

UK assists response to St. Vincent volcano eruption

Press release

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The rapid crisis funds will help provide lifesaving humanitarian supplies like shelter, sanitation kits and protective equipment. Urgently needed technical experts will support relief efforts on the ground, support emergency telecommunications, and restore critical lifeline facilities, like transport links.

The UK has provided an initial £200,000, via the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to support the regional response, through the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).

The UK will continue to work with the CDEMA and other agencies to assess the need for further support. On 8 April Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves ordered an immediate evacuation of people living in the most at-risk areas on St Vincent island.

There are no plans for further evacuations. British Nationals in the area should follow the advice of local authorities. Travel to and from Barbados has also been affected, due to the resultant ash cloud. Barbados Grantley Adams International Airport is currently closed, and people should check with the status of flight with their airline.

British Nationals can contact FCD0 for consular assistance via phone 24/7 on (+44) (0) 207 008 1500 and should sign up online for updates on FCD0 Travel Advice for [St Vincent and the Grenadines](#) and for [Barbados](#).

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Implementing the UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region



Mr President, the United Kingdom welcomes the publication of UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes region and thanks Special Envoy Xia for the update on its implementation. I would also like to thank Ambassador Edrees, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his briefing today.

We also welcome the establishment of a cross-UN Senior Policy Group to guide implementation of the strategy, and oversee the formulation of an action plan.

Mr President, The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about human rights violations and abuses, including as a result of increased armed group activity in eastern DRC.

We are seeking to support President Tshisekedi in working with partners to address these concerns. We welcome coordination between Special Envoy Xia and

SRSg Keita of MONUSCO on eastern DRC, including on MONUSCO's withdrawal strategy.

The United Kingdom recognises that the abundant natural resources in the Great Lakes region are a source of funding for armed groups and a driver of conflict. We therefore support Special Envoy Xia's work to assist governments in the Great Lakes region to address management of natural resources.

Thank you, Mr President.

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[The Prime Minister's tribute to His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh: 12 April 2021](#)

Mr Speaker, I beg to move:

That an Humble Address be presented to Her Majesty expressing the deepest sympathies of this House on the death of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and the heartfelt thanks of this House and this nation for his unfailing dedication to this Country and the Commonwealth, exemplified in his distinguished service in the Royal Navy in the Second World War; his commitment to young people in setting up The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, a scheme which has touched the lives of millions across the globe; his early, passionate commitment to the environment; and his unstinting support to Your Majesty throughout his life.

Mr Speaker, it is fitting that on Saturday His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh will be conveyed to his final resting place in a Land Rover, which Prince Philip had designed himself, with a long wheel base and a capacious rear cabin, because that vehicle's unique and idiosyncratic silhouette reminds the world that he was above all a practical man, who could take something very traditional – whether a machine or indeed a great national institution – and find a way by his own ingenuity to improve it, to adapt it for the 20th or the 21st century.

That gift for innovation was apparent from his earliest career in the Navy. When he served in the second world war, he was mentioned in despatches for his "alertness and appreciation of the situation" during the Battle of Cape Matapan, and he played a crucial role in helping to sink two enemy cruisers. But it was later, during the invasion of Sicily, that he was especially remembered by his crewmates for what he did to save their own ship.

In a moment of high danger, at night, when HMS Wallace was vulnerable to being blown up by enemy planes, he improvised a floating decoy – complete with fires to make it look like a stricken British vessel – so that the Wallace was able to slip away, and the enemy took out the decoy.

He was there at Tokyo Bay in 1945, barely 200 yards away from the Japanese surrender on the deck of USS Missouri; but he wasn't content just to watch history through his binoculars. It seems that he used the lull to get on with repainting the hull of HMS Whelp; and throughout his life – a life that was by necessity wrapped from such a young age in symbol and ceremony – one can see that same instinct, to look for what was most useful, and most practical, and for what would take things forward.

He was one of the first people in this country to use a mobile phone. In the 1970s, he was driving an electric taxi on the streets of London – the fore-runner of the modern low-carbon fleet, and, again, a vehicle of his own specifications. He wasn't content just to be a carriage driver. He played a large part in pioneering and codifying the sport of competitive carriage driving.

And if it is true that carriage-driving is not a mass-participation sport – not yet – he had other novel ideas that touched the lives of millions, developed their character and confidence, their teamwork and self-reliance. It was amazing and instructive, to listen on Friday to the Cabinet's tributes to the Duke, and to hear how many were proud to say that they, or their children, had benefited from taking part in his Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes.

I will leave it to the House to speculate as to who claimed to have got a gold award, and who got a bronze. But I believe those ministers spoke for millions of people – across this country and around the world – who felt that the Duke had in some way touched their lives, people whose work he supported in the course of an astonishing 22,219 public engagements, people he encouraged, and, yes, he amused.

It is true that he occasionally drove a coach and horses through the finer points of diplomatic protocol, and he coined a new word – dontopedalogy – for the experience of putting your foot in your mouth.

And it is also true that among his more parliamentary expressions he commented adversely on the French concept of breakfast, and told a British student in Papua New Guinea that he was lucky not to be eaten, and that the people of the Cayman Islands were descended from pirates, and that he would like to go to Russia except that, as he put it, "the bastards murdered half my family".

But the world did not hold it against him, Mr Speaker. On the contrary, they overwhelmingly understood that he was trying to break the ice, to get things moving, to get people laughing and forget their nerves; and to this day there is a community in the Pacific islands that venerates Prince Philip as a god, or volcano spirit – a conviction that was actually strengthened when a group came to London to have tea with him in person.

