

Press release: UK government has successfully pushed for a review into Palestinian textbooks

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After calls by the UK government for international action on education materials, a group of international partners, including the UK will lead a review into the books included in the Palestinian Authority's current curriculum for primary and secondary school children.

The results of the review will be used to identify the steps necessary to ensure such books promote peace and tolerance. Work on this topic will begin immediately, with results from the review available to the Palestinian Authority and partners by September 2019. The Palestinian Authority have agreed to engage constructively with the findings of the review.

The UK will play a central role in the review process, and intends to commission the Georg Eckert Institute to produce an initial scoping report to expedite the production of the full review.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

The UK is rightly at the forefront of the international community on this issue. We are working closely with the Palestinian Authority to ensure that all Palestinian children receive a decent education and are able to fulfil their potential.

UK aid is helping to provide quality education for children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including through paying the salaries of specially vetted teachers in the West Bank. UK aid does not fund the writing or provision of textbooks by the Palestinian Authority, and all UK aid to the Palestinian Authority is subject to rigorous safeguards to ensure aid is used for its intended purpose.

Note to editors

- The Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research is a leading international institute for analysing education media. It is a publicly funded institution based in Germany.
- The UK intends to commission this organisation to conduct an initial report into the best way for textbooks to be analysed.

News story: Study suggesting widespread illegal killing of hen harriers on English grouse moors published

A new study reveals that young hen harriers in England suffer abnormally high mortality compared to populations in Orkney and mainland Scotland and the study provides compelling evidence that the most likely cause is illegal killing in areas associated with grouse moor management.

Published today in Nature Communications this paper represents the culmination of a 10-year Natural England study involving 58 satellite tagged hen harriers. The analyses have been led by the University of Cape Town and Aberdeen University with the provision of land use data by the RSPB.

The study showed the likelihood of hen harriers dying, or disappearing, was ten times higher within areas predominantly covered by grouse moor, compared to areas with no grouse moor. The study revealed that 72% of tagged harriers were either confirmed or considered very likely to have been illegally killed.

The hen harrier, sometimes called the 'skydancer' because of its amazing acrobatic display in the breeding season, is one of England's rarest birds

and is legally protected. Illegal killing of hen harriers has long been thought to limit their population size, but identifying the scale of these crimes and their impact on harrier populations has been difficult because they occur in remote areas and evidence is likely to be destroyed, thus successful prosecutions are rare.

This long-term study has enabled patterns of disappearances to be assessed across a large number of birds. This provides overwhelming evidence that illegal killing is occurring on some grouse moors, where some gamekeepers view hen harriers as a threat to their grouse stocks.

Rob Cooke, Natural England Director said:

Natural England is working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including moorland communities, conservation organisations, police and landowners to implement the joint Hen Harrier Action Plan which aims to improve the conservation status of this at-risk bird.

This year's Hen Harrier breeding season has been the most successful in over a decade with 34 chicks fledged across the country. While this is a great start we recognise that a continued partnership approach is required to combat illegal persecution of these rare birds and ensure that numbers of breeding hen harriers continue to grow.

Stephen Murphy from Natural England led the data collection and commented:

Natural England welcomes the publication of this study, which demonstrates the value of tagging as a legitimate conservation tool. These analyses are a significant step in understanding the fate of tagged hen harriers, and confirm what has long been suspected – that illegal persecution is having a major impact on the conservation status of this bird.

Dr Megan Murgatroyd, from the University of Cape Town, who is the lead author of the study said:

Natural England's long-term commitment to this tracking study has yielded an important dataset involving over 20,000 individual fixes. This is a remarkable achievement for a species whose population in England has averaged only a handful of pairs for the last few years. Whilst dead harriers can be disposed of, the pattern of hen harrier disappearances revealed by this data could not be hidden. The multiple levels of analyses of the data have all led to the same robust conclusion that hen harriers in Britain suffer elevated levels of mortality on grouse moors, and this is most likely the result of illegal killing.

