United Kingdom promotes livelihoods and environmental protection in the Verapaces

World news story

UK project will allow families in Senahú, Alta Verapaz, to improve their coffee and cardamom production while protecting the environment.

The British Ambassador, Nick Whittingham, attended the launch of the project "Indigenous bio cultural landscapes for livelihoods and connectivity in Verapaces". It will be financed by the Darwin Initiative and the Fund of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) of the British Government.

The initiative will support the productive livelihoods of 10 Q'eqchís and Poqomchíes indigenous cooperatives, benefiting a total of 4,500 families in the municipality of Senahú Alta Verapaz that are associated with the Federation of Cooperatives of Las Verapaces, Limited Liability -FEDECOVERA, RL. – .

The project is carried out in the Sierra Yalijux of Alta Verapaz, an area of high biodiversity whose protection depends on private nature reserves and remnants of forest that are still within the territories of cooperatives and indigenous communities. The project goals are:

- Rescue and recognize the value of biodiversity through stories and ceremonies associated with good practices on the use and management of natural resources and indigenous knowledge about nature.
- Improve the income of 4,500 families through sustainable activities in an equitable manner by ethnic group, generation and gender.
- Restore forest cover to create biological corridors between fragmented and disturbed forests.
- Reduce the carbon footprint in the production of coffee and cardamom by reducing the use of firewood, ecological processing and production in agroforestry systems.

- Support women, youth and indigenous communities in alternative livelihoods compatible with nature.

The project has a duration of three years starting September 2022, with financing of £560,000 (approximately 5 million quetzals) from the British government, and a counterpart contribution of £158,000, which makes a total of Q6,462,000 quetzals. It will be implemented by FEDECOVERA, R. L. and the National Association of Private Natural Reserves of Guatemala -ARNPG-, with the support of the University of Greenwich.

Senior authorities from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) and the National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP) also attended the launch, who are active partners in the project.

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The fundamental building blocks for stability in Afghanistan: UK statement at UN Security Council

Thank you President,

I join others in thanking Deputy Special Representative Potzel, Ghada Waly, Executive Director, and Ms Fawzia Koofi for their sobering briefings and also UNAMA and the Secretary-General for his quarterly report.

As we've heard, nearly 60% of the population of Afghanistan officially requires humanitarian assistance, but the true need is much higher.

The World Bank predicts GDP will have contracted by one third by the end of this year, and the Taliban continues increased restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I cannot speak more eloquently than Fawzia Koofi did about the restrictions on freedom of movement that women and girls face – the political, economic, educational and social exclusion that they face.

UNICEF estimates the ban on schooling for girls has cost the Afghan economy at least $500 million during the last year. But the human cost for each of these Afghan girls is immeasurable.

President,

Some Council Members appear determined to politicise the crisis in Afghanistan, and I think their assertions are neither accurate nor helpful.

The UK disbursed $306 million in humanitarian and development assistance for Afghanistan last financial year, and we have committed a further $306 million this financial year.

We are the second largest donor to the World Bank's Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund, and we continue to work with the World Bank, IMF and others on economic stabilisation.

We recognise the importance of restoring liquidity to the banking system, including a functioning Central Bank able to access Afghanistan's overseas reserves. But this requires an independent Central Bank operating transparently with professional leadership and proper controls in place to prevent funds being diverted to terrorism.

Calling for reserves simply to be returned before these essential steps are in place is neither responsible nor compatible with a genuine commitment to stopping terrorist financing.

President,

Humanitarian and financial support can help, but it will not resolve Afghanistan's problems unless the fundamental building blocks for stability are put in place. To do this, the Taliban must uphold, rather than repress human rights, allow unhindered humanitarian access, meet counter-terrorism commitments made in the Doha Agreement, and they must take responsibility for stabilizing the economy.

This means creating an enabling environment for greater investment, including ensuring transparency on revenue and budget, and enabling women – half of the population – to contribute to economic activity.

Finally President,

I take the opportunity to welcome the appointment of Special Representative Otunbayeva. It is vital for Afghanistan's future that the Taliban cooperate with her and the UN, and we urge all members of the Council to support her as she implements UNAMA's critical mandate.

