

[The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge arrive in Pakistan](#)

Throughout their visit The Duke and Duchess will tour the country to see the dynamic, aspirational and modern Pakistan. From the modern leafy capital Islamabad, to the vibrant city of Lahore, the mountainous countryside in the North, and the rugged border regions to the West, the visit will span over 1000km, and will take in Pakistan's rich culture, its diverse communities, and its beautiful landscapes.

TRH's programme will include visiting projects which empower young people, and communities that are rapidly responding and adapting to the effects of climate change.

Over the course of the visit, TRH will meet a wide variety of people, including children and young people, leaders from government, faiths leaders, business and the charity sector, inspiring conservationists, and well-known cultural figures and sporting stars.

The UK's links with Pakistan are extensive, and TRH are looking forward to building a lasting friendship with the people of Pakistan.

For further information

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

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[Government introduces ground-breaking Environment Bill](#)

The government will today (Tuesday 15 October) introduce a landmark Bill to Parliament to tackle the biggest environmental priorities of our time, signalling a historic step change in the way we protect and enhance our precious natural environment.

The transformative Environment Bill will help ensure that we maintain and improve our environmental protections as we leave the EU. It will build on

the UK's strong track record and sets out a comprehensive and world-leading vision to allow future generations to prosper. Environmental principles will be enshrined in law and measures will be introduced to improve air and water quality, tackle plastic pollution and restore habitats so plants and wildlife can thrive.

Legislation will also create, legally-binding environmental improvement targets. A new independent Office for Environmental Protection will be established to scrutinise environmental policy and law, investigate complaints and take enforcement action against public authorities, if necessary, to uphold our environmental standards. The office's powers will cover all climate change legislation and hold the government to account on its commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050. By also championing nature-based solutions, the Bill demonstrates our commitment to tackle climate change.

The Bill also places the bold ambition of our flagship 25 Year Environment Plan on a statutory footing and goes beyond the [key government commitments outlined earlier this year](#) by confirming powers to enhance nature and habitats and combat the devastating effects of plastics on our natural environment. Introducing charges for a number of single use plastic items will build on the success of the government's 5p plastic bag charge, which has cut sales from the biggest supermarkets by 90% since 2015.

The Bill, announced in [the Queen's Speech](#) and introduced today, will:

- Ensure the environment is at the heart of all government policy making and that this government – and future governments – are held to account if they fail to uphold their environmental duties, including meeting net-zero by 2050, and wider long-term legally binding targets on biodiversity, air quality, water, and resource and waste efficiency established under the Bill;
- Improve air quality – by fighting pollution so children and young people can live longer healthier lives. We will do this by setting an ambitious, legally-binding target to reduce fine particulate matter, PM2.5, and by increasing local powers to address sources of air pollution, enabling local authorities to work with families to cut harmful pollution from domestic burning by using cleaner fuels. The government will also be empowered to mandate manufacturers to recall vehicles when they do not meet the relevant environmental standards;
- Restore and enhance nature – through 'biodiversity net gain' ensure that the new houses we build are delivered in a way which protects and enhances nature, helping to deliver thriving natural spaces for local communities. We will improve protection for our natural habitats in supporting a Nature Recovery Network by establishing Local Nature Recovery Strategies and giving communities a greater say in the protection of local trees;
- Transform the way we manage our waste – through powers to ensure that producers take responsibility for the waste they create, introducing a consistent approach to recycling, tackling waste crime, introducing bottle deposit return schemes and more effective litter enforcement. Powers to introduce new charges will minimise the use and impacts of

single use plastics;

- Protect precious water resources – by increasing sustainable water management through securing long-term, resilient water and wastewater services in the face of a changing climate. Powers to direct water companies to work together to meet current and future demand for water will make planning more robust.

While the Bill applies only to England, more than half of its measures – such as those designed to drive up recycling rates – are designed to apply across the UK, with the consent of devolved administrations, helping the nation deal with the major environmental challenges we face together.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

Our natural environment is a vital shared resource and the need to act to secure it for generations to come is clear.

That's why our landmark Environment Bill leads a green transformation that will help our country to thrive. It positions the UK as a world leader on improving air quality, environmental biodiversity, a more circular economy, and managing our precious water resources in a changing climate.

Crucially, it also ensures that after Brexit, environmental ambition and accountability are placed more clearly than ever before at the heart of government, both now and in the future.

