

# [Hong Kong response is censored](#)

Last Friday we posted an [article](#) on our WeChat channel to respond to errors in media reporting on the UK and Hong Kong.

We did this because we wanted you to have all sides of the discussion on Hong Kong.

We also wanted to make clear that we support Hong Kong's stability and prosperity. As the Prime Minister has said: "Britain wants nothing more than for Hong Kong to succeed under "one country, two systems"

The article was blocked after two hours but in that short time was viewed 350k times – the highest for any article we have ever posted.

We also received 1,050 comments. Many of your comments supported the new national security law and disagreed with the UK's criticism but some welcomed the opportunity to hear a different voice and our point of view.

The Chinese international broadcaster CGTN has also published a reply to our article titled 'A comprehensive response to the British Embassy'. Unlike our article, this will not be censored and can be read and discussed by anyone.

It is not unusual for our posts to be censored but we are not unique. We receive similar censorship to netizens and Chinese media.

The editor of the Global Times Hu Xijin has previously called for greater space for public discussion. In a Weibo post he has said 'China should open up more channels for criticism and suggestions and encourage constructive criticism'.

[Hu Xijin Weibo link](#)

While Caixin previously published an article on the importance of free speech with Shanghai academic Jiang Hong which was censored. When they published a follow up article 'Story about Adviser's Free Speech Comments Removed from Caixin Website' this was also censored.

In the UK the Chinese Ambassador, Liu Xiaoming, and his deputy, Chen Wen, regularly appear on the BBC and other broadcasters to discuss the problems Hong Kong has faced. Chinese diplomats and officials also freely discuss Hong Kong on Twitter or challenge the validity of claims on other issues such as COVID-19 and are not censored.

[Liu Xiaoming tweet link](#)

[Hua Chunying tweet link](#)

The media are free to interview whomever they like because it promotes a wide

range of perspectives and access to information that is important in tackling tricky problems whether that is Hong Kong or COVID-19.

It also means that everyone has a voice and it is not just the most powerful that can be heard.

There are many areas where the UK works side by side with China whether that is trade or climate change. We are both global leaders in tackling global warming and our two countries continue to create wealth and jobs together, with a trade relationship valued at more than £80bn in 2019. The potential of our economic and scientific partnership is huge and you will have seen us post many articles that promote this.

However, we would also like to be able to share with you content on topics where we hold a different opinion to the Chinese Government without it being censored.

The UK has a wide ranging relationship with China where we can have constructive discussions even if we disagree.

We also think that is important that you have a chance to understand our point of view so you can reach your own conclusion. We hope that this post is not censored.

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## [Ensuring aid reaches north-east Syria](#)

Thank you very much, Mr President. Let me also, of course, thank Mark Lowcock for his briefing and Susannah Sirkin from Physicians for Human Rights for what she had to say as well, which was very powerful.

Mr President, the United Kingdom remains committed to ensuring that aid in Syria reaches those who need it, regardless of location. In light of that, we continue to believe that it is necessary to renew the cross-border mandate in the north-west and to re-authorise the mandate for the north-east. And we strongly support the efforts of our humanitarian co-penholders to enact it. A mandate renewal for twelve months in the north-west is the minimum required to enable aid agencies to function effectively in the region. And re-authorisation in the north-east at Yaroubiya represents the most effective way of getting aid to an incredibly vulnerable population.

Mr President, I agree with all of those who've said humanitarian aid should not be a political issue and nor should the modalities in the mechanisms.

Mr President, in the north-west, cross-border operations remain at their highest level since the mandate was approved in 2014, and both crossings remain vital.

In May 2020, 3.4 million people benefited from UN food, security and livelihood assistance, which directly came through Bab al-Hawa. One million people benefited from health assistance provided by cross-border aid through Bab al-Salaam. There have been no cross-line deliveries. There would be no reasonable justification for shutting off this vital lifeline for the millions in the region. In the north-east, over 1.4 million people living outside regime control continue to require humanitarian assistance. Cross-line remains an inadequate replacement for the cross-border mandate, and this is stated clearly in the Secretary-General's June report. While we welcome the two World Health Organisation consignments delivering aid cross-line in May, there are 32 medicines that, as of the start of June, were a month away from running out at medical facilities in the north-east because the cross-border mandate was taken away.

