

# [HRH The Prince of Wales telephone call with Prime Minister Imran Khan](#)

World news story

HRH The Prince of Wales and Prime Minister Imran Khan spoke by telephone on Thursday. They reaffirmed the close and unique bonds between the two commonwealth nations including how the UK and Pakistan show the best of international friendship.



During the call HRH The Prince of Wales passed on his condolences for the lives lost in Pakistan as a result of Covid-19 virus. The UK is providing essential support to some of the most vulnerable in Pakistan during the pandemic.

HRH The Prince of Wales and Prime Minister Khan agreed on the need for greater global co-operation in dealing with shared global challenges especially on Climate Change and protecting the environment.

The UK is hosting COP26 next year and HRH The Prince of Wales welcomed Pakistan's resolve on tackling the threat of Climate Change, reaffirming the UK's support for increased use of renewable energy in Pakistan.

## **For further information**

For updates on the British High Commission, please follow our social media channels:

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# UK scientists take a step closer to revealing origins of our galaxy

UK researchers, backed by funding from the UK Space Agency, produced a precise 3D map of our Milky Way galaxy using the cosmic treasure trove of data collected from the Gaia satellite, known as the 'Galaxy Surveyor'.

The cosmic data – co-ordinated by the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge – will enable astronomers, for the first time, to measure the mass of the galaxy by examining the acceleration of the Solar System. This ability will give us clues to the origins of our star system and could help confirm just how quickly the Universe has expanded since it began.

## **How does Gaia work?**

- The mission carries two telescopes, which it scans across the Milky Way from a location about 1.5 million km from Earth.
- The telescopes' mirrors throw their captured light on to a huge, one-billion-pixel camera detector connected to a trio of instruments.
- It is this ultra-stable and supersensitive optical equipment that Gaia uses to pick out its sample of stars with extraordinary precision and confidence.
- The called-for specification was to get to know the brightest objects' coordinates down to an error of 1.94 degrees.
- This angle is equivalent to the size of a pound coin on the Moon as seen from Earth.
- In addition to their position and proper motion, the stars are having their physical properties analysed by Gaia.
- Its instruments are acquiring vital statistics like temperature and composition. These are markers needed to help determine the stars' ages

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

The mysteries of the Milky Way and our Solar System have captured the imagination of generations of scientists and astronomers across the world – all eager to learn more about the origins of the Universe.

Through this remarkable government-backed mission, UK scientists have taken us a giant leap closer to advancing our knowledge of how our Solar System began by painting the most detailed picture yet that could help to redefine astronomy as we know it.

Gaia is located at a Lagrange point, a gravitationally stable spot in the Sun-Earth system, called L2, which is located about 930,000 miles (1.5

million kilometres) from Earth in the opposite direction from the Sun. It has so far measured the positions and brightness of almost two billion stars, as well as detailing their positions, magnitudes and colours.

At Lagrange points, spacecraft can use a minimum of fuel to maintain the same location in space. Gaia is also far enough from Earth that the light emanating from our planet will not interfere with observations.

Caroline Harper, Head of Space Science at the UK Space Agency, said:

For thousands of years, we have been preoccupied with noting and detailing the stars and their precise locations as they expanded humanity's understanding of our cosmos.

Gaia has been staring at the heavens for the past seven years, mapping the positions and velocities of stars. Thanks to its telescopes we have in our possession today the most detailed billion-star 3D atlas ever assembled.

The information collected by the satellite is analysed back on Earth by the Gaia Data Processing and Analysis Consortium (DPAC), of which the UK is a major partner. The UK Space Agency, together with the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), funds the Mullard Space Science Laboratory and the universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh, Leicester who make up the UK contribution to the group.

The data has been co-ordinated and prepared at the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge and all of the mission's data has been made available to the public so they can help identify interesting phenomena in this massive cosmic treasure trove.

Dr Floor van Leeuwen of the Institute of Astronomy at the University of Cambridge, said:

Gaia is measuring the distances of hundreds of millions of objects that are many thousands of light years away, at an accuracy equivalent to measuring the thickness of hair at a distance of more than 2000 kilometres. These data are one of the backbones of astrophysics, allowing us to forensically analyse our stellar neighbourhood, and tackle crucial questions about the origin and future of our galaxy.