The Bill builds on this government's decisive action to protect the environment, as set out in our 25 Year Environment Plan. Legislation to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and hosting the Climate-focussed COP26 in 2020 will keep the UK at the forefront of international work on these issues.

Public consultations have played an important part in shaping numerous measures in the Bill, including on: environmental governance, the Clean Air Strategy, biodiversity net gain, protections for urban trees, conservation covenants, packaging producer responsibility, consistency in recycling, deposit return schemes and water resources.

Extensive and continued collaboration with the Scottish and Welsh Governments and the Northern Ireland Civil Service has also enabled us to bring forward measures that we expect to see adopted outside of England, for example measures which aim to increase recycling rates.

The ground-breaking Bill will bring a step-change in the way we protect and enhance all parts of our natural environment.

As well as introducing the Bill to Parliament today, the government will

publish an updated policy statement which outlines the many transformative measures included in the Bill, and the government response on our consultation on tree measures.

Key areas where changes will bring wide-reaching benefits include:

Environmental governance

- The Environment Bill will create a world-leading system for environmental governance.
- A new public body – the Office for Environmental Protection – will be our independent watchdog with the teeth to hold government and other public bodies to account on fulfilling their obligations on the environment – including on climate change.
- The government has also confirmed that, once established, the office will be located in Bristol, as recommended by the Cabinet Office Places for Growth Programme, and employ up to 120 staff.
- By setting legally-binding environmental targets, the UK will show global environmental leadership at a crucial time for our planet.
- Environmental principles will be embedded in Government decision-making. Combined with the obligation to publish environmental improvement plans, these measures will help protect and improve our environment.

A new direction for resources and waste management

- The Environment Bill signals a radical step change in how we deal with our waste and shows we are serious about tackling the scourge of plastics and pollution.
- Measures will extend responsibility for waste disposal to those who produce it, reducing waste in the long term as well as creating incentives for the reuse of material, and moving towards a more circular economy.
- We are also cracking down on litter, helping to end this blight on our communities, whilst tackling the organised gangs who profit from waste crime.

Further improving the air we breathe

- Poor air quality is the greatest environmental risk to our health. Our air is now cleaner than at any point since the industrial revolution, but there is more work to be done if we are to protect the health of our nation.
- The Environment Bill builds on our world-class Clean Air Strategy, and highlights our drive to go further, faster to clean up our air.
- The Bill will set an ambitious, legally-binding target to ensure emissions of the pollutant with the most significant impact on human health, fine particulate matter, are limited. This target will be among the most ambitious in the world and improve the quality of millions of people's lives.
- Measures will drive change at a local level, improving cooperation between local authorities who have legal responsibility for air quality in their areas, and those who have the ability to do something about it,

as well as improving the outdated Clean Air Act.

Delivering sustainable water resources

- We all rely on a clean and plentiful water supply, so our Bill will deliver on the pledge in our 25 Year Environment Plan to ensure everyone has access to exactly that.
- We will improve our long-term management of water, including providing for cooperation across water company boundaries, to better enable us to meet the challenges of our changing climate.
- There are also measures to prevent environmentally damaging removal of water from the environment, protecting this precious natural asset.

Restoring and enhancing nature and green spaces

- Nature is in decline. For too long, we haven't been able to reverse this downward trend and now urgent action is needed to drive necessary change.
- The Environment Bill delivers a step-change in our ambition to restore and enhance our natural environment, introducing measures to require and support lasting action for nature.
- Biodiversity net gain will allow us to deliver the increases in housing we need, whilst also enhancing nature, and has been co-designed with MHCLG. An amended duty on public authorities around biodiversity will make sure that every level of government is playing its part.

[HMRC accelerates 95,000 firms onto simplified import procedures](#)

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has automatically registered 95,000 businesses for its simplified import procedures allowing most traders up to 6 months to pay import duties and submit customs declarations, if the UK leaves the EU without a deal on 31 October 2019.

The scheme, known as Transitional Simplified Procedures (TSP), will make importing after Brexit on 31 October much simpler, particularly for businesses that would be completing customs processes for the first time. Up to now, businesses have had to apply for it – over 30,000 had previously registered.

This TSP scheme will allow most businesses up to 6 months to send in customs declarations and pay any customs duties to HMRC after importing goods from the EU. This will prevent congestion at the border when goods enter the UK.

