

British Embassy in Ashgabat announces art competition for students

World news story

The British Embassy launches the 'Creative Earth' art competition, as part of celebrations to mark the 30 year diplomatic relationship between the UK and Turkmenistan.



The art competition aims to showcase the awareness of the young generation of Turkmenistan of climate and environmental issues, and to encourage creative action to promote solutions.

The competition is open to those aged from 6 to 18 years old, in all velayats. One winner from each of the following age groups will be selected:

- 6 to 8 years old
- 9 to 12 years old
- 13 to 18 years old

How to take part

Draw what you hope our climate and an environmentally-friendly life on Earth will look like in the future.

Whether it's green forests and garden cities, clean air and clear skies, solar panels and wind turbines, less petrol and more electric cars, clean water, blossoming fertile fields, or full rivers. We want to see your creative and inventive paintings or drawings, showing what you think our planet should look like in the future.

Along with your drawing, include a description of your work, explaining why you see the future of our planet as you have drawn it (maximum 100 words).

Submit your entry

- Scan or photograph your drawing, and email to

ukembassy.ashgabat@fcdo.gov.uk, with the subject title 'Creative Earth' and your name. Include your age, place of residence and telephone number.

- You must also bring the original drawing to the British Embassy Ashgabat, located at the Ak Altyn hotel's Office Building, or you can send it by registered post:

British Embassy Ashgabat
3rd Floor Office Building
Four Points Ak Altyn Hotel
Ashgabat
744001

Submit your entries by 1 April 2022.

Prizes

Three winners will receive a brand new tablet. The winners will be announced on the [British Embassy's social media accounts and news page](#) by 14 April 2022.

In addition to a prize, the lucky winners of the competition will be invited to join an Embassy ceremony. The best artwork from the contest will be displayed at Embassy events throughout the year.

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[Conference on Disarmament High Level Week: UK statement](#)

Thank you Madam President.

Last year, the UK published our Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Foreign and Development Policy. It set out the deteriorating security environment, flagging the risks posed by new disruptive technologies, alongside longstanding proliferation concerns about the activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran. But it also pointed out the growing challenge from major nuclear armed states willing to flout international norms of behaviour.

Russia's recent unprovoked and horrific attack on Ukraine casts a dark shadow

over the work of this conference. Because the security environment sets the context for what can be achieved on disarmament.

As I told the UN General Assembly last week, the United Kingdom is unwavering in its support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Together we must all unequivocally condemn this aggression, which is a violation of international law and the UN Charter.

As the UK Foreign Secretary set out in her speech in Ukraine on 17 February, in order to achieve a safer world it is now vital that the international community comes together to recommit to arms control.

In doing so, we must strengthen our existing security frameworks, and refresh our thinking so we are prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century.

Strengthening the NPT

Strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as the cornerstone of the international nuclear architecture, is an important place to start.

This year we look forward to the long awaited Tenth Review Conference to the NPT, which offers an opportunity to reflect on the successes of the Treaty, and its central role in keeping our world safe over the last 52 years.

UK Approach

Although the world has changed significantly since 1970, the UK's commitment to the NPT, and fulfilling our obligations under all three pillars of the Treaty, remains undiminished.

We believe the NPT continues to play a central role in promoting long-term stability, peace and security.

The UK therefore wants to work with all States Parties in the coming months to build the momentum for a successful Review Conference.

In October we published our National Report outlining the steps the UK has taken to implement its commitments across all three pillars of the NPT since 2015.

The report set out the progress the UK has made on disarmament, including our leading role in nuclear disarmament verification, and in championing transparency and advancing risk reduction.

We have also pressed for significant steps towards multilateral disarmament, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and beginning negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

Progress in the P5

The UK also recognises our responsibility to cooperate closely with the other

NPT Nuclear Weapon States, in order to make progress on disarmament and risk reduction. This work is vital, and even more important in periods of heightened international tension.

The Joint Leaders Statement on the Prevention of Nuclear War in January was an important signal of our collective commitment, by affirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, and that nuclear weapons—for as long as they continue to exist—should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war.

We want to build on this landmark statement, by deepening our work within the P5 Process on reducing the risk of nuclear conflict through misinterpretation and miscalculation, and enhancing mutual trust and security.

