

Minister hails “strongest ever UK-Gulf ties” on first visit to the region

The UK and Gulf states are working in partnership to tackle coronavirus and save lives, Middle East Minister James Cleverly said following a visit to the region.

During his three day visit to Qatar and Oman, the Minister championed the UK’s strong and historic ties between the respective Governments as well as their leadership in preventing the spread of the deadly disease. At a meeting with His Excellency Qais Al-Yousef, Minister of Trade for Oman, the Minister set out the UK’s high ambition to grow our trade and investment with the Gulf, already our third largest trading partner outside the EU.

At a meeting with His Excellency Soltan bin Saad Soltan Al-Muraikhi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, Minister Cleverly thanked Qatar for its help in repatriating British Nationals throughout the pandemic.

In Qatar, he also visited the Education City Stadium for the Fifa World Cup 2022, offering the UK’s full support to ensuring a safe tournament for fans travelling from all around the world.

Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverly, said:

The UK and the Gulf are working in partnership to stop the spread of coronavirus and save lives, demonstrating our strongest ever UK-Gulf ties.

On my visit to Oman and Qatar, I have seen the true strength of the bilateral relationships between our great countries. From co-operation on security, to strengthening our trade links, to sharing our unique development expertise, our ties are helping to improve our mutual prosperity.

In Muscat, Minister Cleverly met Houthi representative Mohammed Abdul Salam. He urged the Houthis to work constructively with UN Special Envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, and agree to his peace proposals to end the conflict and alleviate the suffering of those in need.

He also raised concerns about restrictions in northern Houthi-controlled areas which are preventing aid from reaching millions of those most in need and called for safe, rapid, and unhindered access for aid workers and supplies, particularly given the risk of famine this year.

The Minister also met His Excellency Akbar Al Baker, the CEO of Qatar Airways, to discuss new regional routes into the UK, which are helping to drive economic growth in the UK beyond London.

Customers could lose out in motor parts merger

Universal Components UK Limited (Universal Components), owned by TVS Europe Distribution Limited, and 3G Truck & Trailer Parts Ltd (3G) are 2 of the leading wholesalers of commercial vehicle and trailer parts in the UK. Both businesses are known for their broad service offering, allowing customers to buy a wide range of parts from a single supplier.

Following an in-depth Phase 2 investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has found that Universal Components and 3G compete closely with each other to supply replacement parts for commercial vehicles and trailers to motor factors (local distributors), who in turn sell on to independent garages and repairers in the UK. The CMA also found that customers seeking to purchase a wide range of parts from a single supplier would have limited alternatives after the merger. This could lead to UK motor factors facing higher costs and lower quality services, such as longer delivery times or worse stock range and quality.

In reaching this provisional decision, the CMA analysed a significant body of evidence looking at how closely the 2 businesses compete, including the companies' internal documents and feedback from customers and competitors. The companies' internal documents showed that the businesses monitor each other closely when determining their strategies and setting prices, and that Universal Components' decision to buy 3G was motivated in part by the desire to remove 1 of its main competitors from the market.

Kirstin Baker, Inquiry Group Chair, said:

Both of these companies supply commercial vehicle and trailer parts that are vital to a wide range of businesses across the UK. We are concerned that, as a result of this merger, distributors would be likely to face less product choice, poorer service and higher prices.

This could make it more difficult and expensive for garages and repairers to service their customers' vehicles and keep them on the road.

All interested parties now have until 4 November 2020 to submit views on possible remedies to address the CMA's concerns and until 11 November 2020 to submit views on the CMA's provisional findings.

For more information, visit the [TVS Europe Distribution Limited / 3G Truck & Trailer Parts merger inquiry](#) web page.

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.

OPSS Launches Firework Safety Campaign

A firework safety campaign has been launched today (20 October 2020) by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), working in partnership with the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the Child Accident Prevention Trust, and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Groups, businesses and individuals are encouraged to support the consumer awareness messages, on how to stay safe when using fireworks, by retweeting and posting them on social media, using the hashtag #fireworksafe, or using the shared campaign materials.

OPSS has produced safety tips on using fireworks responsibly and considerately and protecting people and animals from harm. Please check and comply with the latest COVID-19 restrictions in your local area. For more information, visit [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

These are:

Buy fireworks from licensed in store and online retailers

Do not buy fireworks from unknown retailers on social media sites. Remember that the public can only buy Category F2 and F3 fireworks. Check you have enough space to safely use a firework before you buy it. Fireworks can only be purchased by people aged 18 and over.