The European Space Agency (ESA) launched its Gaia mission in 2013. The mission's name was originally an acronym for Global Astrometric Interferometer for Astrophysics, but interferometry is no longer the method by which the mission does its work.

Its goal was to update and extend the work of a previous satellite from the 1980s/90s called Hipparcos, which was an observatory that created the go-to

Milky Way catalogue for its time.

This astonishing chart of our cosmic neighbourhood mapped the precise position, brightness, distance and proper motion (that sideways movement on the sky) of 100,000 stars.

With its first release of data in 2016, Gaia increased the number of known stars in the Milky Way twenty-fold.

The UK Space Agency contributes £374 million a year to ESA. This membership allows UK scientists to collaborate on a range of programmes, from Earth Observation satellites and Mars Rovers, to advanced telecommunications and commercial applications. The UK Space Agency has already contributed £19 million to Gaia on processing and analysing the findings and STFC has invested an additional £2.4 million into supporting the catalogues derived from the data.

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## [125,000 seabirds to benefit from expansion of protected site](#)

The UK government has today boosted the country's 'Blue Belt', England's network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), by announcing the expansion of the Solway Firth protected site.

Over 125,000 seabirds will benefit from the expansion of this site, with red-throated diver and ringed plover joining the extensive list of species already protected. This will also encourage population growths for important species such as wintering divers and gulls.

The protected area in Solway Firth sits in both English and Scottish waters and today will be expanded in total by 92,070 hectares, becoming an impressive 135,750 hectares in size. The devolved administration in Scotland also announced a similar expansion in its waters today, as well as several other MPAs.

The expansion of the Solway Firth site follows work undertaken by Nature Scot and Natural England to provide scientific advice and conduct public consultation on the introduction of further protections.

It will provide clarity on where boundaries of important foraging areas for protected seabird species are and offers the opportunity to adopt additional management measures if required, which may include byelaws to manage commercial fishing or the zoning of recreational activities such as water sports.

The UK government is committed to protecting and enhancing our marine

environment; recently adding to our MPA network for England, [expanding an internationally significant protected site on the Isles of Scilly](#) and [launching a call for evidence](#) on proposals for managing five of England's Marine Protected Areas including the Canyons, a deep-sea habitat which harbours cold water corals, and Dogger Bank, the largest shallow sandbank in British waters.

Environment Secretary George Eustice also recently announced his intention to pilot Highly Protected Marine Areas where all extractive and destructive activities would be removed, following publication of the independent [Benyon Review into HPMAs](#).

**Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:**

The UK seabird population is of global importance with the UK holding more than a quarter of Europe's breeding seabirds. This addition to England's vital MPA network is a significant step forward in our ongoing commitment to protect and improve the resilience of our marine environment and its precious wildlife.

Together with the development of our Seabird Conservation Strategy, we will help the coastal environment to recover and thrive for future generations to enjoy.

**Marian Spain, Natural England Chief Executive, said:**

The new protections at Solway Firth, based on advice from the UK's world-leading scientists will create more space for nature to recover and signify a significant step forward in enhancing protections for a range of globally important sea and shorebirds.

We will continue to work with Defra as they develop their Seabird Conservation Strategy to understand the challenges that seabird populations currently face and consider what further measures are needed to help their recovery.

Working closely with stakeholders, Defra is developing a landmark Seabird Conservation Strategy, which will look at the range of pressures faced by different seabird species in order to take additional steps to build on today's achievement and further support our iconic seabird populations.

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**[Planned system maintenance: 11pm 31](#)**

# December 2020 to 1pm 4 January 2021

The Transition Period relating to the UK's exit from the European Union will end on 31 December 2020.

From the 1 January 2021 all existing EU Trade Marks (EUTM), Registered Community Designs (RCDs) and International Registrations designating the EU will only cover the remaining 27 EU Member States.

These registered rights will no longer provide protection in the UK.

On 1 January 2021, under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement, the IPO will create a re-registered UK design and UK comparable trade mark for every RCD and EUTM (including International EU designs and trade marks) that are protected at the end of the transition period.