When he spoke so feelingly about the problems of overpopulation, and humanity's relentless incursion on the natural world, and the consequent destruction of habitat and species, he contrived to be at once politically incorrect and also ahead of his time.

In a quite unparalleled career of advice and encouragement and support, he provided one particular service that I believe the House will know in our hearts was the very greatest of all. In the constant love he gave to Her Majesty the Queen – as her liege man of life and limb, in the words he spoke at the Coronation – he sustained her throughout this extraordinary second Elizabethan age, now the longest reign of any monarch in our history.

It was typical of him that in wooing Her Majesty – famously not short of a jewel or two – he offered jewellery of his own design. He dispensed with the footmen in powdered wigs. He introduced television cameras, and at family picnics in Balmoral he would barbecue the sausages on a large metal contraption that all Prime Ministers must have goggled at for decades, complete with rotisserie and compartments for the sauces, that was – once again, Mr Speaker – a product of his own invention and creation.

Indeed as an advocate of skills and craft and science and technology this country has had no royal champion to match him since Prince Albert, and I know that in due course the House and the country will want to consider a suitable memorial to Prince Philip.

It is with that same spirit of innovation that as co-gerent of the Royal Family, he shaped and protected the monarchy, through all the vicissitudes of the last seven decades, and helped to modernise and continually to adapt an institution that is above politics, that incarnates our history, and that is indisputably vital to the balance and happiness of our national life.

By his unstinting service to The Queen, the Commonwealth, the armed forces, the environment, to millions of people young and not so young around the world, and to countless other causes, he gave us and he gives us all a model of selflessness, and of putting others before ourselves. And though I expect Mr Speaker, he might be embarrassed or even exasperated to receive these tributes, he made this country a better place, and for that he will be remembered with gratitude and with fondness for generations to come.

Edition 25: News from the Adjudicator

[Edition 25: News from the Adjudicator PDF](#) (PDF, 155KB, 2 pages)

A very big thank you to all of you who responded to my call in the last newsletter to complete the GCA 2021 survey. I am delighted to announce that we received an astonishingly high response. At 2598 responses the total was 60% higher than the number completing last year's survey which itself attracted a record response. I am delighted that 2398 direct suppliers – including an increasing number based overseas – took part.

This survey will be very important to me in my first year as GCA. With direct suppliers giving me their frank views on the designated retailers' performance and the issues that most concern them I now have very valuable information to plan my work for the months ahead. I am also very grateful to the retailers for the part they play in making the survey a success, encouraging their suppliers to complete the questionnaire. Again this year, most suppliers told the polling company YouGov that they had heard about the survey from their retailers.

I am currently analysing the detailed data but I can reveal that the survey shows continuing improvement in the relationship between retailers and suppliers. The number of suppliers reporting they had experienced Code-related issues at any stage in the past year fell to a record low – down to 29% compared to 36% in 2020. This is particularly encouraging given the challenges of the past year and the large rise in responses. It demonstrates how far the sector has come since 2014 when eight out of ten suppliers reported experiencing issues in the first GCA survey.

Later this year I will publish the survey findings in full, including examples of good practices by the retailers highlighted by their suppliers. YouGov will also be carrying out a number of interviews with direct suppliers to explore a range of topics that have emerged from the findings.

Further progress on forensic auditing

The first ever GCA survey revealed that the issue of most concern to suppliers was forensic auditing with 45% reporting in 2014 that they had experienced the issue. The problem was that some retailers were proactively exercising their legal right to make claims against suppliers going back six years by claiming for historic invoicing errors or submissions.

Suppliers were being asked for significant sums of money with the burden of proof falling on them to show any discrepancies were not valid claims. This was a major challenge for suppliers operating in a fast moving sector where the documentary audit trail was often difficult to piece together after such a long period. To help resolve this issue the GCA encouraged retailers to sign up to a voluntary commitment under which they agreed to limiting the auditing of their suppliers' trading accounts in search of missed claims to

no more than the current and previous two financial years as long as suppliers agreed to do the same.

Currently 12 of the 13 retailers that I regulate are signatories to the commitment and now Sainsbury's has said it will adhere to the commitment from 6 March next year. This voluntary commitment has played an important role in building more constructive relationships in the groceries sector and I delighted that Sainsbury's has seen the value of signing up to it.

Since the voluntary commitment was introduced in 2014 the numbers of suppliers reporting experiencing forensic auditing has fallen dramatically although some concerns remain about how audits are conducted and finalised. I raised these concerns, including the settlement of counterclaims, during my recent progress meetings with CCOs and confirmed I will continue to monitor this issue. You can read the minutes of these meetings [here](#).

'Tell the GCA' now up and running and receiving information

My confidential reporting platform 'Tell the GCA' is now up and running and available to suppliers who want to report behaviour by a designated retailer that they believe to be in breach of the Code. You can access it at www.telltheGCA.co.uk.

The platform allows suppliers to provide information anonymously and there is a facility to continue to correspond with me via a secure post box that protects their identity. The process is very straightforward and I am already receiving valuable information from suppliers who have used it. Don't forget, if you would like to get in touch with me or my team directly to tell me about your experiences, you can email Enquiries@GroceriesCode.gov.uk or call 020 7215 6537.

Mark White

One minute national silence to mark the death of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

News story

National silence to take place on Saturday 17th April.



To mark the death of His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh on 9 April 2021, there will be a national one minute silence at 15:00 on Saturday 17th April.

To pay our respects to His Royal Highness this silence will be observed in all UK government buildings. Devolved administrations will issue instructions in their estates and others as necessary.

Local authorities, other bodies and individuals may choose to join us in observing this silence.

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