

Cameroon: Minister for Africa calls for restraint and dialogue following violence



The UK's Minister for Africa James Duddridge said:

I'm appalled by the killing of civilians, including children, on Friday 14 February in Ngarbruh in the North-West Region of Cameroon. My thoughts and deep condolences are with the families and friends of those killed. There must be an urgent and transparent investigation into what happened, and those responsible must held accountable.

The UK continues to support all credible peacebuilding initiatives and remains ready to work with the Government of Cameroon and international partners to bring peace to the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions.

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UK Biodiverse Landscapes Fund

Biodiversity is declining worldwide faster than at any other time in human history. In the last 50 years, human pressures have increased, while animal populations, on average, have been reduced to more than half.

To help address the challenges facing nature today, the UK Prime Minister announced at the 2019 UN General Assembly the BLF with £100 million to cover at least five transboundary and precious biodiversity areas around the world.

Amongst these, the Mesoamerica Landscape covering Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, has been selected as one of the hotspots to develop projects worth around £15 million over seven years from 2022.

The Fund will be under the management of the Department of Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in coordination with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). It will deliver lasting protection and improvement of biodiversity by aligning nature conservation and human development objectives at a landscape scale.

In each area, we intend to execute the program through conservation and development organizations with a history of delivering high-quality large-scale projects of this nature. We will also welcome the participation of consortia of organizations.

More information about the development of the BLF will be available in due course at the British Embassy / High Commission of each country.

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Last updated 15 July 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 15 July 2021

Updating information on the BLF

2. 9 March 2020

Attachment has been updated

3. 19 February 2020

Added translation

Highways England hosts pupils to inspire the next generation

Helping to inspire the next generation of transport professionals and encourage young people to consider STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) as a career, the company hosted Year 5 and Year 6 pupils from Minety and Oaksey Church of England Primary Schools at their operational base at Avonmouth.

During the visit, youngsters got the chance to see Highways England's Control Room and the monitoring screens covering routes in the South West, met up with Traffic Officers and their on-road vehicle, built Lego Mindstorm autonomous cars and learned about road engineering through civil engineer Nuria Zea Checa, from Highways England partner WSP.

The company is responsible for planning, building, operating and maintaining England's motorways and major A roads, and Garry Packer, Lead Performance Analyst for Highways England, said:

I'm very focused on raising children's aspirations and confidence so they can see their potential, and these school visits are a great way to do this while also promoting Highways England as a great place to work.

I really believe that by engaging children from a young age, the next generations will be more interested in a whole range of transport and engineering-related careers, and Highways England hopes to encourage young people from a diverse range of backgrounds to work in the transport sector and particularly in STEM careers.

Maria Madeley, Science Lead at Minety CofE Primary School, added:

The children found it very inspiring and as well as giving them ideas about what they might like to do in their future careers it has helped them understand the type of skills employers are looking for.

When they returned to school they all said they thought it would be cool to work for Highways England.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Sweden joins UK ocean protection campaign](#)

Sweden has become the latest nation to join the UK's Global Ocean Alliance to help drive urgent action to safeguard the ocean and protect its precious wildlife.

Increasing sea temperatures, deoxygenation, acidification, habitat loss, overfishing and pollution are all damaging the world's marine environments, threatening marine life and habitats. The UK-led international coalition aims to tackle these impacts and safeguard at least 30 per cent of the global ocean in Marine Protected Areas by 2030.

The newest member of the Alliance was officially welcomed by the International Environment Minister, Zac Goldsmith, during a keynote speech at [WWF's](#) 'Blue Road to Glasgow' ocean conference today (Wednesday 19 February). Speaking at the event ahead of [COP26](#) in Glasgow later this year, Minister Goldsmith set out the UK's ambition to make our ocean more resilient through this global alliance and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that can contribute to warming ocean temperatures.

In the 2020 Year of Climate Action, the UK is taking a world-leading approach to marine conservation. As well as being the first country to commit to net-zero emissions by 2050, the UK led the call for a [global 30 per cent ocean protection target at the 2018 United Nations General Assembly](#) – and countries from Belize to Belgium are backing the initiative, as part of a nature-based solutions to improve ocean resilience.