It is important fireworks are stored safely

When storing fireworks, keep them in their original packaging, dry and away from sources of heat and ignition, and lock them away from children and animals.

Let off fireworks on traditional celebration dates only and adhere to the fireworks curfew

People are more likely to plan to protect pets and vulnerable people if fireworks are let off on traditional dates. The firework curfew is midnight on Fireworks Night, 1am on Diwali, New Year's Eve and Chinese New Year, and 11pm the rest of the year.

Be considerate to others when letting off fireworks

Let neighbours know in advance when you are planning to let off fireworks, so they can take steps to protect vulnerable people and animals. If you live

close to horses, make sure you site your fireworks well away from them and aim them in the opposite direction. Do not let off fireworks if they will disturb nearby farm animals, wildlife habitats, or roosting bats and birds.

Keep animals safe

Dogs and cats should be kept inside and have a hiding place. Give small animals who live outside lots of extra bedding and nesting material to burrow in.

Follow the instructions on fireworks for safe usage

Read instructions carefully and if you do not understand them, do not use the firework. Read all the safety warnings on the firework box so you know important information like how far away people should stand from the firework. Once any debris has cooled down, tidy it up and soak it in water. Then put in a rubbish bag and in the bin.

The campaign materials can be downloaded from the [Consumer safety awareness campaigns materials GOV.UK page](#)

[Response to the ACMD report on the misuse of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues](#)

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[Environment Agency chair addresses World Pensions Summit](#)

I always enjoy visiting the Netherlands, so I'm sorry we're only meeting virtually this year.

The Environment Agency, which I chair, manages floods and droughts in England, and we work closely with Rijkswaterstaat and all the Dutch authorities to learn more about how to live with water in a time of climate

emergency.

One of my favourite examples of this is the International Network for Storm Surge Barriers, or I-STORM. I-STORM allows organisations operating storm surge barriers in different countries – other members include the Venice Water Authority and the US Army Corps of Engineers – to share best practice, peer review each other's work and strive for excellence. It shows that even when it comes to unique, place-based structures like the Thames Barrier in London and Maeslantkering in the Netherlands, international collaboration is extremely valuable.

Storm surge barriers are important for protecting key hubs of economic activity from the impacts of the climate crisis. But, that economic activity itself could also be doing more to drive down emissions and prepare for the coming storms.

In the UK alone £3 trillion is invested in pensions. If you are lucky enough to be in a pension fund, or a stocks and shares ISA, your money will be invested, but many people don't realise this.

A new initiative led by the filmmaker Richard Curtis – called Make My Money Matter – is encouraging people to look at their pension, and make sure it reflects their values. Moving to a more sustainable fund can have 27 times as much impact in reducing your carbon footprint than giving up flying and becoming a vegan combined. That doesn't mean that those choices are 27 times less important – far from it – but it illustrates an untapped wellspring of people power. The Make My Money Matter campaign found out that 68 percent of UK savers want their investments to consider people and planet alongside profit. You don't have to switch pension – it's about starting a conversation – helping people find out where their money is invested, and pushing the whole industry to provide more options.

At the Environment Agency Pension Fund, we recently surveyed our members, and found:

- 88 percent wanted their pension invested in sustainable and low carbon assets.
- 7 in 10 members thought climate change will present a financial risk to investments in their lifetime.
- And, generally, the younger the member, the greater they saw this risk to be.

We place great emphasis on investing in sustainable products. For example, companies that:

- produce cleaner energy,
- better transport,

- greener offices,
- greener alternatives to plastics,
- or grow things in a way that is better for the environment.

But we also invest in mainstream everyday companies like supermarkets, food companies and car manufacturers. When we do, we expect our fund managers to ask questions about what that company is doing to improve their environmental performance.

Investing in assets that help the environment does not mean taking a hit on returns. The Environment Agency Pension Fund has shown that sustainable, resilient, well-run companies are more likely to perform better in the long run. We now have one of the best-funded pension fund schemes across Government, and were recently chosen for the second year running by the PRI as a global leader in responsible investment.