Our Russian colleague raised the humanitarian principles. I just like to put on record our deep concern over the actions of the Syrian authorities in areas under their control and on cross-line in connection with the humanitarian principles. Colleagues, when cross-line deliveries fully compensate for the loss of cross-border, we'll be happy to say it's not needed in north-east. But until then, we have a responsibility to re-authorise cross-border into that region.

Now, Mr President, tomorrow, alongside many other Members of the Council, we'll make a pledge at the EU-UN Brussels IV conference. The United Kingdom will continue to show its leadership on the humanitarian fault with its pledge. And we encourage others to donate generously, too.

My Russian colleague spoke of hypocrisy over humanitarian aid. All I can suggest is that all members of the Security Council look carefully tomorrow at which countries pledge and consider how much assistance has been given by different countries over the long years of the war, and then they can make their own minds up about hypocrisy.

Colleagues, we must all make sure that aid gets to those who need it most. However, we must once again emphasise that there will be no automatic transfer of our aid provision to the response led from Damascus if the renewal of the vital cross-border resolution is blocked.

Mr President, let me conclude by noting, as Mark Lowcock did, that Russia has just pulled out of the humanitarian de-confliction mechanism. This, of course, is the mechanism which is meant to protect hospitals and health workers. I say "is meant to" because the Board of Inquiry found it highly likely that Russia and the regime bombed two hospitals and a school. As so often, Russian Federation attacks any impartial report it disagrees with. But this new action, pulling out of the mechanism, I'm afraid only increases the chances of this happening again and more innocent lives being lost. We see absolutely no justification for this move. And so we strongly urge Russia to reconsider its decision and to put Syrian lives first.

Thank you very much, Mr President.

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## Exports boom for record-breaking rower's alkaline water

ACTIPH, the UK's first alkaline ionised bottled water brand, has seen sales double during the coronavirus pandemic. The London based start-up, founded by seven-time Guinness World Record holder, Jamie Douglas-Hamilton, is experiencing unprecedented demand, with sales up 1000% on Amazon, 800% on Ocado and 300% in smaller online retailers.

Jamie Douglas-Hamilton uncovered the benefits of alkaline water out of necessity during a 5,000-mile row from Australia to Africa; realising that fresh water mixed with sea water is more hydrating than fresh water alone, instantly increasing power, energy levels and reducing hallucinations. This revelation helped the team break two Guinness World Records and was the inspiration behind ACTIPH.

Exporting to 15 countries, ACTIPH has already experienced strong growth overseas, with international sales accounting for 40% of the company's annual turnover. However, ACTIPH is looking to expand and grow into new markets, following advice and introductions made by the Department for International Trade (DIT).

### **Jamie Douglas-Hamilton, Founder of ACTIPH says:**

Alkaline water is the fastest growing beverage category in the world and is projected to be worth \$4.3 billion by 2023 – it's an extremely exciting place to be in.

Since launching in 2017, we have experienced 300% year-on-year growth and doubled our distribution in the last nine months. DIT has introduced us to a wide range of business contacts, especially in the US and Middle East, which has helped enormously.

Health has never been as relevant as it is now and is why our exports have soared by 300%. Within the next five years, we want to transform ACTIPH into a global lifestyle brand and become one of the top three players in the USA and the leading alkaline water in Europe, Middle East and Asia Pacific.

It is through expeditions like the one we completed in December, which was the first human powered crossing of the Drake Passage from South America to Antarctica that we intend to inspire and energise our community to live an active boundless life.

ACTIPH Water is produced via a three-stage process of purifying spring water

from Shropshire, adding electrolytes and supercharging by ionisation. This high alkaline water has a pH level of 9.0 or higher, offering the ultimate hydration for people seeking to live an active, balanced lifestyle.

DIT's overseas network is currently helping ACTIPH to enter Singapore, Australia and China markets, as well as assisting the company's expansion in the USA and Middle East.

