

Humanitarian access to Tigray: Minister for Africa statement

Press release

Minister for Africa James Duddridge has called for unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray.



Minister for Africa James Duddridge said:

The UK remains deeply concerned about the situation in Tigray, following reports of continued violence, ethnic discrimination and dire shortages of food, water, fuel and cash.

People across the region will face further suffering, if the ongoing challenges humanitarian agencies have accessing Tigray do not improve.

We have repeatedly called on all parties involved to urgently allow unfettered access and for the independent investigation of alleged violations of human rights.

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Technology drives forward new network for search and rescue

Press release

State-of-the-art technology is bringing a new edge to the search and rescue work of HM Coastguard.



Old copper-based cables are being replaced with fibre-based technology across 165 remote radio sites across the United Kingdom, starting with Weymouth on Wednesday 16 December.

Each radio site receives distress calls from UK waters and the replacement technology will bring improvements such as security and bandwidth.

Damien Oliver, Commercial and Programmes Director for the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, said: "We are investing £175 million into this new national radio network, which is central in preventing the loss of life on the coast and at sea.

"At a time when getting outdoors is pivotal to people's mental health and wellbeing, it is essential that we can provide reassurance that we are here to respond to any emergency they may find themselves in, and this new network will enhance our ability to do that."

The new network is being built and maintained by Telent Technology Services Ltd. Peter Moir, Managing Director of Network Services at Telent, said: "This network may not be seen by many people, but it's literally a lifeline for someone in distress at sea. It's important that this network's capability continues to support Her Majesty's Coastguard in the vital lifesaving search and rescue work that it does."

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Supervision of terrorists reinforced with new powers and closer

collaboration

- new laws to give police powers to search terrorism-risk offenders on licence
- doubling of specialist probation officers tackling terrorism
- better intelligence sharing between police, prisons, probation and security services

The monitoring of convicted terrorists and others who pose a terror risk will be strengthened under plans laid out today by the government, in response to an independent review by Jonathan Hall QC.

While Jonathan Hall found well-established processes were already in place between police, probation and other agencies to manage terrorism-risk offenders, he made a series of recommendations to improve them.

Many of the suggested changes are already underway as part of the government's Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Bill. This includes plans to require terrorists under probation supervision to undergo polygraph testing and giving judges more discretion to decide a crime is terror-related, so that they can impose a tougher sentence.

The National Probation Service has also created a new National Security Division which will double the number of specialist officers dedicated to supervising terrorism-risk offenders and strengthen its work with police, prisons and the security services.

The government has also confirmed it will bring forward new legislation to give police the powers to search terrorist offenders on licence and obtain warrants to check they are complying with the terms of their release, for example by searching their home or seizing electronic devices. The legislation will also ensure offenders who pose a terror risk but were not convicted of a terrorist offence can be supervised like those who were.

Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland QC MP said:

Keeping our communities safe is the Government's first priority and recent atrocities in France and Austria have shown us that continued vigilance is needed.

Our security services, police, prison and probation officers epitomise public duty and these new powers and the Government's considerable investment will help them improve the tremendous, challenging work they do.

Home Secretary Priti Patel MP said:

This year we have witnessed horrific terrorist attacks at home and

abroad, which is why we have taken significant steps to amend our powers and strengthen our tools to tackle the threats our country faces.

The British public should be in no doubt that we will take the strongest possible action to keep them safe, and these new powers will further bolster the improvements already being made by the Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Bill.

Last month's Spending Review committed over £900 million for Counter-Terrorism Police next year, following this year's 10% increase. It also unveiled plans for a world-leading Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre which will bring staff from the security services, counter-terror police and HM Prison and Probation Service together into one location enhancing their ability to discover and prevent attacks.

Jonathan Hall examined how police, prison and probation staff, the security services and others work together through Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) to reduce the risk that terrorists pose to the public.

Other changes outlined in the government response to his report include:

- The creation of a new category of MAPPA, specifically for terrorism-risk offenders.
- Clarifying data protection laws to reinforce that any organisation involved in the supervision of offenders through MAPPA can share information.
- Every terrorism-risk offender will now spend up to 12 months in an Approved Premises when released from prison on licence.

The [government's full response](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

School funding boost confirmed for every local authority in England

In another step towards delivering on the government's pledge to invest a total of £14 billion over three years, the Department for Education has today (17 December) published school funding allocations going to every local authority in England.

This is the second of a three-year cumulative £14 billion funding boost, compared to 2019-20, that gives school budgets their biggest increase in a decade.

