

News story: Next steps towards a fully inclusive transport network

- new measures will help to make transport fully accessible for all passengers by 2030
- up to £300 million made available for improvements to the network
- part of a government drive to build a society that works for all

New measures, backed by hundreds of million pounds, will help ensure all disabled people can travel confidently and easily.

The Department for Transport has today (25 July 2018) set out its [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#), which will improve accessibility across all types of travel for those with both visible and less visible disabilities.

The strategy includes investment in rail accessibility infrastructure, commitments to produce league tables which highlight operators that are delivering the best service for disabled people, and funding for Changing Places accessible toilets at motorway service stations.

The government will put up to £300 million of funding into extending the Access for All programme, making railway stations more accessible, including through step-free access.

Transport Accessibility Minister Nusrat Ghani said:

Transport is at the heart of how we live our lives. It helps us get to work, stay in touch with friends and family, and access vital services like healthcare and education.

But for our ageing population and the fifth of people who are disabled, access to transport can be far from straightforward.

This Inclusive Transport Strategy is the first step in achieving a genuinely inclusive transport network, which meets the needs of all people, regardless of whether they are disabled or not.

Government acknowledges there is a lot of work to do to make the transport system fully accessible by 2030. The physical infrastructure that will be required to achieve this will take time to build. However, we are committed to working at pace on those areas where we can make an immediate and important difference, such as training and assistance.

Other measures announced today include supporting the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) to improve and simplify Passenger Assist – the system disabled passengers use to book assistance on the rail network.

Train operators will be held to account for delivering on this service, ensuring they compensate passengers if the booked assistance is not provided.

Other measures announced today include:

- £2 million to install Changing Places toilets at motorway service stations, supporting disabled people to travel easily and comfortably on the road network
- £2 million for audio and visual equipment on buses, so that passengers on almost every bus will know where and when to alight
- a £2 million passenger awareness campaign to increase disability awareness and reduce hate crime on our network
- an accreditation scheme for transport operators to receive formal recognition for positive work to improve disabled passengers' experiences, such as training frontline staff and senior management on disability awareness
- ensuring future technology is designed inclusively from the outset, with opportunities sought to harness innovation

This work comes ahead of the government's Aviation Strategy, which will set out further measures to improve the airport and flying experience for disabled people.

This could include working with industry to provide better staff training, offering improved on-board facilities and exploring possible changes to aircraft design.

Keith Richards, Chair of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, said:

DPTAC welcomes the publication of the ITS and the government's commitments to better meeting the needs of disabled people. Our role, as independent statutory advisor, is to offer our advice as the ITS is delivered. As a 'critical friend' we will hold the government to account for delivering the strategy and for securing good outcomes for disabled people.

It follows an announcement in May, when the Prime Minister [said she wanted people to enjoy an extra 5 years of healthy and independent living by 2035](#), while also narrowing the gap between the richest and poorest.

Central to making this a reality will be supporting people to remain active and connected to their families and communities – and transport has a significant role to play.

Nic Bungay, Director of Campaigns, Care and Information at Muscular Dystrophy UK, said:

Muscular Dystrophy UK welcomes the Department for Transport's plans to make public transport more accessible for everyone and is

encouraged to see investment in this area. Our campaigners have worked hard over the years to push for improvements and, while we know there is still a long way to go until people with disabilities have full accessibility, this announcement shows we are heading in the right direction.

As the co-chairs of the Changing Places Consortium, we are also pleased that funding has been committed to installing these fully accessible facilities at motorway service stations across the country, and we look forward to working with DfT as these are put in place.

Mark Lever, Chief Executive at the National Autistic Society, said:

The strategy launched today is a step forward, particularly the passenger awareness campaign and accreditation scheme for transport providers. We now need to make sure these measures aimed at all disabled people, fully reflect the experiences and needs of autistic people and their families.

We and our supporters have been calling for the government to listen to autistic people and make sure public transport is accessible for all.

There are around 700,000 autistic people in the UK who rely on trains and buses to go to school, work and to visit family. But many autistic people can feel so anxious about getting on public transport that they are unable to leave the house at all. It's not just the worry about potential delays, cancellations and large crowds. It's also the tuts and stares from other passengers who see someone acting differently, but don't recognise that it's because they're autistic.