International Environment Minister, Zac Goldsmith, said:

I'm grateful to WWF for hosting this important discussion as we advance ocean action ahead of COP26. We are on track to have more than half of UK waters protected by 2020 – and as custodians of the fifth largest marine estate in the world, it's right that we continue to lead the way on this issue.

But we cannot act alone. That's why I am delighted to welcome Sweden as the latest country to join our 30by30 coalition, and I

encourage every nation to join us. We will continue to call for more countries to protect at least 30% of the ocean by 2030 so that we can safeguard the ocean for generations to come.

Swedish Minister for Environment and Climate, Isabella Lövin, said:

I applaud the UK for taking the leadership in advancing this ambitious global goal for marine conservation. Sweden together with Fiji, hosted the first UN ocean conference in 2017, and we firmly believe we need more international cooperation and substantially increased ambitions to help our ocean survive under the increasing pressures of overfishing, pollution and climate change.

We look forward to working together with the UK to see the 30by30 target reflected within the Convention for Biological Diversity and ensuring that the current negotiations to establish a new Treaty to protect biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction can deliver this outcome.

Katie White, Executive Director of Advocacy and Campaigns for WWF, said:

We cannot win the fight against climate change without restoring our ocean. Yet we're overfishing, polluting our waters and destroying vital marine habitats. We applaud the Government's commitment to global ocean leadership today, which is a good first step on the road to a truly world-leading UK plan for ocean recovery.

The UK is at the forefront of marine protection With 357 Marine Protected Areas. Last year the government designated 41 new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), spanning almost 12,000 square kilometres – an area almost eight times the size of Greater London – for a total of 91 MCZs. This means that 40% of English waters are designated as marine protection areas – setting an example for the rest of the world to follow.

At the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019, the UK Prime Minister [announced a Global Ocean Alliance of countries in initial support of the 30by30 target](#). Countries that have signed up so far include: Belgium, Belize, Costa Rica, Finland, Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria, Palau, Portugal, Seychelles, Sweden and Vanuatu.

This year, the UK Government will invite all countries to sign up to this ambition, with the aim that 30by30 marine protection target will be agreed as part of a new global biodiversity framework at the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of Parties in October 2020. This would go far further than the current target set at 10%.

On the WWF ocean conference:

- The “Blue Road to Glasgow, COP26, and beyond” was a WWF conference held on Wednesday 19 February at the Living Planet Centre in Woking. Leading environment and marine NGOs explored ways to further advance climate action and ocean protection ahead of COP26 in Glasgow later this year.
- The event links to the [WWF’s Global Futures Report](#), published last week, which shows the overwhelming economic impacts from loss of nature, and highlights that ocean recovery action is needed to bring our waters back to life for people, climate and nature.

On the 30by30 initiative:

- A Defra Video on the 30by30 initiative, narrated by Sting, is available on [YouTube](#).

Digital form quicker and easier for separated parents applying to see children

- Quicker, less stressful process for parents trying to see children
- More than 8,000 applications during pilot phase
- Some 93% of users satisfied or very satisfied

The system means parents and their legal representatives can apply to the court digitally to make child arrangements.

Until now, this was an entirely paper service which led to errors when filling in the form and postal delays. Of the more than 8,000 people that used the digital system during its pilot phase, 93% of them were either satisfied or very satisfied with many commenting on the ease and speed of the new application.

Previously, some applicants would have to fill in three separate forms, which would typically amount to more than 30 pages. This has now been simplified and can be completed in as few as seven online pages, with thousands of sheets of paper already saved.

Richard Goodman, HMCTS Change Director said:

For parents, it can often be a stressful, challenging time when trying to arrange visits to see children and this system is designed to make that process as straightforward as possible.

As the court reform programme progresses, we will continue introduce services that make the justice system easier to navigate and more efficient for all those that use it.

As well as helping to reduce delays and error, the digital system also directs parents to alternatives other than applying to court, helping many people find more suitable ways to see their children.

This service is part of a £1 billion court reform investment and just one of a number of ways HMCTS and the Ministry of Justice are using digital ways of working to increase access to justice for court users across the country.

In the past four years, more than 300,000 people have used online justice services for tasks such as applying for probate, responding to civil money claims or applying for a divorce.

Notes to Editors

- The online [child arrangements service](#) is available to the general public and legal professionals.
- [Alternatives to court](#) should be considered by all separated parents trying to see their children.
- The online service encompasses forms C100, C1A and C8.