Building this foundation will be an important step in realising our shared long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

2022 as a Year of Opportunity

In addition to the opportunities to collectively strengthen the NPT, 2022 is a year of wider opportunities and challenges for the multilateral disarmament architecture.

Outer Space

The prevention of an arms race in outer space is as important today as it was in the early 1980s when it first became an agenda item of this Conference.

But the nature of the challenge has evolved considerably in that time, and we need to ensure the discussions and negotiations keep pace with those developments.

The UK is delighted to see the progress we have all made through the UN General Assembly on tackling threats in, to, and through space.

There was overwhelming support to set up an Open Ended Working Group to look at responsible space behaviours, in support of our overarching objective of preventing an arms race in outer space.

We all rely on space systems for our prosperity and security, and we must protect them from State threats.

The UK promotes responsible space behaviours to reduce the chances of misunderstanding and escalation that could lead to conflict.

We are pleased to see scheduled discussions on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space at this Conference.

We welcome calls to ban the testing of direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles, that create long-lived debris. This Conference can play an important role in negotiating how this would work.

But we must not forget that many of the threats we face are not as visible as

missiles. There are other ways to degrade and damage space systems, such as lasers and jammers, and we will include these in our work.

We also support greater openness and communication between States.

In the spirit of openness, the UK will present our new Defence Space Strategy to this Conference in the coming weeks.

We encourage all States to publish their own military space strategies, so we can better understand each other.

Chemical Weapons

2022 is also a year of challenges for the control of chemical and biological weapons, where the dangers have not dissipated. But there are also opportunities

Syria remains defiant in its refusal to abide by its obligations on chemical weapons.

In April, the international community underscored its abhorrence of Syria's use of chemical weapons by suspending Syria's voting rights and privileges in the OPCW, as provided for in the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We must hold fast to our core principles, defend the integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW, and hold those who use chemical weapons to account.

The Russian Federation has continued to fail to answer the international community's questions about the poisoning of Alexey Navalny with a Novichok nerve agent.

Russia has the opportunity to explain what happened, cease disinformation, and declare any chemical weapons programme.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the harm that disease can wreak on our societies.

We should grasp the opportunity of the upcoming Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, and strengthen the provisions that ensure current and future life sciences are used only for peaceful purposes.

Full implementation of commitments under the Convention will keep us all safer, as will steps to make the Convention more effective, visible and relevant.

Conventional Weapons

The UK recognises the extraordinary potential that technology has for global prosperity. But we also acknowledge the potential for misuse.

We are focused on ensuring that existing counter-proliferation regimes remain effective in light of technological development.

We are also committed to working with our international partners to develop standards and principles for the deployment of critical technologies.

Together we must inject new energy into the work of the Group of Governmental Experts looking at Lethal Autonomous Weapons systems. We should aim to make tangible progress this year. The UK will signal a clear path to achieving this at the upcoming meeting in March.

In addition to this work, the UK's commitment to the humanitarian goals of disarmament remains unwavering.

Under our Presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, we are intensifying work to achieve universal ratification of this important Treaty.

In coordination with our Nigerian and Swiss partners, we will host a regional Universalisation ratification workshop in Abuja later this month to exchange ideas and best practices, and bolster support for the Convention.

Since 2018, the UK has invested approximately £146 million to save lives, limbs and livelihoods from the scourge of land mines, cluster munitions and the explosive remnants of war.

This work includes clearing and releasing land for productive use, and delivering risk education for communities still living with the deadly legacy of conflict.

We will continue this work with the next phase of our Global Mine Action Programme.

But even with the significant investment that the UK and other donors have made over the years, the scale of the challenge dwarfs the funds available from these sources.

That is why, alongside our direct contribution, the UK has funded research into innovative financing options for mine action.

We will continue to explore this, including through hosting a conference in March, with the aim to pilot an alternative finance model in due course.

Madam President, to conclude, 2022 presents us with significant challenges but also new opportunities to find creative solutions to make our world safer and more prosperous.

This Conference has a key role to play, as the world's single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament.

