

UK to provide vital food supplies to encircled Ukrainian cities

The UK is set to provide £2 million in vital food supplies for areas of Ukraine encircled by Russian forces, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss confirmed today (26 March).

The announcement comes following a direct request from the government of Ukraine, with the UK funding a rapid donation of dried food, tinned goods and water.

Warehouses in Poland and Slovakia are being readied to supply these goods to the government of Ukraine from early next week. Around 25 truckloads will then be transported by road and rail to the local Ukrainian communities in greatest need.

It is estimated over 12 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance across Ukraine, with the actual figure likely to be much higher.

This rapid donation is essential, with the window to reach towns and cities already encircled, as well as those at high risk, closing.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

This vital donation of food and supplies will help support the Ukrainian people in the face of Russia's barbaric invasion.

Our teams are working day and night with our Polish and Slovakian friends and the government of Ukraine to ensure those at most risk get the essential supplies they so badly need.

Alice Hooper, FCDO Humanitarian Adviser said:

The need on the ground in Ukraine is clear, with so many people in encircled areas trapped in basements without access to food or water. Nearly 6 million children remain in Ukraine, many sheltering inside buildings which are coming under attack.

We are working with partners at the borders to ensure these vital UK supplies reach the places they are needed most as quickly as possible.

Access to food, water and cooking facilities for those trapped by Russian advances is becoming increasingly difficult, with people taking refuge in basements from shelling.

This latest donation comes as part of the £400 million committed by the UK,

with £220 million of this on humanitarian aid. The Foreign Secretary today announced the allocation of the first tranche of this funding, which will be shared amongst trusted humanitarian delivery partners on the ground, including:

- £25 million to the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR to support surrounding countries to receive and care for refugees from the conflict
 - £20 million to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the OCHA-managed Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF), to provide coordinated lifesaving humanitarian assistance, protection and basic services to those remaining in Ukraine
 - £10 million to International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to deliver healthcare and water, sanitation and hygiene provision amongst other support
1. The UK announced [nearly £400 million of aid for urgent economic and humanitarian support](#) since the invasion. This includes a £220 million package for aid agencies on the ground to provide medical supplies and basic necessities, saving lives and protecting vulnerable people.
 2. UK bilateral food assistance will support efforts by the UN World Food Programme and Red Cross to scale up alternative food assistance while maintaining the safety and security of staff on the ground.

[Search launched for the next UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#)

- Potential locations have the chance to join the likes of Machu Picchu, the Taj Mahal and The Tower of London for this prestigious award
- Successful sites will progress to formal nomination stage for World Heritage Status

Heritage Minister Nigel Huddleston has today launched a call for the UK's next nominations for UNESCO World Heritage Status.

Open to sites in the UK, Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, nominations are reviewed every ten years and is a chance for sites to receive international recognition for the important role they have played in the world's history.

The successful sites could join the UK's 33 other UNESCO World Heritage Sites including Stonehenge, Saltaire, The Tower of London and Hadrian's Wall. Last year the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales was the most recent UK location to receive UNESCO status. 2021 also saw the City of Bath – originally named a

UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987 – awarded a special dual designation with 11 other European Spa towns including Baden-Baden in Germany and Vichy in France.

Heritage Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

UNESCO World Heritage Status has a transformative impact on places bestowed with this honour. As well as international acclaim, UNESCO status boosts tourism and creates employment and economic growth opportunities.

The UK and Overseas Territories have many potential contenders and I can't wait to see what fantastic sites and stories we uncover in our search.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will form an independent panel of heritage experts to review nominations. Nominations will be assessed against rigorous criteria and only locations with the potential to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List will be put forward to formal nomination.

Notes to editors:

The UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for meeting the requirements of the World Heritage Convention within the UK. This includes maintaining and reviewing the Tentative List of sites, formally nominating new sites, and ensuring existing sites are conserved and protected.

The new Tentative List will be published by DCMS later this year.

