback from consultations that we carried out in 2017 and 2019 to refine our plans. We know that there is a lot of support for these improvements, and we hope everyone with an interest in this scheme will take part in this next stage consultation to help refine our plans further and deliver the best possible road improvements.

People can take part in numerous ways, and we'll be hosting several events for them to come and talk with the team to share their thoughts and feedback. It's important that we get it right for road users and the people who live along this vital road.

Once complete by the end of 2028, the improved A12 will reduce journey times by up to 12 minutes for the 90,000 drivers who use it daily.

This consultation takes into account earlier feedback on the proposals and now local people, drivers and business owners are being invited to share their views on the latest plans to help ensure the improvements deliver the best possible outcomes for people using and living near the road when work starts in 2023. Changes based on earlier feedback include moving the road further away from the Rivenhall Long Mortuary Enclosure scheduled monument, improving slip roads, upgrading junctions, and reducing local traffic by diverting through traffic onto the new road.

People can take part in the consultation, which runs from Tuesday 22 June to Monday 16 August, by:

There will be six public exhibitions, subject to Government Covid-19 guidelines, at which people can have their say and speak with members of the team. These will be complemented by six webinars and an ongoing virtual exhibition.

Following the consultation, plans for the new road will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in Spring 2022. Once a Development Consent Order is issued by late 2023, construction will begin.

For more information about the plans, please visit our [A12 Chelmsford to A120](#)



[widening scheme web page](#).

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# Government announces more than 60,000 fans permitted to attend Euro 2020 semi-finals

- Culture Secretary: “It promises to be an unforgettable moment in our national recovery”
- UEFA President: “I am grateful to the Prime Minister and the UK Government for their hard work in finalising these arrangements with us, to make the tournament final stages a great success in Wembley”
- Matches will form part of the of the Government’s Events Research Programme
- All attendees must continue to follow strict COVID-19 entry requirements

More than 60,000 fans will now be permitted to attend the semi-finals and final of UEFA EURO 2020 at Wembley Stadium, increasing attendance to 75% capacity during the latter stages of the tournament.

The move follows the confirmation last week that the round of 16 match on 29 June and semi-finals and final would be hosted with at least 40,000 fans under the third phase of the Government’s world-leading Events Research Programme (ERP). It will see the largest crowds assembled for a sporting event in the UK in more than 15 months.

All ticket holders will need to follow a number of strict entry requirements including having a negative COVID-19 test or proof of full vaccination – two doses received, 14 days before the fixture. Ticket holders registered with a

GP in England will be able to display their proof of vaccination via the NHS App, or equivalent proof printed out, for example for people from Scotland and Wales. Ticket holders will also be able to display a NHS negative Lateral Flow Test result via email, text message or the NHS App.

Further details, including on ticket sales for these matches, will be communicated by UEFA in due course. However it is expected ticket holders in the UK who lost their tickets for the semi finals and final in the re-ballot will be at the front of the queue to be at the games.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

We are thrilled that more fans will now be able to walk through the Wembley turnstiles and enjoy the finals of EURO 2020.

As we continue to make progress on our roadmap out of lockdown, keeping the public safe remains our top priority. We have worked extremely closely with UEFA and the FA to ensure rigorous and tight public health measures are in place whilst allowing more fans to see the action live.

The finals promise to be an unforgettable moment in our national recovery from the pandemic.

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin said:

It is great news that so many fans will be able to watch the final three matches of the EURO 2020 at Wembley.

The last 18 months have taught us – both on and off the pitch – how integral fans are to the fabric of the game.

This tournament has been a beacon of hope to reassure people that we are returning to a more normal way of life and this is a further step along that road.

I am grateful to the Prime Minister and the UK Government for their hard work in finalising these arrangements with us, to make the tournament final stages a great success in Wembley.

Mark Bullingham, FA Chief Executive said:

It is great that the Government has agreed to allow over 60,000 fans in Wembley for the final three matches of the tournament. It's amazing how much atmosphere fans have been able to generate so far, so to have three times as many will be fantastic.

We have always said that fans are the lifeblood of the game, so it's brilliant that so many will get a chance to see the tournament

finale. We hope that this programme lays the foundation for the safe return of fans in stadiums all across the country next season.

Some of the biggest events in the summer's sporting calendar, including the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, Challenge Cup Final and men's international cricket involving England, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will also go ahead with greater capacities as part of the latest phase of the Government's Events Research Programme.

The next phase of the ERP will also include more sport and cultural pilots as the Government plans up to 20 indoor and outdoor events that will allow audience numbers to return close to full capacity. The pilots will continue to trial the use of covid status certification at mass participation events ahead of the outcome of the Cabinet Office's ongoing COVID-status certification review.

These pilots will involve the ramping up of trialling the use of the NHS App and Lateral Flow Testing, as proof of a person's COVID-status. Trials of the NHS App will be run to assess whether it can also be used to display a user's natural immunity status. The gradual increase of capacity at Wembley Stadium throughout all three phases of the ERP is providing the opportunity to assess how we can best mitigate transmission risks and logistical challenges in preparation for fans returning to stadiums and events in greater numbers.

The pilots will also continue to develop additional scientific research and evidence, as well as implementation considerations, for Government, event organisers, and consumers in reopening events safely with a greater number of attendees.

*ENDS*