The UK is pleased with our collective decision to establish Subsidiary Bodies to allow for an in-depth examination of the state of play on the core issues on the Conference's agenda.

Let me pay tribute to the work of the Chinese Presidency in preparing the ground for this important step.

It is down to all of us to make this mechanism productive, and approach the

significant problems we face with an open and constructive attitude.

The UK delegation will work to support the five coordinators charged with that task in whatever way we can.

Thank you.

[Court finds that Teletext Holidays broke consumer law](#)

- CMA chief executive: “we hope the decision will make it easier for people to get their money back for a cancelled holiday in the future”

The High Court agreed with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) that Truly Travel Ltd and Alpha Holidays Ltd – which traded as Teletext Holidays and Alpharooms respectively – breached the Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations (PTRs). These required them to refund customers for package holidays that were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic within 14 days.

The CMA sought a declaration from the High Court in this case to highlight the importance of travel firms respecting consumers’ refund rights. The CMA wants to ensure that people can book package holidays with confidence, knowing that their legal rights will be respected if their holiday is cancelled due to unavoidable circumstances outside their control.

This court action follows a significant programme of consumer protection law enforcement work by the CMA in the package travel sector, which has secured hundreds of millions of pounds in refunds for people whose holidays were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because Truly Travel and Alpha Holidays have been placed into liquidation, Teletext Holidays or Alpharooms package travel customers with outstanding refunds are encouraged to submit a claim to the Travel Trust Association (TTA), which is now responsible for these. Today’s court decision does not affect this.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

This should be a wake-up call to any business that thinks that it doesn’t need to honour customers’ refund rights. Today’s ruling confirms the CMA’s view that Teletext Holidays and Alpharooms broke the law by not providing the refunds customers were due within 14 days for cancelled package holidays.

While this ruling comes after these firms have been placed in liquidation, we hope the decision will make it easier for people to get their money back for a cancelled holiday in the future. Customers of Teletext Holidays and Alpharooms with outstanding refunds should get in touch with the Travel Trust Association.

The CMA launched court action against Truly Holdings, and its subsidiaries Truly Travel Ltd and Alpha Holidays Ltd, last year, over outstanding refunds owed to customers. Truly Holdings had previously signed formal commitments, known as undertakings, requiring them to use all reasonable endeavours to pay outstanding refunds to passengers in an agreed schedule, and to ensure that all refunds due for cancelled package holidays going forward were paid within 14 days. When the CMA found that Truly Holdings was not fully abiding by these undertakings, the CMA took the company to court.

The court claim for refunds was stayed – paused indefinitely – after the firms entered liquidation, but the CMA continued to seek a declaration from the court that these companies broke the law. This has resulted in the ruling made today.

For more information, visit the CMA's case page on [COVID-19 package holiday cancellations](#).

1. Teletext Holidays is the trading name of Truly Travel Limited, which is a subsidiary of Truly Holdings Limited. Truly Travel Limited and Alpha Holidays Limited (which trades as Alpharooms.com) are both subsidiaries of Truly Holdings Limited.
2. The CMA's investigation relates to package travel holidays booked with Teletext Holidays and Alpharooms.com, not flights or accommodation booked on a standalone basis.
3. The CMA is encouraging package travel customers of Truly Travel and Alpha Holidays with outstanding refunds to submit a claim via an online form to the Travel Trust Association (TTA). The online form differs for [Truly Travel customers](#) and [Alpha Holiday customers](#).
4. The declaration from the High Court today follows an uncontested hearing on the papers which took place on 22 February 2022.

[New guidance published for effectively handling PFI contract expiry](#)

News story

IPA publishes new government to support public sector bodies to effectively manage the expiry of PFI contracts and transition process.



New government guidance has been published today (28 February), supporting public sector bodies to effectively manage the expiry of PFI contracts and transition process, ensuring public services continue to be resilient, well-maintained and fit for purpose.

As part of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority's (IPA) commitment to drive reform within project delivery, '[Preparing for PFI Contract Expiry](#)' provides a framework and practical guidance for managing the expiry process, including asset handback and service transition.

The publication sets out why effectively managing expiry is vital for ensuring value for money and seamless continuity of public services, makes recommendations on how to prepare for and manage the process, and provides detailed guidance on how these activities might be undertaken – all of which are based on the lessons learned from expired and expiring contracts.