The UK's next nominations, drawn from the current Tentative List will be examined by the World Heritage Committee in 2024. They are the Scottish Flow Country and Gracehill in Northern Ireland. Gracehill – a Moravian Church settlement dating from 1759 – will be nominated as part of a joint bid led by the US and Germany to add a number of Moravian Church settlements to the existing UNESCO World Heritage Site in Denmark.

The UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the UK and Overseas Territories are:

Cultural Sites

- Blaenavon Industrial Landscape (2000) *Blenheim Palace (1987)
- Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey, and St Martin's Church (1988)
- Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd (1986)
- City of Bath (1987)
- Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape (2006)
- Derwent Valley Mills (2001)

- Durham Castle and Cathedral (1986)
- Frontiers of the Roman Empire (1987, 2005, 2008)
- Gorham's Cave Complex (2016)
- Heart of Neolithic Orkney (1999)
- Historic Town of St George and Related Fortifications, Bermuda (2000)
- Ironbridge Gorge (1986)
- Jodrell Bank Observatory (2019)
- Maritime Greenwich (1997)
- New Lanark (2001)
- Old and New Towns of Edinburgh (1995)
- Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey (1987)
- Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal (2009)
- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (2003)
- Saltaire (2001)
- Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites (1986)
- Studley Royal Park including the Ruins of Fountains Abbey (1986)
- The English Lake District (2017)
- The Forth Bridge (2015)
- The Great Spa Towns of Europe (2021)
- The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales (2021)
- Tower of London (1988)

Natural Sites

- Dorset and East Devon Coast (2001)
- Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast (1986)
- Gough and Inaccessible Islands (1995, 2004)
- Henderson Island (1988)

Mixed Cultural / Natural

- St Kilda (1986, 2004, 2005)

[England's largest ever seagrass planting hits new milestone](#)

England's largest ever seagrass restoration project has reached a new milestone by planting around 70,000 seed bags spanning 3.5 hectares of seabed, which will provide vital habitat for marine life.

The £2.5 million LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES partnership to ['Save Our Seabed'](#) led by Natural England and funded by the EU LIFE Programme, was launched in July 2019. It is seeking to protect and restore sensitive seabed habitats which are at risk.

Habitats such as seagrass meadows, mangroves and tidal marshes, are

increasingly being recognised for their essential carbon capture abilities – seagrass can be as effective at absorbing and storing carbon as our woodlands. It also provides habitat for sea life including juvenile fish, seahorses and jellyfish, cleans surrounding seawater and helps to stabilise the seabed which can help to reduce coastal erosion. However, research shows the UK has lost at least 44% of its seagrass since 1936.

The UK seabed is threatened by a variety of factors, from seagrass wasting disease (SWD) to pollution and physical disturbance from activities such as the anchoring, launching and mooring of leisure boats.

Natural England is leading efforts to combat UK seagrass losses, in partnership with other organisations including the [Ocean Conservation Trust](#), covering five Special Areas of Conservation in Southern England. To support seagrass recovery in these areas, partners are surveying and mapping seagrass beds to help inform recreational marine users; undertaking studies to better understand how these recreational activities impact seagrass and introducing voluntary No-Anchor Zones. Advanced Mooring Systems are also being trialled, which are designed to interact less with the seabed.

The ReMEDIES partnership has been planting seagrass in the Plymouth Sound and Solent Maritime Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) with its restoration partner Ocean Conservation Trust. The partnership aims to plant a total of eight hectares of seagrass across these two SACs.

Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, said:

Seagrasses are a precious part of our marine ecosystem, providing a habitat for a wide variety of species from juvenile fish to our seahorse populations. They are an essential mechanism for carbon capture and a healthy marine environment.

Seagrasses are vital but they are also very delicate. With their existence threatened by disease, pollution, and human activity, we must all work together to support the recovery of seagrasses – and harness their power to combat climate change and restore our natural environment.