At the National Autistic Society, we won't accept a world where autistic people are shut away. Increasing understanding of autism among transport staff and the wider public has to be at the heart of what needs to change. Today's announcement has the potential to help create a public transport system that works for autistic people.

Mark Atkinson, Chief Executive at disability charity Scope, said:

It's positive to see this commitment from the government. There is a lot of work to do to bring our transport system up to scratch.

Disabled people face unnecessary difficulties using all parts of the transport network every day.

Scope's research shows forty percent of disabled people experience

problems using trains. From airports to buses we've heard too many horror stories of disabled people let down by poor infrastructure, bad service, or being treated as an afterthought. This urgently needs to change.

A genuinely inclusive transport network will make it much easier for disabled people to get to work, see family, and be part of their community.

The Inclusive Transport Strategy also includes raising awareness and enforcement of passengers' rights, staff training and improvements to accessible information. This will support the Future of Mobility Grand challenge, at the heart of which is a transport system that works for everyone.

It follows the [Accessibility Action Plan consultation](#) which received over 1,000 responses.

Speech: Commence renewed and meaningful peace negotiations

Thank you Mr President and thank you to Special Coordinator Mladenov for your briefing and for your recent work with Egypt to secure a renewed ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. It is essential that the ceasefire is respected and maintained by all sides. The people of Israel and Gaza deserve peace and security.

The escalation seen at the Gaza perimeter last Friday, including the killing of an Israel Defense Force soldier, is deeply concerning. Hamas must cease all acts of violence and terror and decide whether it is prepared to demonstrate its commitment to achieving peace and ending this conflict.

The most recent escalation and exchange of rockets into southern Israel, and the economic and kinetic response by the Israelis, are also both concerning.

We urge the parties to take immediate steps to reverse the current negative trends on the ground, and to commence renewed and meaningful peace negotiations.

Mr President, now more than ever, we urgently need a political process that delivers a two-state solution. As Council Members, we must seize the opportunity presented by the prospect of a US plan. The UK stands ready to support and contribute to all credible efforts to restart the peace process; we urge others to do the same.

The UK position on the peace process is unchanged; we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

Mr President, every Israeli and Palestinian has the right to live in peace and security. No one wants to see a return to conflict, which will inevitably have devastating consequences. We call on the parties to take the following urgent action to avoid escalating the conflict:

First, Hamas must bring an immediate and permanent end to rocket fire and the sending of incendiary devices into Israel.

Second, Israel must reverse its punitive measures and work with the international community to ease conditions in Gaza, including opening movement and access and reducing economic restrictions.

Third, the Palestinian Authority must resume salary payments and work to restore its presence in Gaza.

The international community also has responsibilities, including the need to rally around Special Coordinator Mladenov's plans to improve the situation in Gaza and in supporting Egyptian efforts on political reconciliation and longer-term arrangements for calm in Gaza.

The risk of tensions boiling over into a full-blown conflict are very real and very dangerous. Every effort must be made to avoid civilian casualties.

Nobody around this table wants to see another Gaza conflict. At such a highly sensitive time, we urge calm and restraint.

We appreciate Egyptian efforts in calming tensions and we urge Egypt to do more by improving movement and access through Rafah crossing.

Mr President, we are also deeply concerned by continued demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities. Due to severe planning restrictions, many Palestinians have no option but to build without permission. This needs to change. Demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and, in all but the most exceptional of cases, are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

The village of Khan al-Ahmar is a case in point, and this is an example that has also been raised this morning by the French and Dutch Ambassadors. We continue to urge Israel to abandon demolition plans entirely, and instead provide a transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C. Not only could demolition constitute forcible transfer, it would also pave the way for settlement building in E1. In accordance with our longstanding policy, we would have to condemn such a move. Such action would strike a major blow to the prospects for a two-state solution and make it difficult to believe that Israel wants progress towards peace.

Finally, Mr President, I want to reiterate that the UK remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and Palestinian refugees across the Middle

East. The UK welcomes the important contributions that Member States are providing to UNRWA.

However, UNRWA's deficit remains at \$217 million, meaning it will shortly have to make a decision about whether to open schools in September. The increased demand for UNRWA's services and growing instability across the region make UNRWA's support even more important. It is clear that UNRWA needs a broader pool of financial support from donors to achieve sufficient, assured and predictable financing. It is also clear that UNRWA needs to continue to promote realistic and technical cost-saving reforms.