Thank you.

UK experts drive Peru's ongoing response to February's oil spill in the Pacific Ocean

- Team of experts from the United Kingdom carried out the workshop "Response to marine pollution: preparedness and best practices from the

United Kingdom” with Peruvian authorities.
- More than 50 representatives from Peru’s environmental, fisheries, and coast guard sectors actively participated in the four-day workshop.

Lima, 26th September. – Between 20 and 23 September, a team of UK-based pollution response experts from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), delivered the workshop “Marine Pollution Response: preparedness and best practise from the UK”, with Peruvian Governmental authorities.

This 4-day workshop brought together over 50 representatives from Peruvian environment, fisheries and coastguard sectors, including officers from the Minister of Environment, the National Park Service and coastal municipalities. With the support of colleagues from British Embassy in Lima, the UK delegation shared lessons learned from historic UK incidents and discussed key legislation and preparedness principles to ensure an effective and timely response to marine pollution incidents.

The workshop also covered a range of topics including response options, use of satellite and drone technology, socio-economic impacts of spills, evaluating impacts to marine birds and marine mammals, post-spill monitoring and hydrocarbon analysis and fingerprinting. It also included presentations from UK Deputy to the Secretary of State’s Representative for Maritime and Salvage, and sessions from oiled wildlife response organisation Aiuka.

Bethany Graves, from the JNCC, said:

> It’s a pleasure to be here, sharing UK experience and knowledge and working closely with Peruvian Governmental agencies to explore opportunities to be better prepared. We have had an excellent week of workshops with good engagement and discussions.
>
> We’re grateful for the British Embassy Lima’s help in the organisation of the workshop and we are glad to see that all who attended found it useful.

The workshop concluded with a table-top exercise in which lessons learned from the previous days were tested and cemented. After this workshop, the UK team will prepare a ‘Recommendations for better Readiness’ report to hand over in the next few months. This will include comments on Peru’s National Contingency Plan and key gaps in preparedness as identified in the workshop (and shared from Peru agencies).

The British Ambassador to Peru, Gavin Cook added:

> The oil spill off Lima was a wake-up call. But it’s one the Peruvian government is responding to, in both managing the aftermath of the disaster and thinking longer-term. The UK is proud to be supporting this alongside our broad environmental work in

> Peru.
>
> British expertise has a huge amount to offer – especially in the use of technology – and we look forward to continuing to share best practice and drive change.

The workshop was delivered under the Ocean Country Partnership Programme, a UK-led programme funded through the UK government's £500 million Blue Planet Fund, which aims to help eligible countries reduce poverty, through supporting the sustainable management of their marine environment.

Workshop participants discussing during the table-top exercise.

Close to 1,000 jobs moved from London to Scotland under UK Civil Service shakeup

- Major progress made with 933 UK Civil Service jobs moved out of London to Scotland
- UK government has committed to relocate 1500 jobs to Scotland by 2025
- Cabinet Office second HQ to more than double department's presence in Glasgow by 2025

Almost 1,000 London-based Civil Service jobs have moved to Scotland since March 2020, the Cabinet Office has announced today.

The latest figures have been announced as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Nadhim Zahawi, visited the department's new second HQ at Atlantic Square, Glasgow ahead of chairing the inaugural Islands Forum in Orkney on Wednesday.

The relocation programme, known as Places for Growth, is moving 22,000 Civil Service jobs out of London by 2030. Already 933 jobs have been relocated from the capital to Scotland since the start of the scheme, with a further 600 high-quality jobs to be permanently based in Scotland by 2025.

The Cabinet Office will more than double its current numbers of Glasgow employees to around 750 by 2025.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations Nadhim Zahawi said:

> We want to drive growth right across the United Kingdom and moving

> Civil Service jobs out of London is crucial to delivering this. I am delighted to say that the Cabinet Office is leading the way with this work by ensuring we have key decision makers based in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
>
> It is imperative that we continue to build on this momentum and expand opportunities for people outside of London, giving them the chance to build successful careers right across the UK and bring diversity of thought and experience right to the very top of government.