The government has chosen to automatically enrol VAT-registered businesses that import from the EU into the TSP scheme as it is the best option for

businesses that are new to customs processes and haven't yet appointed a customs agent. Businesses that are not registered for VAT should apply for the scheme if it would benefit them.

HMRC Interim CEO Jim Harra said:

We are doing everything we can to help businesses get ready for Brexit on 31 October.

This move will support the trade of thousands of businesses and is part of our longstanding policy of making sure we continue to keep trade flowing.

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

At a time of change, the top priorities at the border have to be keeping trade flowing and minimising the potential for disruption.

Automatically registering companies for TSP at the border means one less immediate demand on traders' limited time and resources in the unwanted event of a 'no-deal' exit.

In particular, it would help the thousands of UK firms who import from the EU but have little experience of dealing with customs processes. We are pleased that ministers have again listened to BCC's calls to reduce the number of administrative hoops businesses will need to jump through as they navigate major changes to the way they trade across borders.

Businesses registered for TSP today are UK-based traders that HMRC has a record of having imported goods from the EU in 2018.

HMRC has sent letters to these traders with further details of their TSP registration, and they only have to take a few simple extra steps – such as checking if their goods attract tariffs, and getting a Duty Deferment Account if they do – to make sure that they are ready for 31 October.

Importers do not have to use TSP: they still also have the option to use full import processes instead. However, HMRC strongly advises traders new to dealing with customs to take advantage of the benefits of TSP.

The UK remains committed to ensuring the country's borders remain secure, and simplified customs measures will not change that. Border Force will continue to carry out intelligence-led checks.

Further information on TSP

If the UK leaves the EU without a deal, TSP arrangements become active from

the leaving date.

In the letter businesses being registered receive, they will need to:

- check what tariffs will apply to their goods after Brexit and whether they need to pay customs duties on their goods – under the [temporary tariff](#), 88% of total imports to the UK by value would be eligible for tariff-free access
- if they do have duties to pay, they must apply for a Duty Deferment Account before importing goods – this allows them to pay the duties they owe monthly by direct debit rather than as soon as the goods enter the UK
- keep customs records of all the goods they import from the date the UK leaves the EU and get ready to make monthly declarations to HMRC

Traders can choose to delay making declarations until 6 May 2020, giving them more time to get used to new processes. If they choose to delay making declarations until 6 May 2020, payment for the duties they owe will be taken by direct debit on 15 May 2020. Traders should prepare to account for the import VAT on imports on their normal VAT return.

If a trader doesn't receive a letter but thinks they should get TSP, they can apply on GOV.UK.

Non-VAT registered traders who import goods from the EU are also encouraged to register for TSP. HMRC is developing a new online service which will let them report and pay import VAT on a quarterly import VAT return if they choose to delay making declarations until 6 May 2020. This service will be available to sign up for after Brexit.

See [more information on TSP](#) and the records you need to keep.

A copy of the [letter to businesses](#) has been published on GOV.UK today (15 October 2019).

HMRC action to prepare traders

This announcement comes after HMRC auto-enrolled 88,000 VAT-registered traders with UK EORI numbers in August. Having a UK EORI is the vital first step for businesses to take if they wish to continue trading with the EU as normal after 31 October.

Earlier this month HMRC also invested a further £10 million in grants to boost the staff capability of customs agents after Brexit. This grant is available to businesses currently completing customs declarations on behalf of other importers and exporters. The investment followed previous funding of £16m in September as well as £5 million provided in December 2018 available to UK traders.

HMRC has sent over 1.3 million letters and emails to traders, published a wide range of guidance, step-by-step guides, videos, webinars and held events to help businesses and agents prepare for a no deal scenario.

Businesses can [register for our free email update service](#) – select ‘business help and education emails’, then select ‘Brexit’.

Businesses can also use the GOV.UK readiness checker to ensure that they have made the necessary preparations for 31 October, or call the new Brexit import and export helpline on 0300 3301 331 for advice.

New fund for frontline organisations tackling loneliness

- Government launches £2 million grant fund for organisations tackling loneliness
- New funding comes one year since publication of landmark Loneliness Strategy
- Builds on existing £11.5 million Building Connections Fund and support for community space and tech projects

A new £2 million fund is being launched to help organisations at the frontline of tackling loneliness across the country, Minister for Civil Society Baroness Barran announced today.