Mark Parry, Development Officer at the Ocean Conservation Trust, said:

Seagrass meadows are one of the most valuable and biodiverse habitats on the planet. By restoring seagrass, we are ensuring they will continue to provide vital environmental benefits to both people and the planet.

We are very proud to be the restoration lead in this project and are grateful for communities in both Plymouth and the Solent volunteering their time to help us restore such an important habitat.

Following further seagrass planting efforts this week, an impressive total of 3.5 hectares of seabed has now been planted, comprising 2.5 hectares in Plymouth Sound and 1 hectare in Solent Maritime. It takes about 10,000 seagrass seed bags per half a hectare, and approximately 70,000 seed bags have been packed by volunteers and deployed into the sea overall.

Later this year, sea dives are due to take place at healthy seagrass meadows in the Solent and Cornwall to collect seagrass seeds. The seeds will then be sent to the ReMEDIES cultivation laboratory at the National Marine Aquarium (NMA) in Plymouth and cared for until they are ready to be planted.

As part of ReMEDIES, the Ocean Conservation Trust is also trialling methods of planting seedlings directly into the seabed. They are currently growing square 'pillows' of multiple seedlings in the lab of the NMA which will be transferred to the seabed at the Plymouth Sound site using divers.

Information and key learnings from ReMEDIES will be shared with other marine conservation projects to help benefit seabed habitats across the UK and Europe.

Further information:

- ReMEDIES is funded by the EU LIFE programme and led by Natural England in partnership with the Ocean Conservation Trust (OCT), Marine Conservation Society, Royal Yachting Association, and Plymouth City Council/Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum.
- The project covers five Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which are designated areas under the European Union's Habitats Directive in place to protect special habitats and species. The five areas are: Isles of Scilly Complex (SAC), Fal and Helford (SAC), Plymouth Sound and Estuaries (SAC), Solent Maritime (SAC), and Essex Estuaries (SAC).
- Find out more about LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES by following on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook @EULIFERemedies, or visiting www.saveourseabed.co.uk.

Communities to trial innovative ways of adapting to coastal erosion

As part of the Government's £200 million flood and coast innovation programme, £36 million will be invested to explore innovative approaches of adapting to the effects of coastal erosion.

Known as the Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme, the initial areas of focus will be East Riding of Yorkshire and North Norfolk. Both local authorities will receive funding to help communities on areas of the coast that cannot sustainably be defended from coastal erosion.

Residents will be supported to prepare and plan for the long term, while also trialling some immediate actions that support the long-term resilience of communities near the coast.

Such interventions might include:

- improving and replacing damaged community infrastructure, such as beach access or coastal transport links and replacing public or community owned buildings in areas at risk with removable, modular, or other innovative buildings
- repurposing land in coastal erosion zones for different uses such as temporary car parks and restoring and creating habitats to include green buffer zones
- working with the finance and property sectors to explore innovative finance or funding mechanisms to help move communities from the highest risk areas, for instance schemes to incentivise the relocation of at-risk infrastructure for businesses and homeowners
- developing the local planning system so it supports and facilitates the managed transition of communities from high-risk land and ensuring it restricts future development in areas affected by coastal erosion

The Environment Agency will manage the programme, supporting both areas as they develop and deliver their local projects. It will also ensure that ongoing learning is shared with other areas facing similar challenges.

Floods Minister Rebecca Pow said:

As climate change brings more extreme weather, we must redouble our efforts to build a more resilient nation. We have ramped up flood and coastal erosion policies, and we will always defend our coastline where it is sustainable and sensible to do so. Where it isn't we will support communities to adapt.

What we are announcing today will support innovative solutions to help those areas most vulnerable to coastal erosion to prepare and adapt.

The programme will run to March 2027, exploring and testing innovative opportunities. A full evaluation of the programme will help to inform future national policy direction and will add to our coastal resilience activity elsewhere, which includes a national coastal erosion risk map providing clearer data about local risks to help local planning, and the ongoing national refresh of existing Shoreline Management Plans.

