

PM announces new air defence for Ukraine on first visit to Kyiv

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said it is “deeply humbling” to be in Kyiv and pledged that the UK will continue to stand by Ukrainians in their fight, on his first visit to the country today [Saturday 19th November].

Meeting President Zelenskyy, he confirmed that the UK will provide a major new package of air defence to help protect Ukrainian civilians and critical national infrastructure from an intense barrage of Russian strikes.

The £50 million package of defence aid comprises 125 anti-aircraft guns and technology to counter deadly Iranian-supplied drones, including dozens of radars and anti-drone electronic warfare capability. It follows more than 1,000 new anti-air missiles announced by the Defence Secretary earlier this month.

In the last week, Ukrainian forces say Russia has rained down more than 148 missile strikes on critical infrastructure, leaving approximately 10 million people without power. The UK is also bolstering our training offer to Ukrainian’s armed forces, sending expert army medics and engineers to the region to offer specialised support.

In Kyiv, the Prime Minister laid flowers at a memorial for the war dead and lit a candle at a memorial for victims of the Holodomor famine, before meeting first responders at a fire station. The team of emergency responders described their harrowing work rescuing survivors from the rubble and fighting fires in the aftermath of Russian airstrikes and mortar attacks. He also saw captured Iranian-made drones which have been used to target and bomb civilians in recent months.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said:

I am proud of how the UK stood with Ukraine from the very beginning. And I am here today to say the UK and our allies will continue to stand with Ukraine, as it fights to end this barbarous war and deliver a just peace.

While Ukraine’s armed forces succeed in pushing back Russian forces on the ground, civilians are being brutally bombarded from the air. We are today providing new air defence, including anti-aircraft guns, radar and anti-drone equipment, and stepping up humanitarian support for the cold, hard winter ahead.

It is deeply humbling to be in Kyiv today and to have the opportunity to meet those who are doing so much, and paying so high a price, to defend the principles of sovereignty and democracy.

Recognising that Ukrainians face a very difficult winter, with widespread blackouts of destruction of homes, schools and hospitals, the Prime Minister has also confirmed £12 million for the World Food Programme's response, as well as £4 million for the International Organisation for Migration. The funding will help provide generators, shelter, water repairs and mobile health clinics. The UK is also sending tens of thousands of extreme cold winter kits for Ukrainian troops.

Working with the Government of Ukraine, the UK has identified an initial eight construction projects to be supported by UK Export Finance, helping to repair Ukraine's critical infrastructure and lay the foundations for economic recovery. The projects include six bridges and two housing projects, including a development in Bucha for some 2,250 residents.

[Derelict land to be transformed into new homes in boost for local regeneration](#)

- Up to £35 million allocated to help councils transform unused sites into high-quality, new homes
- 59 regeneration projects from Exeter to Sunderland set to support thousands of new jobs, drive local growth and level up the country
- Forms the first phase of £180 million Brownfield Land Release Fund which will continue to be rolled out over next two years

Thousands of new homes will be built on derelict land to create thriving communities and help level up the country, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced today (19 November 2022).

Almost £35 million from the £180 million Brownfield Land Release Fund 2 has been allocated to 41 councils to help kickstart regeneration in towns and cities.

The funding will bring unloved, council-owned land back into use, by transforming redundant industrial sites, disused car parks and derelict buildings into new places for people to live.

A total of 59 regeneration projects from Exeter to Sunderland will see over 2,200 homes – including over 800 affordable homes – built for local communities. This will help more young people and families onto the housing ladder and generate up to 7000 new jobs in housing and construction.

The new fund, announced today, forms part of the government's plan to level up the country – ensuring local areas can achieve their full potential, while

also protecting the country's green spaces.

Minister for Housing Rt Hon Lucy Frazer said:

We are helping local communities transform unwanted, urban eyesores into thriving places that people are proud to call home.