The funding aims to support frontline, grassroots organisations that bring people together and help them build social connections. These could include community cafés, street parties, coffee mornings or local walking groups.

The investment will help small organisations promote themselves more widely, help fund the use of suitable venues and accessible transport, and bring established groups together to best serve local people at risk of loneliness.

The funding marks one year since the publication of the Government’s landmark Loneliness Strategy which outlined almost 60 commitments to end loneliness.

This included funding 126 projects through its £11.5 million Building Connections Fund – the first Government fund ever dedicated to reducing loneliness, jointly funded with the Co-op Foundation and National Lottery Community Fund.

Baroness Barran, Minister for Loneliness, said:

Loneliness is one of the biggest public health challenges our country faces and we are committed to tackling it head on. This new fund is a fitting way to mark one year since the launch of our landmark strategy and will help grassroots organisations address the issue in their own communities.

I have had the privilege of meeting so many people, young and old, who are unsung heroes and heroines in their communities, bringing people together through cafés, reading groups, arts and crafts, gardening, sports and more. They have told me how they want a chance to celebrate their work, together with other local groups, so they can raise awareness and encourage more people to be involved.

This new investment shows how much we value their work and our continued commitment to beating loneliness.

The commitments in the Loneliness Strategy also included:

- Social prescribing: supporting all local health and care systems to implement social prescribing schemes that can refer patients to support programmes to inspire social connections across the country by 2023;
- Building a network of employers to take action on loneliness: more than 30 local and national organisations have signed up to an Employer Pledge to provide help and support to lonely people;
- Working in partnership with Royal Mail to trial 'Safe and Connected': An innovative pilot was launched to enable postal workers in Whitby, Liverpool and New Malden in Kingston-upon-Thames to help lonely older people on their usual delivery rounds.

Over the past year, the Government has also:

- Launched the [#LetsTalkLoneliness campaign](#), which aims to raise awareness of loneliness, recognise the signs and tackle the stigma surrounding it. The campaign was developed through a partnership between Government, business and charities, including the Co-op Foundation, the British Red Cross, the Campaign to End Loneliness, Mind, Public Health England, the Jo Cox Foundation and the Marmalade Trust;
- Launched the £1.6 million Space to Connect fund in partnership with the Co-op Foundation, to unlock community spaces where people can come together such as community cafés, art spaces, or extending opening hours of community buildings; and
- Invested £1 million in the Nesta Tech to Connect Challenge Prize, to encourage the design of solutions to tackle social isolation and promote community cohesion. The announcement comes ahead of the Minister visiting 'Body and Soul', an expansion project based in Hackney, which is using a grant from the Building Connections Fund to deliver a dialectical therapy skills group, trauma yoga sessions and weekly creative spaces – reducing social isolation in the process.

Since her appointment, the Minister has travelled across the country to chair a number of events with representatives from charities, sports and youth clubs, social enterprises, responsible businesses and local groups to build on the positive work of the Civil Society Strategy and Loneliness Strategy. This has been with a particular emphasis on building stronger connections between people and helping to develop their sense of belonging.

These relationships will help to inform the Government's future work, including its first loneliness annual report, highlighting achievements and next steps, which will be published at the end of 2019.

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

Further details on the funding application process, including eligibility and when it will open, will follow in due course.

Ten top tips for if you're feeling lonely

1. Remember you are not alone – lots of people of all ages and backgrounds feel lonely. Millions of people in the UK say they are often or always lonely.
2. Think about what is making you feel lonely – Anyone can experience loneliness at some point in their life, but the reasons why will vary from person to person. Taking time to think about what's causing you to feel lonely may help with finding what could help you feel differently.
3. Be proactive. Look at what resources are out there – If you're going to the doctors or your local library have a look for leaflets about any local events, exercise classes, book clubs, coffee mornings, playgroups etc. that may help you connect with your community. Alternatively you can also refer yourself to LetsTalkLoneliness.co.uk
4. Take up a new hobby that can be done in pairs or groups like learning a language? If you don't like it you can always change your mind and do something else.
5. Don't be afraid to ask for help – Try opening up to someone who you feel comfortable talking to, whether that's a member of your family, a friend, your carer or even GP.
6. Accept help when it's presented to you – It might be a friend or a neighbour just offering for you to go round for a brew. Don't think that you're a nuisance or they're not offering because they want to see you. Try not to worry about how you're being perceived.
7. Access free services – There is lots of support out there which could help you address some of the causes of your loneliness. See below for more information on organisations that can help. – same as above
8. Volunteer – Volunteering can be a great way to meet new people and make new connections. You could help out at a local charity shop, or use your skills to support others.
9. Surround yourself with activity. If you're feeling alone, why not pop out to a coffee shop or somewhere where there's some activity going on. You may meet someone else in a similar situation to you and it might spark a conversation. Try to smile at people; having someone smile back could change your day.
10. Join groups online. If you can't leave the house try joining an online community who share similar interests to you. You can also try inviting people into your home if you find it difficult to go out.