The number of Senior UK Civil Servants now based in Glasgow has grown by 1,400 per cent under the scheme, with 30 senior officials now permanently located in the city. The government plans to have at least 50 per cent of UK-based Senior Civil Servants located outside of London by 2030.

Cabinet Office roles previously based in London but which are now in Scotland include directors in the Counter Fraud Function, Consulting Hub and Debt Management teams. This signals the end of the era where staff who wanted to climb the ladder to senior level needed to move to London or nearby, or made the long commute from further afield. Staff are now able to lead teams delivering exceptional public services while based anywhere in the UK.

Naomi Hunter, who was born in Edinburgh but moved to London to join the Treasury in 2013, is now a Senior Civil Servant based in the Cabinet Office’s Glasgow HQ. After joining the UK Civil Service, she spent the next seven years living in London and travelling back to Scotland regularly to see family and friends.

Ms Hunter, who leads the strategy team for recovering public sector debt, said:

> When I first joined the UK civil service, I moved to London because it was the only option if I was going to progress in my career. The opening of the Cabinet Office HQ in Glasgow has meant I’ve been able to move back to Scotland and still do what I’m passionate about. I’m so pleased for people in Scotland that they no longer need to move south to start their careers or get good, expert jobs in their field.

The expansion has meant graduates are remaining in Scotland, preventing a ‘brain drain’ as young people travel south to further their careers.

Ceilidh MacDonald, aged 27 and originally from Inverness, was her family’s first university graduate. After initially ruling out a job at a central government department due to the requirement to live and work in London, she learned of the Cabinet Office’s expansion in Glasgow and took a role in the Grants team.

Ms MacDonald said:

> I thought the only way to have a career was to move to London but when Covid hit, I realised that was the last place I wanted to be. I'm now not only gaining more experience than I ever thought possible in Scotland, but we're working in the community to get the word out that there's fantastic opportunities on your doorstep.

Other cities have also benefited from the expansion with hundreds of roles moved to Edinburgh and East Kilbride in departments including the FCDO, Ministry of Justice and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

It is expected that these jobs will provide a significant boost for local business and enterprise, with government research having shown that workers put around 50% of their salaries back into the local economy.

BEIS in the Growth Plan

The government has published a Growth Plan aimed at delivering higher, sustainable economic growth with an ambitious target of 2.5%, with plans that will boost investment, create skilled jobs, improve living standards and make Britain an even better place to do business. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will have a key role to play in working towards this target.

The plan lays out the biggest package of tax cuts and reforms in a generation, to encourage investment and make work pay. The planned rise in corporation tax has been cancelled, keeping it at 19%, while changes to income tax and national insurance will see over 30 million people receive a tax cut. Stamp Duty cuts will also help people on all levels of the property market.

Alongside addressing the immediate challenges of high energy costs through support for households and businesses, the government recognises the importance of acting now to grow the economy. Ultimately, growth means more jobs, higher pay and more money to fund public services, like schools and the NHS.

Cutting energy bills for households and businesses

Support for Households: Energy Price Guarantee

On 8 September, the Prime Minister announced the Energy Price Guarantee.

The Energy Price Guarantee will ensure that a typical household in Great Britain pays an average £2,500 a year on their energy bill, for the next 2 years, from 1 October 2022, with an equivalent scheme in Northern Ireland from November.

The consumer saving will be based on usage, but a typical household is expected to save at least £1,000 a year (based on current prices from October). Energy suppliers will be fully compensated for the cost of the Energy Price Guarantee. Based on 2019 median consumption, houses will save around £1,000 a year, and flats will save £700 a year.

£150 of this saving will be delivered by temporarily transferring the cost of environmental and social costs, including green levies, to the Exchequer for 2 years. This will mean customers don’t bear the costs, but benefit from the low-carbon electricity generation.

This support is in addition to the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme available to all households. This will be paid in 6 instalments from October.

An additional payment of £100 will be provided to compensate for the rising costs of alternative heating fuels for those UK households who are not able to receive support for heating costs through the Energy Price Guarantee.

The most vulnerable UK households will continue to receive £1,200 of support (including £400 from the Energy Bills Support Scheme) provided in instalments over the year.

