Press release: World Wildlife Day: A helping hand to turtles and mangroves

Government-funded projects to protect the world's turtles and mangroves have been praised by the Environment Minister on World Wildlife Day.

Today (Sunday 3 March) marks United Nations World Wildlife Day. The theme for this year is 'Life below water: for people and planet'.

One of the key animals whose plight is being highlighted is the turtle, targeted for their eggs, meat and shells. Turtles have also suffered from habitat loss due to construction on coastlines.

The UK Government's Darwin Initiative has supported the work of Flora and Fauna International to help these important sea creatures. One such project to protect leatherback and hawksbill turtles in Nicaragua has achieved a significant reduction in the illegal harvesting of their eggs.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

> World Wildlife Day is a chance to celebrate the wonderful individuals and organisations in coastal communities around the globe who are dedicated to protecting our flora and fauna.
>
> I am pleased to see this successful work to protect turtles in Nicaragua. The Darwin Initiative is critical in supporting this type of international conservation project.
>
> The UK is also a global leader in providing support and finance to help coastal communities protect and enhance vital resources, such as mangroves. This overseas support is critical to delivering on our ambition to be the first generation to leave our environment in a better state than we found it.

Flora & Fauna International has been working to protect marine turtles in Nicaragua for 15 years and a key part of that work has been ensuring local communities are central to conservation initiatives.

The most recent project received £385,617 from the UK Government's Darwin Initiative in 2017 and has been achieving significant success for young turtle hatchlings.

Joanna Elliot, Senior Director, Conservation Partnerships, Fauna & Flora International said:

> In Nicaragua we have worked with our community partners to bring about a 95% reduction in the number of turtle eggs that are

> illegally harvested and ensured more than 190,000 leatherback and hawksbill hatchlings have begun their ocean lives that otherwise would have been lost.
>
> Support from the Darwin Initiative has been critical in helping us find a solution that has not only benefitted biodiversity but also directly improved the lives and livelihoods of local people through jobs and business opportunities in tourism and related sectors.

A video of the project helping turtles in Nicaragua is available to view here.

2019 marks the Government's Year of Green Action, a year-long drive to help people to connect with, protect and enhance nature.

The Darwin Initiative is a grants scheme that helps to protect biodiversity and the natural environment around the globe. These projects reflect the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan commitments to protect the marine environment, to secure the benefits of biodiversity for the poorest communities and to help prevent the extinction of species.

Blue Forests

In 2016, the UK Government funded the establishment of the 'Blue Forests' initiative run by British organisation Blue Ventures. The aim of the project is to reduce deforestation of mangroves habitat, create new sustainable livelihoods, support community health and women's empowerment and increase climate resilience in coastal communities.

This initiative has been funded through the UK's International Climate Finance programme and plays a crucial role in addressing the global challenge of Climate Change.

So far, Blue Ventures has worked with over 6,000 coastal people, empowering local management of 160,000 hectares (ha) of mangrove forests at six different sites across three countries, and partner villages have replanted 652,000 mangrove trees.

Dr Alasdair Harris, Executive Director, Blue Ventures Conservation, said:

> World Wildlife Day is a rallying reminder of the foundational importance of our planet's biodiversity to all life on Earth. Wildlife underpins all life, and its loss imperils our own future.
>
> Nowhere is this more apparent than in the mangrove forests of the tropical Indian and Pacific oceans. These so-called blue forests protect shorelines, absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide, and form the foundation of fisheries and marine ecosystems that underpin coastal economies for hundreds of millions of people.
>
> Defra's work is on the frontline of efforts to reverse mangrove

> loss – innovating scalable approaches to conservation that deliver meaningful benefits to people and nature.
>
> Projects like these are illustrative of the ‘win-win’ approach encouraging sustainable livelihoods whilst conserving some of the world’s iconic and endangered species and landscapes, which benefits us all.

News story: Transport Minister calls on the aviation industry to address the gender gap

Transport Minister Liz Sugg has written to the aviation sector, calling on them to pledge action to overcome the gender gap, ahead of International Women’s Day later this week.