Regeneration is at the heart of our levelling up mission and this new brownfield first fund will help communities across the country unlock disused, council-owned sites to build more of the right homes in the right places”

Cabinet Office Minister Alex Burghart said:

This funding is absolutely crucial for stimulating growth and forms part of a push across the whole of government to get the UK economy moving.

Unused land such as this is ripe for investment and I'm thrilled we're opening the door for more than 2,200 new property owners to potentially take their first step onto the property ladder.

This funding is great news for businesses, it's great news for industry and it's even better news for local people in these communities who are seeing housing and jobs moving to their area.”

Local areas were invited to bid for a share of the first round of funding from the new scheme. The remaining £140 million is to be allocated over the next two years – creating up to 17,600 new homes in total across the country, as well as support up to 54,000 jobs in the sector.

Cllr James Jamieson, Chairman of the Local Government Association, said:

We are delighted to be a key partner in supporting the Government's £180m Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF2).

Councils play a vital role in driving progress to provide more and better housing, and the awarding of this fund will ensure English councils unlock their brownfield land for new homes and deliver local housing priorities.

With built-in support from the One Public Estate programme, councils can tackle complex and challenging brownfield sites to benefit their communities.”

This scheme builds on the success of the first Brownfield Land Release Fund, which saw £77 million help councils release over 160 brownfield sites for around 7,750 new homes across the country.

Today's allocations will now support the transformation of more previously developed, council-owned sites, by funding infrastructure and remediation

work to release the land for new homes. Examples include:

- Lancaster – one of two successful projects will see over £1.6 million will transform the city centre with 140 new homes, including new affordable homes, cultural venues, and facilities to the Canal Quarter regeneration area.
- Hull – £175,000 will release land to deliver 10 new affordable homes for the local community, as part of the city’s regeneration drive.
- Mid-Devon – a total of £280,000 will release land for two modular, affordable housing sites in Tiverton and Cullompton to build 14 quality, low-carbon homes for the community.
- Great Yarmouth – £219,155 for one of two successful projects will boost the city centre by helping to transform old industrial buildings into 32 high-quality affordable homes, turning the area into a vibrant place for people to live.

Increasing housing supply is central to the levelling up agenda and supports the government’s ongoing target to deliver 300,000 new homes a year. Just before the pandemic in 2019/20 over 242,000 homes were delivered – the highest number for over 30 years,

As with the previous scheme, the new fund will be delivered through the One Public Estate – a partnership between the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Office of Government Property and the Local Government Association. Find out more about the latest [One Public Estate funding](#).

Brownfield Land Release Fund 2 (BLRF2) funding:

Local Authority	BLRF Award (£)
Amber Valley Borough Council	1,033,901
Babergh District Council	210,000
Basildon Borough Council	1,847,037
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	220,000
Bristol City Council	515,649
Cambridge City Council	643,329
Canterbury City Council	554,500
Chorley Borough Council	650,000
Darlington Borough Council	223,049
Dover District Council	100,535
Epsom & Ewell Borough Council	75,000
Essex County Council	1,119,015
Exeter City Council	293,391
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	465,000
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	237,711
Haringey Council	5,913,369
Harrogate Borough Council	33,000
Havant Borough Council	1,650,000

Local Authority	BLRF Award (£)
Hull City Council	175,000
Ipswich Borough Council	3,340,500
Lancaster City Council	2,769,343
London Borough of Barnet	1,598,968
London Borough of Waltham Forest	1,048,946
Mid Devon District Council	280,000
Mid Suffolk District Council	238,000
Mole Valley District Council	90,000
Norfolk County Council	330,000
North East Lincolnshire Council	50,000
Oxford City Council	404,081
Rother District Council	185,000
Sevenoaks District Council	1,215,000
Shropshire Council	334,500
St Helens Borough Council	812,142
Sunderland City Council	1,943,657
Tendring District Council	420,001
Torbay Council	337,748
Warwickshire County Council	153,800
Wealden District Council	300,000
West Sussex County Council	986,722
Wigan Council	506,168
Worthing Borough Council	104,349

Almost 1,000 prison leavers tagged in first year of drive to cut booze-fuelled crime

- one year since world-first launch of alcohol tagging of prison leavers in Wales
- offenders tagged for up to a year face prison for breaching drink rules
- tags tackling alcohol-fuelled crime which costs society £21 billion a year

Under the scheme, offenders released from prison are fitted with alcohol monitoring tags if their probation officer thinks they are likely to reoffend when drinking. Those who break the rules set by the Probation Service around their drinking face being sent back to jail.

