

## **Press release: Minister for the Middle East statement following meeting with Syrian Opposition**

The UK continues to play a leading role in response to the tragedy in Syria. We have committed nearly £2.5bn to our humanitarian response to the crisis.

I am alarmed that in spite of commitments to de-escalation the regime and its backers continue to bomb and shell opposition areas in eastern Ghouta and Idlib. In recent weeks these regime offensives have killed hundreds of civilians, displaced tens of thousands, and destroyed hospitals and other civilian infrastructure. These attacks must stop.

After nearly seven years of conflict and over 400,000 deaths, it is abundantly clear that only a political settlement can bring a durable end to the human suffering and the regional instability the conflict fuels.

Along with our international partners, the UK supports the efforts of the UN-mediated Geneva process as we believe this is the best way of reaching a lasting political settlement to end the conflict. We commend the constructive engagement by Nasser Hariri and the Syrian opposition in the latest round of Geneva talks and call on the Syrian regime to likewise engage constructively and agree to direct talks.

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## **Press release: PM call with Chancellor Kurz: 16 January 2018**

In a positive phone call this afternoon, the Prime Minister spoke to Chancellor Kurz of Austria. During the conversation, the PM extended an invitation for him to visit the UK in the near future, which he accepted.

She gave a brief update on Brexit and confirmed that the government will respect the decision taken by the British public to leave the EU.

Chancellor Kurz updated on his recent European engagement, and they both agreed to stay in touch on Brexit and Austria's forthcoming European Council Presidency.

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# Press release: Innovative licence issued to help hen harrier

Natural England has today [issued a licence](#) permitting the trial of a brood management scheme of hen harriers with the long-term aim of increasing their numbers across England.

The licence is time-limited for a 2-year period and places stringent conditions on the trial, which will take place in the northern uplands of England. Brood management will only take place with the permission of the land owner.

Brood management is the sixth action within the Defra Hen Harrier Recovery Plan, ultimately aiming to reduce hen harrier predation of grouse chicks on driven grouse moors, leading to an improvement in the conservation status of hen harrier.

The licence permits the removal of hen harrier eggs and/or chicks to a dedicated hatching and rearing facility, where they will be hand-reared in captivity, before being transferred to specially-constructed pens in hen harrier breeding habitat, from which they are then re-introduced into the wild in the uplands of northern England. This intervention may only occur where hen harrier nests have reached an agreed density.

Natural England experts have rigorously scrutinised the licence application and will work closely with the licence applicant throughout the duration of the trial to ensure that all elements are carried out proportionately and effectively, to bring about the best possible outcome for hen harriers.

Natural England Chairman, Andrew Sells, said:

Improving the conservation status of hen harriers across England is something I feel very passionate about. The principles of this trial have been carefully researched by those best-placed to understand the conflict which can occur between hen harriers and driven grouse moors.

It is a complicated and emotive picture and we have considered this application very carefully. Licensing this trial will allow important evidence to be gathered which, I sincerely hope, will lead to a self-sustaining and well-dispersed breeding population of these beautiful birds across England.

Amanda Anderson, Director of the Moorland Association said:

The Moorland Association is delighted that Natural England has issued a ground-breaking research licence to test if brood

management will help improve the Hen Harrier population and range in upland northern England. The Hen Harrier Brood Management Group has sought to provide a pragmatic solution to a proven predator-prey conflict while safeguarding important land use.

Moorland managed for red grouse contributes significantly to remote rural communities, businesses and treasured landscapes. This new wildlife management licence will give land managers confidence that impacts of hen harriers breeding on their land can be minimised creating a win-win scenario.

Dr Adam Smith of the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust said:

GWCT research has over many years described the tension between grouse moor management and hen harrier conservation. We believe it important that the hen harrier recovery plan includes this practical trial of a well understood raptor conservation tool, the brood management scheme. If successful this approach should help hen harriers and red grouse thrive – in the interests of both, and of moorland.

We have published [a redacted version of the full licence issued and the application submitted](#).

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## **[News story: Three Hundreds of Chiltern: Barry McElduff](#)**

[unable to retrieve full-text content]The Chancellor of the Exchequer has this day appointed Barry McElduff to be Steward and Bailiff of the Three Hundreds of Chiltern.

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## **[News story: Defence Secretary hosts Qatari counterpart at historic Horse Guards](#)**



Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and Minister of State for Defence Affairs of Qatar, His Excellency Dr Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah, met horses and soldiers from the Blues and Royals at Horse Guards in London. Crown copyright.

The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and his Qatari counterpart, His Excellency Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah, have reaffirmed the important long-term relationship between the UK and Qatar during a meeting in London.

The visit follows the Defence Secretary's trip to Qatar last December, where he signed a [£6bn deal](#) for Typhoon jets and missiles, supporting thousands of British jobs at BAE Systems.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Qatar is a vital partner in the fight against Daesh, hosting the headquarters of the coalition air campaign which is still coordinating strikes on targets in Syria every day.

Our two countries face the same threats from violent extremism and a mutual interest in supporting stability in the region, which will deliver security at home.

The visit to London focussed on defence and security cooperation between the UK and Qatar ahead of the 2022 World Cup, which is being hosted by Qatar, and lessons learned from the military support to the London 2012 Olympics. In addition to the Defence Secretary, Al-Attiyah also met with Security Minister Ben Wallace and the Deputy National Security Advisor Paddy McGuinness. His Excellency also inspected the men and horses of the Blues and Royals at the Army's historic London Headquarters at Horse Guards Parade.

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