Top tips for identifying loneliness

1. Loneliness is a subjective feeling experienced by people of all ages and all backgrounds. Identifying people who are lonely or at risk of loneliness therefore might seem tricky. Here are some simple tips that could help:
2. Remember that loneliness is often triggered by key life transitions, such as loss of mobility, taking on caring duties, bereavement, developing a health condition, leaving school, separation, retirement, becoming a parent, unemployment, moving to a new area and so on.
3. Loneliness can also be triggered by money problems, stress, being bullied or treated with less respect.
4. Ask whether people feel they can talk to others, whether they are satisfied with their relationships, how often they leave the house, how often they feel left out, as though they lack companionship and whether they feel isolated from others.
5. Don't ever assume someone isn't lonely. Just because they have an active social life doesn't mean they're not experiencing loneliness. Anyone can be lonely but everyone can help. Ask questions; they might not show the obvious signs.

*Courtesy of the British Red Cross

Home education: a choice or last resort?

Children leaving secondary school to be home-educated often have complex needs and some make the move as a last resort rather than a preferred choice, new research by Ofsted has revealed.

Ofsted carried out the study: 'Exploring moving to home education in secondary schools' across 7 local authorities in the East Midlands specifically to look at how and why children move from secondary school to home education.

Ofsted's report, published today, says that special educational needs, medical, behavioural or other well-being needs were the main reasons behind such a move for parents and their children.

Parents, local authorities and schools told Ofsted that, often, there was little or no communication about the decision between parties before the child moved, and alternative options or consideration of what was the best outcome for the child were not always discussed.

Ofsted also found that, in some cases, the process of making the move can take less than a day.

Participants reported that children are often moved to home education to resolve pressures at school. For example, parents may remove their child from school to avoid exclusion or prosecution for non-attendance. Some parents also reported that schools had applied indirect pressure to convince them to move their child to home education.

In the absence of a national framework for support, schools and local authorities have different approaches to providing support to parents.

Some schools reported that they were unsure of their responsibilities once a child moved to home education. This led to a breakdown in information-sharing with the parent that could have helped with their child's ongoing education.

Parents said that they would have benefited from information and guidance on the financial cost of home education. In addition, parents would have liked to have been told more about where their child could sit external exams.

Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, said:

Home education is a legitimate parental choice and can be a positive decision when parents are well equipped to provide a good education.

However, children should not be moved to home education simply to resolve difficulties in school. Schools, local authorities and parents need to work together before such a decision is made, to ensure that home education is genuinely in the interests of children and not just the best thing for schools or parents. It's vital that parents are fully informed about the alternatives, and that they understand all the implications and costs of home-educating their child.

Ofsted's report makes several recommendations for government, schools and local authorities, aimed at supporting the interests of children who may be moving from secondary school to home education, including:

- the DfE should consider the extent to which current legislation and guidance considers children's views during decisions to home-educate
- schools and local authorities should develop clear processes for working together once they know a parent's intention to home-educate
- local authorities and schools should be aware that when a school writes a letter to remove a child to home education on behalf of a parent, this may be evidence of off-rolling
- after a move to home education is made, it would be good practice for schools to provide parents with children's previous classwork

For its part, Ofsted will evaluate carefully the reasons for pupils leaving when pupil movement at a school is unusually high. When Ofsted finds evidence of off-rolling, it will continue to report this clearly and is likely to judge the school's leadership and management to be inadequate. Where appropriate, and where pupil movement into home education is very high,

inspectors will take the views of parents who have moved their children into home education into account in their inspection evidence.