

UN Human Rights Council 45: Statement for the Universal Periodic Review Adoption – Lao People's Democratic Republic

World news story

The UK statement delivered during the Universal Periodic Review Adoption on Lao People's Democratic Republic



The Human Rights Council takes place in Geneva.

Madam President,

The United Kingdom welcomes the Lao People's Democratic Republic's (PDR) engagement with the UPR. We commend the Lao PDR for its cooperation and engagement with UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures, as well as its economic development and poverty reduction strategies and work on children's rights, including its very effective response to COVID-19.

The UK notes the Lao PDR's statement that the constitution and relating laws guarantee freedom of expression. However, we remain concerned about restrictions on foreign news agencies, and the use of intimidation against critics of the State. We urge the Government to promote and protect the right to freedom of expression for all. The UK remains concerned that the case of Sombath Somphone is yet to be resolved, and asks that investigations into all enforced disappearances are carried out thoroughly.

We welcome Lao PDR's support for the UK's recommendations to develop and implement a national action plan on human trafficking and modern slavery, and to repeal all legislation inhibiting freedom of opinion and expression. However, we regret that Lao PDR did not support the UK's recommendation to undertake impartial, thorough and transparent investigations into all enforced disappearances.

We remain open to discussing these recommendations with the Lao PDR and would welcome further discussion on next steps for implementation.

The UK encourages the Lao PDR to engage fully with the UN and the international community on their accepted recommendations, and to implement them fully.

Thank you.

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August 2020 Price Paid Data

News story

HM Land Registry Price Paid Data tracks land and property sales in England and Wales submitted to us for registration.



Image credit: Anton Clark

This release contains updates to the partial releases we've made since April as well as introducing the first release of data for August 2020.

As the August data is not complete, we would not recommend using it in isolation as an indication of market or HM Land Registry activity. However, when the full dataset is viewed alongside the data we've published since April, it adds to the overall picture of market activity in this period.

We will continue to add to the data in the coming months with a view to reinstating the normal releases in the coming months.

[Access the full dataset](#)

There is a time difference between the sale of a property and its

registration at HM Land Registry.

In the dataset you can find the date of sale for each property, its full address and sale price, its category (residential or commercial) and type (detached, semi-detached, terraced, flat or maisonette and other), whether or not it is new build and whether it is freehold or leasehold.

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[Defra engagement with the tobacco industry on litter](#)

In the [litter strategy for England](#) (2017), we said that tobacco product manufacturers and associated trade bodies need to think about ways to address the issue of smoking related litter.

According to a recent survey commissioned by Defra, despite smoking rates in England being at their lowest recorded level, cigarette butts continue to be the most commonly littered item in England.

The Minister for the Environment, Rebecca Pow, met with members of the tobacco industry and environmental charity, Keep Britain Tidy, to discuss smoking related litter in England and to explore what is preventing the tobacco industry from addressing this problem.

All such discussions need to comply with the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and accompanying guidelines on implementation, in particular Article 5.3.

In line with the framework, Defra intend to publish all correspondence and notes of meetings with the tobacco industry where it decides it is necessary to discuss steps that the tobacco industry can take to clean up the litter caused by its product.

[Dredging underway on Steeping River, Lincolnshire](#)

The dredging operation will remove sediment from targeted locations across 5.5km of waterway.

The stretch includes 5km of river between Thorpe Culvert and Dovecotes Farm, and 650m of the eastern end of the relief channel.

The specific locations being targeted within those stretches are where silt has built up higher than is ideal for maintaining a free flow of water.

This first phase of dredging is expected to last several months and will be followed by a second stage next autumn, tackling areas of sediment across 1.2km of the western end of the relief channel. The timings are subject to change.

The amount of silt in the river and relief channel was surveyed last autumn.

Findings showed that overall levels of sediment had reduced by 20% since the last investigation in 2014 – but that more had accumulated in certain isolated pockets.

The dredging work will tackle those pockets, across which silt is an average of 43cm higher than desired.

Authorities have always acknowledged that dredging alone does not reduce flood risk in the Steeping – and would not have prevented last year's breach.

The [Environment Agency](#) and its partners agree there is no single solution that can eliminate flood risk. But that it can be reduced using a combination of methods.

Such a combination, including dredging, is proposed in wide-ranging plans to reduce the risk of a repeat of last year's flooding.