While there are established markets in clean technology, many nature-based adaptation solutions are also needed between now and 2030 to keep global warming below 2°C. For example, protecting forests on indigenous lands sequesters carbon dioxide, and protects 80 percent of global biodiversity. For cities, an annual investment of \$100 million in urban tree planting could create enough shade to cut average temperatures by 1°C for 77 million people around the world.

Failure to adapt will result in an unconscionable human and economic toll. But it's not just about avoiding risks, it's also about long-term returns and healthier development. In the Netherlands, instead of building ever higher levees, the Room For The River strategy has been adopted to live with water instead of fighting it. The country moved dikes inland, widened rivers, raised bridges, dug flood channels and added river catchment areas. Now the River Rhine can safely carry 1,000 cubic meters of water per second more than before. And this has also helped create new public infrastructure, parks and recreational spaces.

In Canada the \$2 billion Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund is helping communities better manage risks from floods, wildfires, and droughts through investment in natural and constructed infrastructure. Twenty five million dollars of this is restoring saltmarshes and improving dykes along the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia. The project will reduce coastal flooding for tens of thousands of people, businesses, world heritage sites, indigenous communities, and more than 20,000 hectares of farmland.

In Niger, farmers have led reforestation efforts by boosting crop yields, improving soil fertility and lifting communities out of poverty. Tree cover has soared ten-fold and the daily time spent gathering firewood – a task that mainly falls to women – has dropped from three hours to 30 minutes. Mexico has identified and designated water reserves in more than one-third of its river basins, covering nearly 50 million hectares. These reserves are a mix of protected areas and wetlands that help maintain adequate downstream flows, and protect the water supply for 45 million people.

In England, the Environment Agency is helping green projects attract private

sector investment to tackle climate change and restore nature. In Greater Manchester, we are part of a project that aims to increase the city's green infrastructure 10 percent by 2038. The IGNITION program is looking to create at least €10 million worth of projects that incentivize organizations to invest in nature-based solutions. This kind of urban planning and regeneration enables increased physical activity and connectivity with the environment, helping people's health and well-being as well as increasing prosperity.

The Global Commission on Adaptation says that compared with traditional infrastructure, nature-based solutions deliver more jobs per dollar, higher economic returns, and are faster to implement and more sustainable in the long run.

For example:

- Restoring mangrove forests that protect from sea level rise and storm surges is 2 to five times cheaper than building engineered structures
- And wetland ecosystems provide services worth up to \$15 trillion around the world, including flood protection, fisheries habitat and water purification.

Through its Nature-Based Solutions Action Track, the Global Commission on Adaptation is bringing attention to nature's largely untapped role in adaptation. Results from the Action Track will be showcased at the virtual Climate Adaptation Summit – which will also be hosted by the Dutch Government on 25 January 2021, a key moment in the run up to the UK hosted COP26.

Before I go I would like to mention one more thing that the Environment Agency Pension Fund is doing that you – as pension fund experts – could do. We are reducing the carbon in our pension fund's supply chain as part of the EA's approach to becoming a net zero organisation by 2030. We are putting a binding carbon reduction clause into the contract for our new fund administration. We have set out how those bidding for the contract need to measure their carbon, and the percentage this must be reduced each year. We recognise that each organisation will start from a different point on its carbon reduction journey, but... if the supplier does well and beats the targets, they are rewarded financially, with at least half of this amount expected to be spent on green or diversity projects.

On 27 February, Sir David Attenborough spoke at the launch the COP26 Private Finance Agenda hosted by the former Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, he said:

I make no pretence to understand the complexities of the global financial system, but in a lifetime of observing the natural world I do have some understanding of the equally complex natural systems that underpin our civilizations and trade.

And I can tell you first hand that those systems are collapsing and

anything built upon their assumed future stability is on very shaky foundations indeed.

The market for natural infrastructure and resilient development is growing. We are pioneering Nature-Based Solutions mechanisms to enable the finance sector to shift investment towards nature-positive activity. The Netherlands and the UK have a close working relationship in preparing for climate change, but international collaboration is vital well beyond the North Sea. That doesn't just mean governments writing agreements at international conferences. It means steady long-term gains for people investing in a pension. Portfolio managers need to quantify and plan for physical risk around climate change. It will connect your pension funds with the public who increasingly demand action. And, it's the right thing to do.

Thank you very much.