

One month of President Putin's war of choice against Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE, 24 March 2022

Thank you Mr Chair.

I am grateful to Ambassador Çevik for briefing the Permanent Council this morning. I would ask him to pass on the United Kingdom's heartfelt thanks to all his staff – both international and Ukrainian Mission Members – for everything they have done and continue to do for us. The experience, the expertise and the contacts built up by the Special Monitoring Mission over the last eight years remain invaluable. I would also like to take this opportunity to offer my personal condolences and those of my delegation for the death of Maryna Fenina – she, together with all Ukrainian victims of Russian aggression, remains in our thoughts.

Mr Chair, today we mark one month of President Putin's war of choice against Ukraine.

One month ago in the early hours of Thursday the 24th February, the world woke up to bombs falling on Ukrainian cities and the news that Russia had launched a premeditated, unprovoked and entirely unjustified invasion of its sovereign, democratic neighbour. That same day [my Foreign Minister joined dozens of others in this very council](#), condemning Russia's violation of the most basic principles of the UN Charter and international law, as well as their flagrant disregard for OSCE principles and commitments.

The Russian government claimed to be acting in pursuit of peace. In reality, they started a war of aggression.

Sadly, in the days that followed, Russia's disregard for international humanitarian law and their willingness to indiscriminately attack civilian areas became crystal clear. Civilian casualties grew rapidly as reports came in of the Russian military bombing apartment blocks, schools and hospitals in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Mariupol and many other places.

The Russian government claimed falsely to be acting to protect people in Donetsk and Luhansk regions – instead they unleashed hell on the people of Mariupol and on towns and cities throughout Ukraine.

In an effort to stop the bloodshed, on the 27th February 45 OSCE participating States, including the UK and OSCE chair Poland, called on the Russian government to implement a humanitarian ceasefire. Shamefully, not only was that call ignored, but evidence emerged of Russia targeting agreed evacuation corridors – attacking civilians at their most vulnerable as they attempted to flee for safety.

The Russian government claimed to be respecting international humanitarian

law – instead they committed atrocities against civilians.

As Russia's war of aggression dragged on, we saw yet further evidence of Russia's irresponsibility and their willingness to endanger not only Ukrainians but people all across Europe. Russia occupied the Chernobyl nuclear power plant – interfering with the vital work of Ukrainian staff keeping the site safe and preventing them from being relieved by their co-workers for days. The Russian government became the first State to attack a functioning nuclear power plant when they shelled Europe's largest nuclear power station in Zaporizhia.

Mr Chair, sadly these are just some of the many heinous acts perpetrated by the Russian government that we have been forced to confront in the last month. There were many others I could have named.

The Russian delegation can continue to attempt to distract and deflect us from their government's actions. But this is futile. No one believes them.

Instead, our colleagues should consider what it is they are defending and advise their government in Moscow that it will never succeed – neither in President Putin's senseless war, nor in its attempts to spread disinformation about that war.

So, Mr Chair, what should the Russian government do? No, what must the Russian government do?

They must respect international humanitarian law:

- Civilians must be allowed to evacuate in the direction of their choosing – not be forcibly deported to Russia as shockingly is now being reported.
- International organisations, including the OSCE, must be granted safe passage throughout Ukraine. Russia must allow the delivery of humanitarian aid.
- Russia must stop targeting civilians and civilian areas – international humanitarian law is unbending and indisputable in this area.

Mr Chair, the above steps from Russia are urgently needed for humanitarian reasons, but they would no longer be necessary if Russia simply immediately ended this senseless war. This is a war that the Russian government chose to start, in violation of international law, they can and must respect international law and end it.

Finally, Mr Chair, Russia must return to respect for the OSCE principles and commitments that keep us all safe. They must respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their neighbour Ukraine. They must withdraw all their troops and return all Ukrainian territory to the rightful control of

the Ukrainian government, including Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

The Russian government has made itself an international pariah through its own actions – the longer they persist in this war of choice, the longer they will remain a pariah.

Thank you Mr Chair and I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

[Charity Commission opens statutory inquiry into Lancashire charity for people with learning disabilities](#)

Press release

The Charity Commission has opened a statutory inquiry into Rossendale Valley Mencap, to investigate potential misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charity.



Rossendale Valley Mencap's charitable objects are to support people with learning disabilities through help and support to them and their families, as well as the provision of meeting and leisure activities and facilities.

The Commission began engaging with the charity in December 2017 and has since issued two action plans to trustees, to address overdue and outstanding accounting records and issues around the charity's governance. The charity did not comply with either of these action plans and the regulator is concerned that the charity's assets may now be at risk.

The inquiry will examine whether the charity's trustees are complying with their legal duties, including:

- whether the charity has a sufficient number of trustees who are willing and capable of managing it in accordance with its governing document
- the extent to which the trustee(s) have responsibly managed the charity's resources and whether assets are secure or have been lost and/or misapplied
- their compliance with legal obligations for the preparation and filing of the charity's accounts and other information or returns
- the extent to which the trustee(s) of the charity have complied with previously issued regulatory guidance
- whether there are appropriate policies and procedures in place to safeguard vulnerable beneficiaries

The Commission may extend the scope of the inquiry if further issues emerge.