The UK continues to support UNRWA and remains one of the top five donors. We have delivered our pledge of \$37.5 million and have brought forward \$13.5 million to help meet the urgent needs of Palestinian refugees. We encourage members of this Council to consider what more they can do to support Palestinian refugees and alleviate the current financial pressure facing UNRWA.

Thank you.

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Press release: PM welcomes hero British divers to Downing Street

At the event, also attended by the Thai Ambassador Mr Pisanu Suvanajata, Theresa May praised the heroism of those involved in the extraordinary cave rescue.

The group of rescuers, who have been cave diving for over 20 years, battled zero visibility conditions and narrow cave passages to reach the trapped boys.

Among those attending with their families was John Volanthen, one of the British divers who was part of the team which first discovered the boys. He was also one of the three divers who went out as the initial team and who helped place guides in the cave to assist others in navigation. Also at the event was Robert Harper, who was part of the team which pinpointed the boys' exact location, and Vernon Unsworth, who first alerted cave divers in the UK to the situation in Thailand.

Divers who took part in the final stages of the rescue were also honoured at the reception, including Chris Jewell who successfully guided the second-to-last boy to safety.

Speaking at the reception the Prime Minister said:

It's a pleasure to welcome you to Downing Street today. This was an amazing rescue mission. On hearing about the boys who were trapped most people would have just stood by but you chose to go out there and do something about it.

The eyes of the world were on you and I think I can speak for everyone when I say a huge thank you.

John [Volanthen] you have said that you're not heroes...well to most of us you are.

Sadly we know that a Thai diver, Saman Kunan, died during this mission. He lost his life saving the lives of others – a danger you also faced.

The Thai PM has written to me to say thank you for the fantastic job you did and I know that everyone in this country would agree. We are all very proud of you.

Bill Whitehouse, Vice Chairman of British Cave Rescue Council, said:

The Thailand operation was a unique occasion when individual cave divers and cave rescuers from many teams came together and worked as a truly national team under the BCRC banner.

In total eight cave divers and three other cave rescuers travelled out to Thailand to help with the search and then the rescue. They were backed up by a support team in the UK of BCRC officers and members of various teams.

It has been both gratifying and humbling to experience how cave rescuers, cave divers and the wider caving world worked together during the eighteen day operation to play such a significant part in pulling off what many thought to be an impossible task.

It has undoubtedly been one of the most incredible cave rescues ever.

John Volanthen, one of the lead cave divers involved in the rescue, said:

It was an honour to join the incredible effort to rescue of these boys and their coach, and I would like to personally add particular reference to the skill and dedication of the many military groups and civilians we worked alongside, especially the Thai navy seals.

I would also like to extend my thoughts to the family of Saman Kunan.

Press release: PM meeting with Amir of Qatar: 24 July 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister held bilateral talks earlier today with the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at Downing Street, covering mutual prosperity, defence and security cooperation, regional stability, and wider foreign policy issues.

They agreed that the trade and investment relationship between the UK and Qatar was already strong, welcoming the fact that half of Qatar's 2017 £5 billion investment commitment had already been allocated to projects in the UK. They agreed a shared desire to see investment flows both ways continuing to grow, noting the significant commercial opportunities on offer for both countries across a wide range of sectors. The Prime Minister welcomed Qatar's commitment to continue to invest not just in London but across the country.

They agreed the bilateral defence and security relationship was also strong and growing, noting the recent £6 billion Typhoon deal. They discussed how the UK could continue to support Qatar to deliver a safe and successful World Cup 2022, with the Prime Minister highlighting our particular expertise in this area. They agreed to intensify joint counter-terrorism work, recognising the importance of tackling the root causes of terrorism including the ideology that underpins it.

They discussed a range of regional security issues and the Prime Minister reiterated our strong desire to see Gulf Cooperation Council unity restored at the earliest possible opportunity, observing that Gulf security is our security.

They also discussed Russia, agreeing on the importance of continuing to approach Russia from a position of strength and

unity. They noted the particular importance of the international community continuing to work together to stand firm against malign activity, and to protect the global rules and norms.