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss launched [UK-Australia free trade agreement](#) negotiations on Wednesday 17 June and reaffirmed the UK's intention to join the [Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership \(CPTPP\)](#); both moves will make it easier for SMEs, such as ACTIPH, to trade with these dynamic markets.

### **International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss said:**

ACTIPH is a great example of the power of e-commerce, which continues to play an intrinsic role in keeping businesses afloat during these unprecedented times.

More trade is essential if the UK is to overcome the economic challenge posed by coronavirus and that's why we are negotiating free trade agreements that will open up new markets and provide exporters with greater opportunities overseas.

In 2019, the UK exported £8.1 billion worth of beverages, an increase of 3.9% compared to 2018. The USA was the biggest export market for UK beverages, accounting for over one fifth of all UK beverage exports in 2019.

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## **[Virtual Syria meetings show UK support for victims of brutal conflict](#)**

News story

Middle East Minister James Cleverly today held a series of virtual meetings with UK partners in Syria.



The Minister took part in discussions on several issues including humanitarian aid from the British Government, the need for a political solution to the country's conflict, and wider economic issues.

The UK is one of the largest bilateral donors to the Syrian crisis and the Minister was able to hear first-hand how UK aid is having a huge impact in the country, helping to change the lives of vulnerable people who need it most.

Mr Cleverly spoke with civil society activists and UK government partners working on projects that deliver life-saving assistance, empower women and help create the conditions for peace and security in Syria.

Partners showcased their achievements, made possible through UK support, such as increasing women's participation in peace negotiations and preventing and responding to gender-based violence in Syria.

Minister Cleverly said:

Today, I was grateful to see how the UK is providing vital support to victims of the brutal Syrian conflict.

This series of virtual meetings has been a welcome opportunity to reaffirm UK commitment to Syria as a partner in peace and one of the largest donors to the appalling crisis, which is now in its tenth year.

Speaking with UN officials and others, the Minister reaffirmed the importance of maintaining cross-border access in North West Syria to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe. A vote on the mandate for UN cross-border aid into North-West Syria, an area with over 1 million internally displaced people, will take place at the UN Security Council in the coming weeks.

He also stressed the urgent need for a political agreement in line with UNSCR 2254 to help end the brutal conflict.

## **Further information**

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## Tea is for team

When you're a department made up of people who can mainly work from home, how do you keep your team together?

It's something many of our offices are now facing, as it becomes apparent that for some of our teams, coming back to the office won't be an option for quite a while.

Our information services organisation (ISO) teams are tackling this with "cuppa and catch-up" meetings, held via Microsoft Teams.

The meetings are helping people stay in touch, whilst helping managers understand the concerns people have as we move into a post-Covid world.

ISO head of business and programmes, Steve Jennings, said:

We have seen a real shift in people's point of view recently.

It has always been the case that people appreciated the opportunity to talk to others.

At the beginning we were being told by our people they were coping really well, but as they've realised this could be much longer term than they first thought, their view has changed.

They feel much more daunted by the idea that working from home could be a permanent situation for them. The idea of no social interaction for months is hitting them hard.

This change in their views has shown us we have work to do as managers to help our people understand how this is going to work. Working from home could be the future for some of our people, but it's not something they should 'put up with', it's something they should feel they can embrace.

Such get-togethers are becoming an integral part of people's working week – not just in ISO but across the business where staff have found themselves working from home.

ISO's communications officer Lucy Routledge explained:

We encourage people taking part in the sessions to take a break from their home desk and grab a drink.

Although we are successfully home-working across ISO, we recognise

that no matter how good the capability and tools are, there is nothing that can substitute the face-to-face interaction that we all once enjoyed in the office environment.

The sessions are about allowing us to catch up with one another, to have a chat about how we're coping, how we are finding home-working, and what, if anything the ISO lead team can do to help.

The sessions also provide the opportunity to ask us any direct questions or raise any concerns. If they can't immediately be answered, the lead team come back with a response or address it in a future lead team blog.