The initiative was launched in Wales last November and rolled out to England

in June as part of government plans to stamp out the scourge of alcohol-related crime.

Alcohol plays a part in 39 per cent of all violent crime in the UK and roughly 20 per cent of offenders supervised by the Probation Service are classed as having an alcohol problem.

Around 12,000 orders requiring offenders to wear alcohol tags are expected to be issued over the next three years, covering both prison leavers and those serving community sentences.

Prisons and Probation Minister, Damian Hinds MP, said:

When more than a third of all violent crime is fuelled by alcohol, these tags provide vital monitoring to help cut reoffending and protect our communities.

Roughly 12,000 offenders will have benefitted from these innovative tags by 2025 – helping them to make positive changes to their lives and making the streets safer.

The tags help probation officers monitor offenders' behaviour and support them to turn their backs on crime. They also provide offenders with the incentive to break bad habits as breaching their licence condition could see them back in prison.

Natasha (not her real name), aged 22, from Cardiff, has been on a tag since the beginning of September. She said:

I was nervous about being tagged but it does help. It's a physical reminder for me not to drink.

I've been on probation before but this time I'm doing really well. I'm sober and not getting in trouble.

An offender's licence will stipulate that the alcohol tag must be worn for a minimum of 30 days up to a maximum of one year. Those getting tagged either have a licence condition which requires them to go teetotal or have their drinking levels monitored during this time.

Judges and magistrates have handed down 5,939 alcohol tagging orders to offenders serving community sentences since October 2020.

Last year, the government launched another world-first, [using GPS tags](#) to track robbers, thieves and burglars. Around 10,000 tagging orders are expected to be made over the next three years to help stop criminals from reoffending and help police catch them if they carry on.

The move is part of the government's plan to tackle crime, expanding the use of innovative technology to protect the public and drive down reoffending.

The £183 million investment over the next 3 years will nearly double the number of defendants on tags at any one time from 13,500 in 2021 to 25,000 by 2025.

Notes to editors

- Reviews are carried out every 3 months to ensure the tag is still necessary, reasonable and proportionate to the risk they pose (a legal requirement).
- The amount of time an offender is required to wear the tag is flexible and could be reintroduced after a year if deemed necessary and proportionate to the risk they pose.
- Recently published [statistics](#) show 97% compliance with alcohol bans on community orders.
- [Statistics](#) show that around 20% of offenders managed in the community by the Probation Service had alcohol assessed as a being likely to cause criminal behaviour.

[Foreign Secretary speech at the Manama Dialogue in Bahrain](#)

Your Royal Highnesses,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to speak here today. When Britain opened our Embassy here in Bahrain, our diplomats could look directly over the waters of the Gulf and watch dhows carrying pearl divers to the northern oyster beds.

Yet today our Embassy is almost half a mile from the coast, not because it has moved, but because Bahrain has moved the sea by reclaiming land that once lay beneath the waves.

All around us, the Arabian Peninsula has experienced one of the swiftest transformations in history, wrought by the power of hydrocarbons, allowing spectacular cities to rise from empty deserts and entire countries to achieve prosperity, great prosperity, within a single lifetime.

The lesson I draw is that when our friends in the Gulf and the wider region decide to make change happen, they can reinvent themselves, and indeed reinvent their economies, with astonishing speed.

And now another transformation is beginning – and I believe it will be equally momentous and filled with opportunity – as this region remakes itself by harnessing the power of sunlight, wind and nuclear energy.