Dr David Douglas, RSPB Principal Conservation Scientist and a co-author on the paper, said:

The high rate of illegal persecution on grouse moors revealed by this study goes a long way to explaining why hen harriers are barely hanging on as a breeding bird in England. Satellite tag data is giving us very valuable insights into what is happening to our birds of prey in the UK. It has already provided compelling evidence of the link between suspicious golden eagle deaths and grouse moors in Scotland and now it has done the same for hen harriers in England.

The report, [Patterns of satellite tagged hen harrier disappearances suggest widespread illegal killing on British grouse moors](#), can be found online on Nature Communications.

[News story: Healthcare advice for UK travellers in the event of a no-deal EU Exit](#)

Leaving the EU with a deal remains the government's top priority and would give all UK nationals the stability and certainty to prepare for our new relationship after EU Exit. However, the government must plan for every possible outcome, including no deal.

Today, we are updating UK nationals on the Department of Health and Social Care's plans for the continuity of reciprocal healthcare arrangements in the event we exit the EU without a deal.

All UK nationals who are planning to reside in, travel to, work or study in the EU or European Free Trade Area (EFTA) states (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) are strongly advised to check the latest country-specific guidance on [GOV.UK](#) and [NHS.UK](#) about healthcare arrangements if the UK leaves the EU without a deal.

The Department of Health and Social Care has been working closely with EU member states and EFTA states to protect existing healthcare arrangements for these and other groups. However, it is not possible for the UK government to guarantee access unilaterally to healthcare abroad.

Actions for UK nationals

Visitors to the EU

The government always advises UK nationals to take out travel insurance when going overseas, both to EU and non-EU destinations. UK nationals, including those with pre-existing conditions, planning to visit a country in the EU/EFTA on exit day should continue to buy travel insurance.

Any questions regarding individual travel insurance policies should be directed to the relevant insurance companies or refer to guidance published on the [Association of British Insurers \(ABI\) website](#).

Residents in the EU

Substantial numbers of UK nationals will already be eligible for or enrolled in local health services, because of their residency, benefits or employment status. There is no reason to think that a no-deal scenario will affect these arrangements where EU countries offer equal access to healthcare.

UK nationals resident in the EU are advised to register their healthcare entitlement with their local authorities, if they have not already done so. This may mean that they will need to join a social insurance scheme and contribute as other residents do. Others will need to buy private healthcare insurance.

The UK government's offer

In order to continue to support the healthcare needs of UK nationals, we have made an offer to EU member states and EFTA states to maintain the existing healthcare arrangements, in both a deal or no-deal scenario, until 31 December 2020.

This would mean that we will continue to pay for healthcare costs for current or former UK residents for whom the UK has responsibility who are living or working in or visiting the EU.

We have brought forward legislation to enable us to implement new reciprocal healthcare arrangements.

Although we are hopeful that EU member states will accept our offer, as a responsible government we have developed a multi-layered approach to minimise disruption to healthcare provision for UK nationals currently in or travelling to the EU:

- some EU member states have prepared their own legislation for a no-deal scenario. Spain has publicly committed to healthcare access for resident and visiting UK nationals
- the UK and Ireland are committed to continuing healthcare access within the Common Travel Area
- the UK has already agreed with EFTA states to protect citizens' rights,

including healthcare

- the UK will fund healthcare for UK nationals who have applied for, or are undergoing, treatment in the EU prior to and on exit day, for up to one year
- we have published country-specific guidance on GOV.UK and NHS.UK
- UK nationals may use NHS services if they return to live in the UK
- those who have their healthcare funded by the UK and are resident in the EU on exit day can use NHS services in England without charge when on a temporary visit
- the ABI has advised that travel insurance policies will cover emergency medical treatment costs that could have been reclaimed through European Health Insurance Cards (EHICs)

If EU member states do not agree to extend the existing healthcare arrangements before exit day, many of the arrangements for access to healthcare in the EU would change for UK nationals. Healthcare arrangements in many member states would revert to those that apply to the rest of the world.

In a no-deal scenario, UK nationals may no longer be able to use their EHICs when travelling to the EU.

More information can be found in the [written ministerial statement to the House of Commons on Tuesday 19 March](#).