Support for businesses and non-domestic properties

Through the new Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS), the government will provide support with energy bills for all non-domestic consumers in Great Britain and Northern Ireland (including charities and public sector organisations).

This 6-month scheme will protect them from soaring energy costs by providing a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices.

It will apply to energy usage for all non-domestic energy users from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Equivalent support will be provided for non-domestic consumers who use heating oil or alternative fuels instead of gas (further detail on this will be announced shortly).

In Northern Ireland, the scheme will be established on the same criteria and offering comparable support, but recognising the different market fundamentals

We will publish a review into the operation of the EBRS in 3 months to inform decisions on continued support after March 2023.

Reform to tackle root causes in the energy sector

While the interventions for households and businesses will be funded by the government, action is being taken to significantly reduce the cost over time.

A new Energy Supply Taskforce – The new Taskforce will seek to negotiate long-term agreements with major gas producers. BEIS is also working with low carbon electricity generators to reduce the link between gas and electricity prices. Successful action should smooth the price of wholesale gas and electricity over time. Such action should also increase security of supply over time, reducing the likelihood of similar energy price crises in the future.

Energy Markets Financing Scheme – Together with the Bank of England, HM Treasury are providing further details around a £40 billion scheme announced on 8 September to address extraordinary liquidity requirements faced by energy firms, due to variation margin calls. The Energy Markets Financing Scheme will improve resilience in energy markets, and the economy. To deliver the scheme, there will be a 100% guarantee to commercial banks covering additional lending they extend to firms. The scheme will provide short term financial support and will be designed to be used as a last resort, with pricing and conditions reflecting this. The EMFS will only be available to firms who are able to meet eligibility requirements.

Energy Company Obligation (ECO) – This scheme requires medium and large energy suppliers to achieve bill-savings for low-income and vulnerable households, by delivering energy efficiency improvements such as insulation. We will expand this existing obligation by a further £1 billion over 3 years, beginning from April 2023. Support will be targeted at those most vulnerable, but will also be available for the least efficient homes in lower council tax bands. This will help hundreds of thousands of customers take action to reduce their energy bills, delivering an average saving of around £200 a year through measures such as cavity wall insulation and loft insulation.

Moving to a simpler, lower tax economy

The Growth Plan reduces the tax burden by delivering tax cuts worth around £45 billion per year by 2026/27, which is the biggest tax cut in generations.

A pro-growth tax system:

- creates the conditions for business to invest, innovate and create jobs
- allows hard working families to keep more of what they earn
- is simple and fit for the future

Tax cuts for businesses

We are cancelling the planned rise of the Corporation Tax rate from 19% to 25%, which puts £19 billion back into the economy by 2026/27 and will make the UK tax system one of the most competitive in the world.

The increase in the Diverted Profit Tax rate will remain at 25%. The Bank Corporation Tax Surcharge cut will also be cancelled. Super-deduction technical rules will also be amended to ensure it works as intended at the new Corporation Tax rate.

We are introducing an investment package designed to supercharge the ability of small British businesses to raise money, attract talent and ultimately grow and succeed

The level of the Annual Investment Allowance (AIA) at is remaining at £1 million permanently, which is a tax cut for businesses of around £1.3 billion a year.

At £1 million, the AIA covers the investment needs of over 99% of the UK's businesses.

From April 2023, the amount companies can raise under Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) will increase by £100,000 to £250,000, and the gross asset limit will increase from £200,000 to £350,000.

The company age limit will increase from 2 to 3 years, and the annual investor limit will be doubled to £200,000. This package will help over 2,000 start-up companies raise the capital they need to grow.

The Company Share Option Plan (CSOP) scheme options limit is doubling from £30,000 to £60,000, and the rules which restrict use of the scheme when companies have more than one class of ordinary shares (the 'worth having' restriction) is being relaxed from April 2023.

We are introducing a new VAT-free shopping scheme for overseas visitors, which will boost our high streets and help create jobs for those working in the travel and retail sectors.

Growth

Driving greater private capital investment

The growth plan will unlock billions of pounds of long-term investment, helping our pioneering British businesses developing new technologies, accelerate their growth and to scale up.