As you embark on this journey, I want to assure you that the United Kingdom will remain a steadfast friend and partner, committed to our relationships in the Middle East and North Africa for the long term, and do so by building on centuries of tradition and friendship.

Because we know that your security is our security and that any crisis here would have inevitable global repercussions.

We know that your prosperity is our prosperity, that is symbolised by the ever greater flow of trade between us, including over £44 billion between the UK and the GCC.

We welcome regional initiatives to reinforce stability, including the historic Abraham Accords, of which the UK is a committed supporter.

And Britain is convinced that we will only be able to overcome mutual threats and seize the opportunities in front of us by cooperating ever more closely.

That's why we're negotiating a free trade agreement with the GCC, which I remind the room, is our fourth biggest export market after the EU, the US and China.

That's why we're providing development finance through British International Investment – including \$500 million to Egypt and \$250 million to Morocco so far.

That's why we're deepening our security partnerships with Jordan and Oman and strengthening our cooperation with regional finance centres against illicit money.

And that's why we want to be with you on our shared transition to green energy, ensuring that we all benefit from renewable technologies that are not only practical, but are increasingly affordable, but also promise near total energy security.

Last year we hosted COP26 in Glasgow, then we passed the baton to Egypt for COP27 this year and we look forward to COP28 in the UAE next year.

I commend Saudi Arabia and the UAE for their plans to invest nearly \$350 billion in green energy, and also to Bahrain for its ambition to double its deployment of renewables by 2035.

I draw inspiration from the Middle East Green Initiative, which will help countries to achieve their Nationally Determined Contributions to reduce carbon emissions.

But none of our shared ambition will succeed without security – and the hard truth is that we face an ever greater array of threats.

In January of this year I was in the garden of the British Ambassador's Residence in Abu Dhabi watching explosions in the night sky as incoming Houthi rockets were intercepted and shot down overhead – and I can assure you that I gave thanks for the accuracy and efficiency of the UAE's missile

defences on that evening.

Those trails of light, darting across the sky above me, were visible evidence of how Iranian-supplied weapons threaten the entire region.

Today the Iranian nuclear programme is more advanced than ever before and the regime has resorted to selling Russia the armed drones that are currently killing civilians in Ukraine.

As their people demonstrate against decades of oppression, Iran's rulers are spreading bloodshed and destruction across the region and as far away as Kyiv.

Britain is determined to work alongside our friends to counter the Iranian threat, interdict the smuggling of conventional arms, and prevent the regime from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.

Twice this year, a Royal Navy frigate operating in international waters south of Iran intercepted speedboats laden with surface-to-air missiles and engines for cruise missiles.

Had those engines reached their destination, they could have powered the type of cruise missile that bombarded Abu Dhabi on 17th January, killing three civilians – and the toll would have been even higher without the defences that I saw in action a few weeks later above the skies of Abu Dhabi.

That's why British forces are striving alongside their counterparts in this region to keep us safe and defend the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity which protect every nation.

Putin's onslaught against Ukraine amounts to a flagrant breach of the principles of sovereign and territorial integrity.

No country is immune from the turmoil he has brought to world energy markets or the damage he has caused to global food security.

Day after day, Putin's war is inflicting yet more suffering on Syrians and Yemenis, who were already enduring the privations of humanitarian emergency, and he's having an impact on ordinary Lebanese, caught up in economic crisis.

Meanwhile the horrors that he is meting out to Ukrainian civilians compare with the destruction that he and Assad wrought upon Aleppo and other Syrian cities.

Yet despite using overwhelming and pitiless force, Putin is losing.

Almost everywhere, Russian forces are in retreat and it is only a matter of time before Ukraine prevails.

And it should be dawning on other regimes, who might have been tempted to behave similarly, that most of the world is determined to ensure that aggression does not pay.

This region demonstrated its belief in sovereignty and territorial integrity when it voted at the UN General Assembly to condemn Putin's annexation of Ukrainian territory.