Matthew Vickerstaff, Director of Finance at the Infrastructure and Projects Authority said:

"I am pleased to announce the publication of this critical piece of guidance for public sector bodies and others dealing with the expiry of PFI contracts.

"These particular contracts deliver a wide range of vital public services and with many of these due to expire within the next 10 years, the government is committed to supporting a successful end of contract process.

"I would like to encourage PFI contracting authorities to utilise this practical guidance to help prepare for the specific challenges of the process and moving seamlessly into the future services provision."

This document is part of the suite of support offered by the IPA's PFI Centre of Excellence, as set out in the 'Managing the Risks of PFI Contract Expiry – Support Plan'.

The IPA's PFI Centre of Excellence was set up in 2020 to manage the risks in operational PFI contracts and build the capability, knowledge and tools needed within the public sector to manage those contracts effectively.

Further background

- This guidance is a key deliverable of the PFI Contract Management Programme established in 2020 and managed by the IPA's PFI Centre of

Excellence.

- The PFI Contract Management Programme responds to recommendations made by the NAO in their report '[Managing PFI assets and services as contract end](#)' (June 2020).
- This support provided under the programme includes contract expiry health checks, guidance documents, training, and expert support and advice. This is set out more fully in '[Managing the Risks of PFI Contract Expiry](#)' (July 2021).

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[Bolton man sentenced for hospital security fraud](#)

Press release

A Bolton man who used his father's licence to work as a hospital security guard was exposed when a reference from a friend revealed his dishonesty.



Security Industry Authority

Mohammed Bashir was found guilty of fraud at Bolton Magistrates' Court on 22 February 2022 following his misuse of a Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence. The court handed Bashir a 26-week jail sentence, which was suspended for two years. It also ordered him to do 200 hours of unpaid community service and pay £1,000 court costs, plus a victim surcharge of £128. Bashir originally pleaded not guilty to the charges at Bolton Magistrates' Court in September 2021. The SIA brought the prosecution.

Bashir's criminality came to light when he applied for an SIA licence of his own in July 2020. The SIA rejected his application due to a string of convictions that disqualified him from being a fit and proper person to bear a licence. Bashir made an unsuccessful approach to the SIA to appeal the decision. He supplied a reference from a long-time friend and colleague, which suggested that Bashir had been working in the security industry, with a

licence, for the last three years. The SIA opened an investigation immediately.

SIA investigators soon discovered that Bashir had falsely claimed to be properly licensed when seeking work from SIA approved contractor Lingwood Security Management Ltd in December 2018. In fact he used his father's non-front line licence to work for Lingwood at various NHS hospitals in Northwest England up to the end of February 2019. In May 2019 he also purported to be licensed and presented his father's Door Supervisor's licence to Radius Security Ltd.

Mark Chapman, one of the SIA's criminal investigation managers, said:

Mr Bashir has been found guilty and given a suspended prison sentence for three counts of fraud. We deemed him unfit to hold an SIA licence due to his prior criminality, yet he worked illegally in hospitals at a time when the NHS was severely under pressure and dealing with vulnerable people. The SIA's licensing regime is there to protect the public and keep people safe and he sought to undermine the licensing regime by his dishonest behaviour. This successful prosecution has stopped him in his tracks, and he now has a substantial costs' order to pay.

Notes to editors:

- By law, security operatives working under contract must hold and display a valid SIA licence
- [Read about SIA enforcement and penalties](#)
- The offences committed against the [Fraud Act 2006](#) were:
 - 2 counts of Section 2 Fraud by false representation
 - 1 count of Section 6 Possession of articles for use in fraud

Further information:

- The Security Industry Authority is the organisation responsible for regulating the private security industry in the United Kingdom, reporting to the Home Secretary under the terms of the [Private Security Industry Act 2001](#). Our main duties are: the compulsory licensing of individuals undertaking designated activities; and managing the voluntary Approved Contractor Scheme.
- For further information about the Security Industry Authority visit www.gov.uk/sia. The SIA is also on [Facebook](#) (Security Industry Authority) and [Twitter](#) (SIAuk).

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