This is in addition to the record £5.2 billion being invested in flood and coastal defences between 2021 and 2027, building around 2,000 new flood defences to better protect 336,000 properties from flooding and coastal erosion.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

England's coastline has never been static. Today, 9,000 kilometres of open English coast is at risk from sea flooding, erosion and landslips, and by 2100 once-a-century sea level events are set to become annual events.

As a minimum, we need to plan for at least a metre rise of sea level rise by the end of the century. In some places the pace and scale of change may be so significant that, over a period of time, coastal authorities will need to help local communities transition away from the current shoreline over time.

This programme is about providing that local support while increasing the whole country's expertise and resilience in the face of climate and coastal change.

These two locations were chosen because they are already living with the challenges of coastal erosion and between them include 84% of the properties at risk of coastal erosion in England over the next 20 years.

Councillor Jonathan Owen, Leader of East Riding of Yorkshire Council, said:

Valuing our environment, tackling climate change, safeguarding our heritage and countryside whilst developing our infrastructure remain key priority areas for the council and on that basis, we very much welcome today's announcement.

Our coastal communities are vitally important to the East Riding and residents will be supported to prepare and plan for the long term impact of climate change, while also trialling some immediate actions that support the long-term resilience of communities near the coast.

Councillor Tim Adams, Leader of North Norfolk District Council, said:

This new initiative is going to build on our previous experiences and actions in meeting the constant challenge of coastal erosion in North Norfolk, to help us to continue to work together with our local communities and shape a positive future alongside those most at erosion risk.

We will be exploring practical actions which can be done now and in years to come, aided by this support from the CTAP programme.

Further information

- The Budget in 2020 provided £200 million to run a flood and coast innovation programme that could explore new approaches to help build

resilience to the threat of flood and coastal risk.

- In March 2021, Minister Pow announced 25 areas to receive a share of £150 million from the Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme (FCRIP) between 2021 and 2027 to explore and test innovative practical actions to address flooding in their local areas.
- A further £8 million is trialling a new approach to strategic long-term adaptive pathways in Thames Estuary, Humber Estuary, Yorkshire and Severn Valley.
- The Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP) is the third major component of the overall innovation programme. Some £36m is expected to be invested to explore innovative approaches to coastal transition by the end 2026/27.
- North Norfolk and East Riding of Yorkshire authorities have been identified as the areas to lead off the CTAP as they have proportionally the highest number of properties at risk from coastal erosion in England. Other areas will benefit from the programme in future years learning from their early experiences.
- The government is investing a record £5.2 billion in flood and coastal schemes between 2021 and 2027. This record investment will create 2,000 flood defences, better protect 336,000 properties, drive down flood risk and help to avoid £32 billion of wider economic damages along with a range of other benefits for local communities and the environment.
- The [government policy statement on flooding and coastal erosion](#), published on 14 July 2020, sets out the government's long-term ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. The [press release](#) included information about the £200m resilience innovation programme.
- Alongside the policy statement, the Environment Agency published its new [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#), which is also focused on improving overall resilience and provides a framework to guide the activities of those involved in flood and coastal erosion risk management.

[UK on track to reach 4,000 zero emission bus pledge with £200 million boost](#)

- nearly 1,000 more zero-emission buses to be funded in towns and cities across the country, bringing the total funded in England to 2000 so far under this government
- a further 600 zero-emission buses have been funded in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- comes as consultation launched on ending sale of all new non-zero emission buses from 2025 to 2032

- government continues taking unprecedented action to hit net zero and level up transport across the country

Millions of people across the country will be able to make greener, cleaner journeys as almost 1,000 green buses are rolled out with the backing of nearly £200 million in government funding.