Just as those principles remain constant, so I fervently believe that Britain's friendships across the Middle East and North Africa will deepen and endure, as we uphold peace and security together, and as this region masters its second transformation, allowing a new world of green energy to succeed the old.

Autumn Statement and Social Mobility

In more stable times, assessing the social mobility implications of policy is a difficult challenge. In an unpredictable period, this becomes much more complex. Every area of policy has some impact or another, and there is a danger of losing focus. To address this, the Social Mobility Commission is aiming to focus on the "big ticket" items where the evidence of impact is greatest. These are the policy areas which we hope governments, now and in the future, will acknowledge as their priorities in ensuring that this country nurtures and allocates talent in the best possible ways. They are described in our Work Plan and will shortly be set out in more detail in our Strategic Plan, which will provide the wider narrative about our approach and why we believe it is relevant to the current period.

Our main areas of focus will be on education, routes to work, and economy and enterprise. Assessing the Autumn Statement in the light of these three priorities presents a mixed picture. We share the ambition to grow the economy. Much of the debate about social mobility is focussed on relative mobility, which is the comparison between different groups, in terms of socio-economic background and access to higher level employment and income. This is an important part of the story, but far too little attention has been given to absolute mobility – which is when people move up, either in income or occupational status, compared to their parents. Arguably, this is the bigger challenge currently. Last week, the Institute of Fiscal Studies, produced a thought provoking report on intergenerational mobility, and the extent to which our younger generation, whatever their social background, are facing diminished opportunities compared to older people. Far too many people have seen their real incomes improve very little over the past decade. And there is a strong geographical aspect, which means that some parts of the country experience a disproportionate share of the problem.

The only solution to this is to grow the economy and to do so in ways which spread innovation and improved productivity across the whole of the country. We recognise that there is a strong commitment to this in the Autumn Statement, and a recognition that this requires fiscal and monetary stability, innovation and strong public services. In terms of the detail, it

is too early to form judgements about how well this might work. However there are three aspects to which we would draw attention at this stage. First, is to commend the commitment to the most vulnerable. This does not, in itself, improve social mobility, as this depends on a range of other factors as well as income – but it does offer a degree of protection against opportunity diminishing for those families and their children who are most exposed to financial insecurity. We also commend the additional funding for schools, for much the same reason. It will not offset all of their pending challenges, but is likely to mitigate some of the most difficult pressures caused by rising costs. However there are two areas of substantial concern: the lack of any reference to the impact of financial pressures on early years or to further education.

It is highly unlikely that any government can meet its ambitions for a strong economy without addressing skills. From a social mobility point of view, this is about how we create and open opportunity for high skilled and well paid employment, but is also about finding some new solutions to our biggest national problem: the number of young people and adults with low levels of formal qualifications. In large part this is about addressing deficiencies in basic skills, including literacy and numeracy – as this is a major impediment to the progress of individuals, and the capacity of the economy to innovate and improve productivity.

It is encouraging that the Autumn Statement does refer to skills and acknowledges the importance of current proposals to improve the skills system. However, it is silent on the risks posed by the current economic crisis to the organisations charged with delivering these outcomes. We know that early years development is critical to developing the cognitive and non-cognitive skills which enable children to do well, and we are supportive of the reforms to post-16 education and training which seek to strengthen technical and vocational pathways – because these aim to recognise and reward the wider range of talents which people have and which the labour market needs.

More funding is not always the answer to every problem, and is never the whole answer to every problem. How early years is delivered and how skills are taught are both extremely important areas of interest for us. Nothing can be delivered, however, without stable institutions – and there is evidence, in both early years and further education, that current funding levels are insufficient to recruit and retain high quality staff, or to secure the institutional stability needed to maintain current levels of service while things improve. We are concerned about the implications of this, both for the individuals who are affected (nearly 2 million people are enrolled at further education colleges) and the potential drag this may well have on the longer term ambition to deliver a stronger economy.

Katharine Birbalsingh OBE, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission

Alun Francis OBE, Deputy Chair of the Social Mobility Commission