The [Steeping Catchment Action Plan](#) outlines the actions that public sector organisations and the community can take to become more resilient to flooding and the impacts of climate change.

It is the result of extensive investigations into how flood risk is managed across the entire area – and what actions will provide the most benefit in reducing future risk. Dredging is just one part of those plans.

Also included are options to improve the flow of water, boost community resilience, further strengthen and maintain defences, and hold back or store flood water.

Exactly which approaches are taken long-term depends on funding. But the plan is exploring and developing new, innovative ways of financing the work.

The plan was launched in April 2020 by a steering group of local authorities and community representatives, formed to focus attention on solutions for the areas hit by last year's flooding.

On 12 June 2019, intense rain led to the breach of the Wainfleet Relief Channel, sparking a massive emergency response, including military.

Just two days before the breach was the wettest day ever recorded in June and

in Wainfleet. The area saw 74.6mm of rain in just one day. That is around 40% higher than the average for that time of year, and 75% more than the last major flood in June 2007. This record-breaking rainfall has been identified as the main cause of the breach.

In total, 88 properties were affected across six parishes in the East Lindsey district, with Wainfleet All Saints the hardest hit.

Morgan Wray, flood and coastal erosion risk manager at the Environment Agency, said:

We and our partners have worked tirelessly with the community since last year's devastating floods. Together, we have prioritised a comprehensive set of actions that will reduce the risk in the future as much as possible. Dredging is just one part of that and this has only been possible thanks to contributions from partners. It is something we know will be welcomed by the community but it is important to recognise that we can never eliminate the risk of flooding, so we urge people to understand their risk and prepare for it.

For safety reasons, especially in light of social distancing needed to combat Covid-19, please stay away from locations where activity is taking place and do not approach staff carrying out the work.

Robert Caudwell, chairman of the Steeping Steering Group, said:

I'm absolutely delighted to see this first stage of the dredging getting underway, helping to bring to life the Steeping Catchment Action Plan. I would like to say a huge thank you to all those involved in making it happen.

Andrew McGill, chief executive of Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board, said:

Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board is pleased to deliver this project in partnership with the Environment Agency, East Lindsey District Council and Lincolnshire County Council. These targeted de-silting works are taking place over a significant length of the river and will discourage weed growth, improve flows and assist with controlling the levels in the Steeping. The benefits of this will be felt in Wainfleet and throughout the Steeping catchment as this main river work will greatly assist the safe and timely evacuation of water from the lowland systems.

The steering group is a partnership made up of the Environment Agency, [Lincolnshire County Council](#), [East Lindsey District Council](#), the [National Farmers' Union](#), [Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board](#) and [Witham Fourth Internal](#)

[Drainage Board](#). The dredging operating is managed by Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board.

You can sign up to the EA's Flood Warning Service to get advanced notice of any expected flooding – call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or visit gov.uk/flood, where you can also find out what actions you can take to prepare for the worst.

UN Human Rights Council 45: Statement for the Universal Periodic Review Adoption – Kyrgyzstan

World news story

The UK statement delivered during the Universal Periodic Review Adoption on Kyrgyzstan



The Human Rights Council takes place in Geneva.

Madam President,

The United Kingdom welcomes Kyrgyzstan's engagement with the UPR and their determination to make progress on human rights.

We also welcome Kyrgyzstan's support for all three of our recommendations: to ratify the Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) of the ILO; to take all steps necessary to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including ensuring access to work and education and ensuring that all public buildings are accessible; to ensure that legislation is not adopted, including the so-called "foreign agents law", that would limit the ability of non-governmental organizations to operate freely. We welcome the ongoing consultations on the NGO law and encourage

Kyrgyzstan to consult the Venice Commission to ensure consistency with International human rights law good practice.

We were deeply saddened to hear about the tragic death of Mr Azhimzhan Askarov in prison, despite international calls for his release.

We call on Kyrgyzstan to uphold constitutional rights and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and, especially in light of October's Parliamentary elections, to continue to protect and promote the safety of journalists.

Following the considerable pressures that the coronavirus pandemic has placed on society, we urge Kyrgyzstan to take steps to improve the situation on domestic and gender-based violence.

The United Kingdom stands ready to support Kyrgyzstan in the implementation of our recommendations.

Thank you.

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