

## **News story: X Factor charity song 2017: Chancellor to donate VAT to children's charities**

The Chancellor announced today that VAT collected on sales for the X Factor winner's charity song will be donated to children's charities.

VAT collected on sales of the X Factor winner's charity song will be donated to children's charities, Together for Short Lives and Shooting Star Chase, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, announced today. Both charities, which provide vital support to children with life-limiting illnesses and their families, will benefit from the donation as the government waives VAT on the X Factor charity song for the seventh year running. Philip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said:

I'm delighted to be able to support Together for Short Lives and Shooting Star Chase by donating the VAT collected on all sales of this year's X Factor song. These amazing organisations do such valuable work helping children with life-threatening conditions and supporting their families to cope in extremely challenging circumstances. Every song bought will help to fund their vital work.

The government has previously waived the VAT on other charity singles, such as the 2016 Jo Cox Foundation single, 2015 Save the Children single, the 2011's Military Wives Choir single, and the 2010 Haiti earthquake appeal single.

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## **Press release: Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council: 28 and 29 November 2017**

Minister of State for the Overseas Territories Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon joined leaders and representatives of the Overseas Territories this week for talks on hurricane recovery, Brexit, climate change, and tax transparency.

The annual Joint Ministerial Council, held between 28 and 29 November 2017 in London, was also attended by Ministers from across government, including the

Department for Exiting the EU, the Department for International Development, Her Majesty's Treasury, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Department of Health and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The talks began with a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, Theresa May, at Downing Street where she updated leaders on the progress of discussions with the European Union and discussed progress on reforming financial services in the Overseas Territories.

The first day of the meetings focused on hurricane relief and recovery and wider UK programme support for the Overseas Territories, including a new £70 million package of recovery and reconstruction support for those islands hit by devastating hurricanes in September. This package sits alongside up to £300 million of UK loan guarantees for territories that need support to access finance.

### Caribbean Hurricanes: Building Back Better

The second day of discussions covered a range of issues, including tax transparency and beneficial ownership; preparations for the 2018 Commonwealth Summit; child safeguarding; and climate change.

Minister for the Overseas Territories Lord Ahmad said:

It was wonderful to welcome the leaders of the Overseas Territories once again. The UK is clear that ongoing, close cooperation with the Overseas Territories is in our mutual interest.

We continue to be close partners on vital issues such as climate change and marine protection, and the UK is working closely with the governments of the Overseas Territories to deliver real change on health, corruption and child safeguarding.

The Prime Minister also announced new support for the Territories worst affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, with £70 million of grants and up to £300 million of loan guarantees to make sure essential recovery needs can be met.

Minister for Exiting the European Union Robin Walker led discussions on the progress of exit negotiations and the future Overseas Territories relationship with the EU.

Minister for Exiting the European Union Robin Walker said:

It was a pleasure to again meet with the leaders of the Overseas Territories and to continue our close engagement on shared

priorities as we exit the EU.

The UK is responsible for representing the Overseas Territories' priorities in exit negotiations and a clear objective of those negotiations is to achieve a deal that works for all parts of the UK family. Leaders and representatives from the following Overseas Territories attended the [two-day conference]<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-territories-joint-ministerial-council-2017-communiqué>) in London:

- Anguilla
- Ascension
- Bermuda
- British Virgin Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Falkland Islands
- Gibraltar
- Montserrat
- Pitcairn
- St. Helena
- The Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia
- Tristan da Cunha
- Turks & Caicos Islands

### **Further information**

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## **[Press release: England gets ready for Russia](#)**

With England now preparing for matches against Tunisia, Panama and Belgium next summer following Friday's World Cup draw, thousands of England fans will be travelling to the three host cities of Volgograd, Nizhny Novgorod and Kaliningrad.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has been working with Russian authorities to help maximise the chances of a trouble-free tournament for fans, and the British Embassy in Moscow has visited all 11 of the host cities over the past year to discuss safety and security preparations.

The FC0's 'Be On The Ball' campaign gives supporters simple advice and tips to help avoid preventable problems and boost their World Cup experience. This includes specific Russia 2018 travel advice, and a preparation checklist. The FC0 offers a country-specific travel advice alert system and those travelling to Russia for the tournament are encouraged to sign-up to this.

Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan said:

We're all looking forward to the World Cup in Russia next summer – nobody more so than those planning to travel for the tournament. Russia is getting ready to host the World Cup, but fans need to be prepared too.

We hope our advice will help fans Be On The Ball by planning ahead with appropriate travel insurance, passport validity, emergency numbers and other essentials.

Start doing your trip research now. Signing up to Russia travel advice alerts is the easiest and quickest way to receive any updates to our advice, to help ensure you have a safe and trouble-free visit.

The UK and Russia have been cooperating closely to ensure the safety of British supporters at the tournament. This has included regular visits by the UK police to Russia and reciprocal visits from the Russian police to the UK.

The signs from Russia have been promising – after recent Liverpool and Manchester United matches in Moscow, the embassy has recorded zero consular cases.

We want this success to continue, and enhanced security measures during the tournament will help to ensure those travelling from the UK can safely enjoy the games.

Ticket holders should apply for a FAN ID, which will give them free travel on match day, enable those with tickets to access stadiums, and will even act as their visa for the tournament. There's also advice for fans without tickets, who will need to apply for a visa to travel.

Last year, Britons made 150,000 visits to Russia, and we are expecting tens of thousands more to travel next summer.

## **Further information**

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# **News story: UK bolsters defence ties in the Western Balkans**

The trip marks the first time Mark Lancaster has been to Kosovo since he served there in 1999-2000 and it's the first visit to Serbia by a British defence minister in more than 10 years.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

The Western Balkans is a key region for the stability and security of Europe, and the UK continues to play a leading role in supporting the Kosovo Security Force and the Serbian Armed Forces.

Our connections are historic; it is a hundred years since we fought side by side with Serbia during the First World War, and we will continue to build on our rich history with both countries in the years to come.

Mr Lancaster's visit to Kosovo comes at a time when the UK has boosted its presence in the country, having recently deployed 30 troops to NATO's Force based there to work with allies to promote safety, security and stability in the region. This is in addition to long-standing defence training assistance and capacity-building of the Kosovo Security Force.

The Defence Minister went on to visit Belgrade, to meet with his counterparts. It marked the hundredth anniversary since British and Commonwealth troops successfully fought alongside Serbian counterparts to secure the Salonika Front during the First World War. The UK has a proud history of training side-by-side with Serbian forces, with the 2nd Battalion the Royal Irish Regiment recently working on Exercise Platinum Wolf in Cepotina.

While in Kosovo Mark Lancaster met with President Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, Minister for the Kosovo Security Force Mr Rrustem Berisha, and Lieutenant General Rrahman Rama. He also laid a wreath at the UK

memorial in Pristina and saw a demonstration by the Kosovo Security Force. In Serbia the Minister met Defence Minister Aleksandar Vulin, laid a wreath at the Belgrade War Cemetery and addressed military personnel at the Peacekeeping Centre.

The visit comes ahead of the major Western Balkans Summit in London in next year.