Mencap advised the Commission in 2019 that the Rossendale charity is no longer affiliated with it and the group had informed Royal Mencap Society they intended to operate under the name of Rossendale Open House. The charity is also known locally as the 'Rossendale Valley Gateway Club'. It was previously known as 'Rossendale Society for mentally handicapped children and adults' until it changed its name on 12 March 2011. Its registered charity number is 513296.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. [Reports of previous inquiries are available on GOV.UK.](#)
2. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.

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[Planning Inspectorate casework during the election period](#)

News story

Information regarding issuing appeal decisions and recommendations during the election period in England.



Image by RachelH_ <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bagelmouse/17246052428>

On Thursday 5 May 2022, elections will be taking place:

- to the Northern Ireland Assembly;
- to a number of local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, including a number of directly elected Mayors.

The Planning Inspectorate always aims to issue decisions and recommendations promptly after the event. However, in the run-up to the May 2022 elections we are concerned to ensure that appeal decisions or recommendations relating to proposals which have raised particular sensitivities or interest in an area cannot be seen to have influenced the election or have been used to electoral advantage by any interested body.

Accordingly, we will not be issuing decisions, reports or advisory letters in cases or examinations where known candidates have made representations until the election results have been announced.

Appeals casework

In appeals we will also hold back cases that may give rise to electoral sensitivities because of their nature and / or the issues involved. This might include:

- where there has been an extensive local campaign or where the decision raises very controversial local issues like inappropriate and / or unauthorised development in the Green Belt
- major green field housing
- renewables
- where there is an emerging Neighbourhood Plan

Whether a decision should be held back until the election results have been announced is a judgement taken by the Inspector in conjunction with senior managers at the Planning Inspectorate based on the circumstances of the case. We shall, of course, ensure that any such delayed decisions are issued promptly after the election.

National Infrastructure Casework

As National Infrastructure Examinations are required to comply with a statutory time limit, once the Preliminary Meeting has been notified and the Examination Timetable has been set the examination is expected to run to the published timetable.

Local Plans

All scheduled local plan examinations and hearing sessions will continue during the pre-election period and new examinations will also begin. However, to avoid making announcements that could be politically sensitive, the Planning Inspectorate will not be issuing any letters regarding the soundness or legal compliance of local plans, or final reports (including for fact check), until after the elections.

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[DataConnect22 is coming!](#)

News story

Join us for the second DataConnect conference, bringing together people and data stories from across the public sector



Last year we organised DataConnect21 with our colleagues in the Data Standards Authority. Our first week-long data event [featured 83 sessions](#), from around fifty different organisations. We had over 6000 registrations for events, with attendees coming from 325 organisations across the government, academia, the third sector and beyond.

And we are doing it again in 2022 so mark your calendars for 26 to 30 September.

DataConnect22 will feature the same great mix of sessions as last year, by and for people across the UK public sector. We know that there are fantastic data stories to share, so if you have a piece of work, a challenge, or an innovation you want the data community to know about, then bring it along to DataConnect.

If you would like to do a show and tell, share a challenge, run a workshop, take part in a panel discussion or showcase an innovation [please sign up](#) now. Or you can email us at dataconnect@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk to talk about bringing your story to DataConnect22. Every aspect of data belongs at DataConnect, from technical stories about data design, to strategic thinking about data leadership. DataConnect21 had speakers from a data apprentice up to director generals, if you are working with government data in any way then this is the event for you.

If you just want to attend, that's fine too, you can [register to receive information](#). Get updates about the event in the run up to DataConnect22; be one of the first to receive the schedule; and sign up for our free events across the week.

Please help us spread the word by telling your colleagues that DataConnect22 is coming!

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[Independent report on Windrush Compensation Scheme](#)

News story

Professor Martin Levermore MBE DL, Independent Person to the Windrush Compensation Scheme, releases report on the Compensation Scheme.



The report comes on the same day that the latest Compensation Scheme statistics are released showing over £45m has been paid or offered to the Windrush generation.

In his report, Professor Levermore came to a number of conclusions on the Windrush Compensation Scheme and made some recommendations for improvement.

He found that knowledge of the Windrush schemes is increasing amongst affected Commonwealth nationals. He notes the department is working diligently to refine processes to increase efficiency and productivity of the scheme. He also found that there are robust procedures, systems, and checks and balances in place, which with a few refinements could exemplify best in service delivery.

Minister for Safe and Legal Migration, Kevin Foster said:

Over £45 million has been paid or offered to members of the Windrush generation.

I thank Professor Levermore for his work and report on the scheme. We will continue working closely together to make sure it is as efficient as possible and everyone eligible for compensation, receives it.

This is Professor Levermore's first report on the scheme's operation, policy and effectiveness. He will be making regular reports on the operation of the Compensation Scheme to track progress and improvements.

His recommendations included grouping applications with close family links and creating a clearer link between the Windrush Documentation Scheme and Windrush Compensation Scheme to reduce administration.

Professor Levermore was appointed in March 2021 and reports directly to the Home Secretary. He also regularly attends the Windrush Cross-Government Working Group. He brings a wealth of professional and personal experience to the role and provides crucial independent oversight and reassurance on the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

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