Twelve areas in England, from Greater Manchester to Portsmouth, will receive grants from the multimillion-pound package to deliver electric or hydrogen powered buses, as well as charging or fuelling infrastructure, to their region.

The funding comes from the [Zero Emission Buses Regional Area \(ZEBRA\) scheme](#), which was launched last year to allow local transport authorities to bid for funding to purchase zero emission buses.

Today's (26 March 2022) £198.3 million of funding will provide 943 buses. It builds on almost:

- £71 million announced last year to support up to 335 new zero emission buses in 5 areas
- a further £50 million funding for the UK's first All Electric Bus City, Coventry, supporting up to 300 buses
- 100 buses funded by previous funding schemes

The first orders have already been placed. Hundreds more zero emission buses have been funded in London, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It means the government remains on track to deliver its commitment to fund a total of 4,000 zero-emission buses across the country – which the Prime Minister promised in 2020 to “drive forward the UK's progress on its net zero ambitions” and to “build and rebuild those vital connections to every part of the UK”.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

I will level up and clean up our transport network. That's why I've announced hundreds of millions of pounds to roll out zero emission buses nationwide.

Not only will this improve the experience of passengers, but it will help support our mission to fund 4,000 of these cleaner buses, reach net zero emissions by 2050 and build back greener.

Today's announcement is part of our [National Bus Strategy](#), which will introduce lower fares, helping drive down the cost of public transport even further for passengers.

The move is expected to remove over 57,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year from the country's air, as well as 22 tonnes of nitrogen oxides on average each year, as government continues to go further and faster to achieve net

zero, clean up the transport network and build back greener.

It is also part of the government's wider £3 billion National Bus Strategy to significantly improve bus services, with new priority lanes, lower and simpler fares, more integrated ticketing and higher frequencies.

Jobs in the bus manufacturing industry – based largely in Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England – will be supported as a result of the move. Zero-emission buses are also cheaper to run, improving the economics for bus operators.

Transport Minister Baroness Vere said:

We recognise the scale of the challenge the world faces in reaching net zero. That's why reducing emissions and creating green jobs lies at the heart of our transport agenda.

Today's multimillion-pound investment is an enormous step towards a cleaner future, helping ensure transport is fit for generations to come and allowing millions of people to get around in a way that is kinder to our environment.

The areas whose business cases were approved and will be receiving funding are:

- Norfolk
- North Yorkshire
- Portsmouth
- Blackpool
- Nottingham
- Greater Manchester
- Hertfordshire
- South Yorkshire
- Oxfordshire
- West Midlands
- York
- West Yorkshire

Martin Griffiths, Stagecoach Chief Executive, said:

We welcome today's announcement, which will complement the significant investment and initiatives by operators as we work together to transition to a zero emission bus fleet and help the country achieve its net zero ambitions.

Stagecoach has already started its journey towards our target of a fully zero emission UK bus fleet by 2035, and there is also a major opportunity to deliver cleaner air by people switching to more sustainable public transport, cycling and walking.

Britain's buses have an exciting future ahead, helping decarbonise the country, as well as driving economic recovery and levelling up our communities.

Government funding of Transport for London has supported the introduction of 300 zero emission in London. Around 600 zero emission buses have been funded in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as a result of the block grant to the devolved administrations.

The government will also today launch a [public consultation seeking views on setting a specific date between 2025 and 2032 for ending the sale of new non-zero emission \(at the tailpipe\) buses.](#)

This would mean that, from 2032 at the very latest, the sale of all new buses, powered either in part, or totally, by an internal combustion engine would cease to be allowed.

Any new buses sold from that date would need to be fully zero-emission at the tail pipe and the end of sales would apply across the whole of the UK.

Such a move would bolster the market for zero-emission buses, making them the default choice for operators to transition sooner.

Calls for evidence will also be launched today on ending the sale of new non-zero emission coaches and minibuses, allowing evidence to be gathered on the challenges to moving to a zero-emission fleet, and what an appropriate end of sales date might be.