Every pupil in England will benefit from a funding boost. The [allocations](#) to

local authorities, based on the most up to date numbers of pupils in each school, mean that the majority of local authorities will see increases of more than three per cent in the funding allocated per pupil.

Delivering on the Prime Minister's pledge, every school will get more money for every child – "levelling up" funding and helping to spread equality of opportunity for all. Every school is set to receive the new minima of £5,150 per-pupil funding for secondary schools next year, and £4,000 for primaries, up from the £5,000 and £3,750 which schools are receiving this year in the first year of the funding settlement.

Funding to cover increases to teacher pay and pensions worth £2 billion will also be included from 2021 rather than paid separately, reassuring schools that the funding will continue to be provided in their core budgets.

Extra funding for small and remote schools is increasing by more than 60% next year through the national funding formula, reflecting the financial challenges that these schools can face, and the unique role they play in local communities.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Every pupil, no matter what their background, deserves an excellent education and the chance to fulfil their potential.

This three-year school boost is part of our commitment to level up outcomes and opportunities, giving the biggest increases to schools that have historically received lower levels of funding.

It builds on the significant support we have introduced to help the most disadvantaged pupils, including our £1 billion Covid catch up fund to tackle the impact of lost teaching time as a result of the pandemic.

The three-year funding settlement is helping make sure all children and young people receive an excellent education, regardless of where they grow up or go to school.

Alongside this, funding for the pupil premium will continue in 2021-22 with per pupil rates protected to remain the same as this year. This means schools will benefit from £1,345 per eligible primary pupil, and £955 for every eligible secondary pupil.

High needs funding to support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is also increasing by £730 million next year, a 10% increase that will bring the total high needs budget to more than £8 billion.

The government's £1 billion Covid catch up fund is also helping tackle the impact of lost teaching time as a result of the pandemic, including a £650 million catch up premium for this academic year and a £350 million National Tutoring Programme which is on the way to reaching hundreds of thousands of

pupils by the summer.

Further, £44 million is being invested in early years in 2021-22, to increase the hourly rate paid to childcare providers for the government's free childcare entitlement offers.

Also announced today is the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021-22, providing councils a complete picture of their funding streams for next year.

Jenrick acts to tackle failure of Nottingham City Council

- Government publishes rapid review into council's governance and risk management
- Expert panel to be appointed to help council improve
- Council to produce recovery plan by end of January 2021

Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick has today (17 December 2020) announced new measures to address the serious failures at Nottingham City Council and begin to turn it to around so it can again deliver value for money for the taxpayer. This follows a non-statutory review into the council's finances last month.

An Improvement and Assurance Board, made up of experts in governance and finance, appointed by the department, will be set up to help the council deliver the report's recommendations on governance and company ownership.

The council must put forward their 3-year recovery plan by the end of January 2021. This will set out how they will improve their financial position and review their investments. They must submit progress reports to the Department on a quarterly basis.

The measures come in response to a [rapid non-statutory review commissioned in November](#) to examine serious governance and risk management issues, including those associated with the council's private energy company Robin Hood Energy.

Councils have a duty to manage taxpayers' money responsibly and are held to account where they are found to have failed to do so. The review team, led by Max Caller CBE, found that the council's financial strategy and commercial investment decisions over the past 4 years have resulted in a very significant budget gap and low levels of reserves.

It also highlighted that the council failed to understand the roles and responsibilities associated with managing their companies and, as a result, ended up with significant debts.

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

The rapid review into Nottingham City Council highlighted appalling financial and management issues within the council. Taxpayers and residents have been let down by years of disgraceful mismanagement and inept ventures such as Robin Hood Energy, that have wasted tens of millions of pounds that should be being spent on public services. These must end now. The council has a window in which to demonstrate that it is capable of running the city and turning the situation it has created around.

I will be appointing an independent expert panel to help them urgently address this by producing and delivering a comprehensive recovery plan.

Given the scale of the changes needed, it is vital that the council act quickly for the benefit of the communities they serve. I will be monitoring progress closely and do not rule out further action.

The department will continue to work with the council to understand the range of financial issues they are experiencing and will consider any request that the council submits for additional financial support from the government.

In the event of a failure by the council to demonstrate significant progress, a more formal statutory intervention will be considered, including the appointment of commissioners.

The [findings of the review](#) have been published on GOV.UK alongside the Local Government Secretary's letter to lead reviewer Max Caller CBE.