We are bringing forward draft regulations to reform the pensions regulatory charge cap, giving defined contribution pension schemes the clarity and flexibility to invest in the UK's most innovative businesses and productive assets creating opportunities to deliver higher returns for savers

Building on this, the government is also introducing the Long-Term Investment for Technology and Science (LIFTS) initiative, providing up to £500 million to mobilise billions of pounds of investment into pioneering UK businesses.

Getting more people into work with the right skills

In addition to making work pay and helping working families keep more of what they earn, the government is introducing further reforms to incentivise and support people into more and better paid work.

Government will set Minimum Service Levels (MSLs) for transport, to ensure some services run during industrial action and unions cannot prevent the public making journeys that are essential for day-to-day life.

Unions will be obliged to put employer pay offers to member vote. This requires defining the calling of a strike as a breakdown in negotiations, allowing employers to engage employees directly.

In addition, the government will set out further measures relating to flexible childcare and ensuring the immigration system supports growth in due course.

Allowing business to get on with business

A simple tax system is critical for growth. Instead of having a separate arms-length body oversee simplification, the government will embed tax simplification into the institutions of government. It will therefore abolish the Office of Tax Simplification and set a mandate to the Treasury and HMRC to focus on simplifying the tax code.

The reforms to off-payroll working, known as IR35, have added complexity and cost for many businesses. To achieve a simpler tax system and reduce burden on businesses which engage contractors, the government must be ready to change course. That is why the government is repealing the reforms introduced in 2017 and 2021.

This will free up time and money for business. Businesses can now focus on the services they receive and invest time and resources in core activities that stimulate growth and productivity.

The government is reforming alcohol duty to reduce the administrative burden on businesses and tax alcohol according to its strength. This will encourage growth in the lower ABV market and incentivise product innovation.

The government will introduce a modern, digital, VAT-free shopping scheme as soon as possible, with the aim of providing a boost to the high street and creating jobs in retail and tourism.

Later this autumn, the government will bring forward a set of measures to reduce the burden of business regulation and remove barriers to growth.

The government will also set out its strategy for maximising the long-term productivity, resilience and competitiveness of the UK’s agricultural sector.

Building High quality infrastructure

The Growth Plan announces that new legislation will be brought forward in the coming months to address barriers that restrict the growth potential of the government’s landmark public investment in high quality infrastructure. This includes;

- reducing the burden of environmental assessments
- reducing bureaucracy in the consultation process
- reforming the existing habitat and species regulations
- increasing flexibility to make changes to the Development Consent Order (DCO) once it has been submitted

- reviewing the spending control framework, including the business case process, to accelerate decision making across government

The Growth Plan also announces further sector specific changes to accelerate delivery of infrastructure, including:

- prioritising the delivery of National Policy Statements for energy, water resources and national networks, and of a cross-government action plan for reform of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure planning system
- supporting deployment of onshore wind, by bringing planning policy in line with other infrastructure to allow it to be deployed more easily in England

Investment zones

The government is announcing Investment Zones, and is in early discussions with 38 Mayoral Combined Authorities and Upper Tier Local Authorities who have already expressed an initial interest in having a clearly designated, specific site within their locality.

Investment Zones will drive growth and unlock housing right across the UK. Areas with Investment Zones will benefit from tax incentives, planning liberalisation, and wider support for the local economy. Investment zones will benefit from:

- Lower taxes – businesses in designated sites will benefit from time-limited tax incentives
- Accelerated development – there will be designated development sites to deliver growth and housing. Where planning applications are already in flight, they will be streamlined and we will work with sites to understand what specific measures are needed to unlock growth, including disapplying legacy EU red tape where appropriate. Development sites may be co-located with, or separate to, tax sites, depending on what makes most sense for the local economy
- Wider support for local growth – for example, through greater control over local growth funding for areas with appropriate governance. Subject to demonstrating readiness, Mayoral Combined Authorities hosting Investment Zones will receive a single local growth settlement in the next Spending Review period

The government will announce further supply side growth measures in October and early November, including changes to the planning system, business regulations, childcare, immigration, agricultural productivity, and digital infrastructure.