

UN Human Rights Council 41: Yemen

Thank you, Mr President,

The United Kingdom welcomes Yemen's continued engagement with the UPR process.

We welcome the Government of Yemen's commitment to promote and protect human rights, including freedom of expression. We are pleased that the Government is addressing gender equality, including the participation of women in public life.

However, the UK remains deeply concerned by reports of widespread human rights violations and abuses being committed by all parties to the conflict in Yemen. We are particularly concerned by the lack of protection of civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law, cases of arbitrary detention and torture, religious persecution, restrictions on freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, restrictions on freedom of movement, detention of migrants, restrictions on women's rights and girls' access to education, sexual and gender-based violence, and recruitment of child soldiers.

We welcome the Government of Yemen's acceptance of our recommendations, including for the protection of civilians, and access for humanitarian assistance. We urge all parties to continue engaging constructively with the UN Special Envoy to implement the Stockholm agreement and the UN-led peace process. We now encourage the Government of Yemen to take action to implement these commitments, and to investigate and prosecute human rights violations and abuses.

We are disappointed that the Government of Yemen has not accepted our recommendation to end arbitrary arrests and detention, including detention of migrants, enforced disappearance, torture and ill-treatment, and to ensure detainees are treated in accordance with international law and norms. We urge the Government of Yemen to address these critical issues.

Thank you, Mr President.

Chancellor in Saudi Arabia: 6-7 July

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The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond is travelling to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia tomorrow (6 July) for the first Economic and Social Pillar meeting of the UK-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council.

As part of the government's on-going support for economic and societal reform in Saudi Arabia, the Chancellor will have a series of meetings with business and political leaders, including the Minister of Commerce and Investment of Saudi Arabia, Dr Majid bin Abdullah Al Qasabi, and the Minister of Finance, Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan.

The Chancellor will also be joined by the Minister for Investment, Graham Stuart, and a delegation including David Schwimmer, CEO of the London Stock Exchange Group, and Ken Costa, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Vision 2030.

Vision 2030 is Saudi Arabia's economic diversification programme.

Further Information

The full delegation accompanying the Chancellor to Jeddah:

- Graham Stuart – Minister for Investment
- Ken Costa – Special Envoy for Vision 2030
- Sir Ciarán Devane – CEO of British Council
- Sir Anthony Seldon – Special Envoy for Education
- Professor Duncan Selbie – CEO of Public Health England
- Simon Penney – Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for the Middle East
- David Schwimmer CEO of London Stock Exchange Group

Multi-million fund to revitalise country's high streets

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country's high streets

Over 50 areas across the country – from Whitehaven in Cumbria to Penzance in Cornwall – are going through to the second phase of a multi-million fund that will transform their high streets and make them fit for the future, High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP confirmed today (5 July 2019).

From improving transport and access into town centres to converting retail units into new homes, the £675 million Future High Streets Fund will help local leaders to reinvent their town centres.

Those successful towns will now receive up to £150,000 of new funding to work up detailed project proposals, based on their initial plans. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will work closely with them, focussing on those places that have “shovel ready” projects where there might be opportunities to accelerate these.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Our high streets lie at the heart of local communities – creating jobs, boosting the economy and helping small businesses thrive.

But new technology and changes in the way we shop means they also face growing challenges, so I'm delighted over 50 towns will initially benefit from this scheme.

The funding will breathe new life into town centres and – together with measures such as small business rate cuts and opening up empty shops – will transform our high streets for the future.

Speaking ahead of a visit to Morecambe town centre High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP said:

High Streets are a crucial part of our local economies and people care about them because they are also the centres of their community.

But we recognise that changing consumer behaviour and the rise of online shopping presents a significant challenge and that's why we are taking action to help them evolve.

Many of our high streets are successfully re-inventing themselves and with these new plans now in development, local leaders, who know their areas best, will be driving forward the transformation of their town centres into further great success stories.

The [Future High Streets Fund](#) was launched in December 2018 as part of the

government's plan for the high street.

Last month the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport together with the Architectural Heritage Fund and National Lottery Heritage Fund announced a £62 million package of support to breathe new life into historic high streets across the country, to restore historic buildings, create new work spaces and cultural venues. As part of the overall funding, £55 million has been allocated from the Future High Streets Fund.

Today's announcement comes during the second Great British High Street Week, a week of activity to celebrate high streets up and down the country and share the work that government is undertaking to support them. This includes:

- cutting small retailers' business rates bills by a third, building on over £13 billion of business rates support since 2016
- trialling the 'Open Doors' scheme in Stoke-on-Trent, Bradford, Rochford, Kettering and Slough where empty shops will be opened up to community groups offering services to the most vulnerable in our communities
- on the recommendation of the government appointed High Streets Expert Panel chaired by the hugely successful entrepreneur Sir John Timpson has this week launched a Town Centre Task Force to give local leaders expert advice and support in implementing their plans to revitalise their local high streets
- enabling more areas to set up a Business Improvement District to support business owners and local leaders in bringing communities together to deliver additional local services and transform commercial areas

The hotly contested [Great British High Street Awards](#), the national competition to find Britain's best high street are also part of this work.

The Awards not only celebrate the best high streets across the nation, but also champion 'Rising Stars' – the most ambitious high streets which are taking a lead and working together to revive, adapt and diversify.

Crickhowell High Street on the edge of the Brecon Beacons is the reigning champion, recognised for its community led initiatives and strong presence of independent businesses.

A selection of 40 shortlisted finalists will be chosen by an independent judging panel. Shortlisted high streets are eligible to win up to £15,000 for their local community and the huge response with over 200 entries highlighted the number of retailers and community groups across the country working in innovative ways keep town centres vibrant and strong.

Such has been the high level of interest in this year's competition we have

decided to extend the deadline for entries until Thursday July 11.

The full list of those towns going on to the next phase of the Future High Streets Fund is available here:

[Future High Streets Fund shortlist](#) (PDF, 92.8 KB, 2 pages)

Successfully shortlisted places will receive further guidance later this month.

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