Women account for nearly half (47%) of the national workforce, but only 6% of airline pilots are women.

Aviation Minister, Liz Sugg, said:

> For every 100 airline pilots, 94 are male. With a shortage of pilots in the future, the aviation industry needs to be making the best use of the talent in this country.
>
> There are already some great industry initiatives, and ahead of International Women’s Day we are calling on the aviation industry to pledge action to address this gap.

International Women’s Day this year is being celebrated on Friday 8 March 2019, with the theme of #BalanceforBetter, to drive gender balance across the world.

There are already a number of positive initiatives taking place across the industry:

- Baroness Sugg helped to launch the Women in aviation charter, which commits to build a more balanced and fair industry for women
- easyJet is on track to achieve its target of ensuring 20% of its new pilot entrants are female by 2020
- Flybe’s FlyShe campaign raises awareness of gender stereotypes
- London Stansted Airport is a signatory to the ‘Women in aviation charter’, and has a number of education programmes including its

> Aerozone centre which have helped inspire thousands of young girls in the last 3 years

Liz Austin, HR Director at London Stansted Airport, said

> Encouraging more girls into aviation-related careers is something London Stansted fully supports, and we welcome the government's drive to increase the number of women in these roles.
>
> Stansted Airport College was created to build pipeline of future talent, and works hard to promote the many exciting opportunities open to girls in aviation, from engineering to cabin crew. Along with our Aerozone education centre for younger children, we're proud of the part London Stansted is playing in inspiring the next generation of the aviation workforce and look forward to seeing an increase in the representation of women in all sectors.

Press release: Minister for Middle East welcomes report by OPCW confirming reasonable grounds to conclude the use of chemical weapons in Douma attack

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has published a report confirming that there are reasonable grounds to conclude that a toxic chemical was used as a weapon in Douma on 7 April 2018.

The Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office welcomed the report, stating:

The UK welcomes the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) report published today (1 March) confirming that there are reasonable grounds to conclude that a toxic chemical, likely chlorine, was used as a weapon in Douma on 7 April 2018. We remember the many victims of that attack and their families today and remain committed to seeking the justice they deserve.

This is the latest in a long line of instances where the OPCW has confirmed that chemical weapons have been used in Syria. We welcome further investigations by the newly-mandated OPCW team, who will now work to

attribute responsibility to the perpetrators of these hideous attacks.

The UK once again calls on the regime to engage meaningfully with the OPCW to fully declare and destroy all aspects of its past and current chemical weapons programme. The use of chemical weapons cannot be allowed to become normal – either in Syria, on UK streets or elsewhere. We call on the regime's backers to use their influence to ensure the regime never uses chemical weapons again.

The UK remains committed to working with fellow members of the Chemical Weapons Convention to strengthen implementation of the Convention, and to challenge any efforts to undermine the ban on these vile weapons.

Press release: Joint statement on efforts to de-escalate tensions in southern Libya

Joint statement on efforts to de-escalate tensions in southern Libya – GOV.UK

UK, France, Italy and US reiterate support for credible and secure elections.

The governments of [France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States] strongly support the ongoing efforts of UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General(SRSG) Ghassan Salamé and the United Nations Support Mission for Libya (UNSMIL) to de-escalate tensions in southern Libya and help the Libyan people chart a path toward credible and secure elections. We welcome UN leadership in convening Prime Minister al-Sarraj and "Libyan National Army" Commander Haftar on February 27 and commend the efforts of the Government of the United Arab Emirates to facilitate this discussion. We call on all Libyans to work constructively with SRSG Salamé and seize this vital opportunity to realize a stable and unified government that can deliver

security and prosperity for all Libyans.

We also welcome the announcement by the Government of National Accord that parties had agreed to resume oil production at the al-Sharara field. All sides should promptly implement this agreement in order to allow the National Oil Corporation (NOC) to resume its vital work for the benefit of all Libyans. These Libyan resources must remain under the exclusive control of the NOC and sole oversight of the Government of National Accord, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolutions 2259 (2015), 2278 (2016), and 2362 (2017).

Further information

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Thank you for your feedback