The IPO will need to amend our systems and undertake maintenance to create these rights. As a result, our customers will experience disruption to our internal and external services for trademarks and designs while essential work takes place.

Services will be disrupted from 11pm 31 December 2020 until 1pm 4 January 2021.

## **Effect on services**

The following services will be affected:

### **Trade marks**

### **Designs**

### **Patents**

The following services will be affected:

## **Effect on dates**

Digital application services will be unavailable on this date.

If the filing date of 31 December 2020 to 04 January 2021 is important you can [apply for a trade mark](#) or [design](#) through our paper application channels.

Customers can file an [opposition](#) between 31 December 2020 to 04 January 2021 as services using the paper form are unaffected.

You will not be able to file a [threatened opposition](#) and we advise that you do this in advance of 11pm 31 December. Customers should contact our information centre [information@ipo.gov.uk](mailto:information@ipo.gov.uk) if they need to file during this

service disruption.

You should respond in advance of any deadlines set by the IPO for your trade mark (including Right Start payments) or design application if it falls on 31 December 2020, 01 January 2021 or 04 January 2021.

## **Effect on our customer service delivery**

Our Information Centre will not be available from 1pm on Thursday 31 December 2020. You should not rely on other direct line numbers being answered during this period.

Our [Information Centre hours over the Christmas and New Year](#) are available.

Our Internal services will also be affected until 1pm on 04 January 2021.

This means we will be unable to view and advise on the progress of your trade mark or design application. All areas of our internal services, from receipt to post-registration of applications will be unavailable.

For more information please refer to [Intellectual property after 1 January 2021](#).

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## **[More funding to support people with disabilities live independently](#)**

- Extra £68 million to help adapt homes for people with disabilities in England
- More than 280,000 home adaptations provided through the Disabled Facilities Grant
- Details of £4 billion Better Care Fund confirmed to better integrate health and social care

An extra £68 million will help thousands more disabled people to access grants to improve their homes so they can live independently, Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Kelly Tolhurst has announced today (3 December 2020), the International Day of People with Disabilities.

The additional funding for councils will help people make the adaptations they need to live safely and independently in their own homes.

The Disabled Facilities Grant funding can be used towards the costs of home adaptations such as stair-lifts, level access showers, wet rooms, winches, grab rails and ramps. These can play a critical role in avoiding the need for hospital or care home admission, as well as helping to speed-up discharge from hospital.

This funding is in addition to the £505 million paid to councils in May 2020, increasing the overall government investment in the Disabled Facilities Grant to £573 million this year.

With Spending Review 2020 investment of £573 million in the Disabled Facilities Grant for 2021 to 2022, government has now confirmed over £4 billion funding for the grant since 2010.

This is part of the government's comprehensive programme to better integrate health and social care services. Today details of the £4 billion [Better Care Fund](#) were also confirmed – setting out how councils may use this funding to deliver effective care and support for people in their communities.

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing, Kelly Tolhurst said:

I'm pleased that extra funding announced today, on the International Day of People with Disabilities, will see thousands more people benefit. This grant can be literally life changing and lengthening, helping more people to live independently in their own homes.

Since 2012 over 280,000 home adaptations have been funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant Scheme helping many tens of thousands of people to live at home independently.

Minister for Care, Helen Whately said:

This grant will help hundreds of thousands of disabled people across England to live more independently in their own homes and improve their quality of life.

I know this year has been incredibly difficult for disabled people in particular and I'm pleased that, on the International Day of People with Disabilities, we're able to provide this additional funding.

The Disabled Facilities Grant is a really important part of our ambition to reduce health inequalities and support more people to live healthy, independent lives for as long as possible.

The Disabled Facilities Grant forms part of the Better Care Fund, a fund which brings together local government and health partners to jointly plan and pool budgets to support integrated care.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how health and social care systems can come together and focus on the public's health and care needs. This announcement is part of the government's ongoing work to address disparities across society, and its commitment to ensuring that health and care systems work effectively together at a local level, and the Better Care Fund is a key



part of this integration.