

DfT to embrace artificial intelligence technology in plans for local roads health-check

- Department for Transport (DfT) announces a national examination of road markings to help improve road safety
- assessment will give an insight into the current condition of local road markings, sections of the National Cycle Network and the country's footways

Innovative artificial intelligence (AI) technology will be used to help improve the condition of local roads, thanks to DfT funding announced today (20 July 2019).

As part of a wider £350 million funding package for improving the quality of local roads, the department has awarded £2 million to develop the most thorough understanding ever of Britain's road markings.

By having analysis on the quality of near 100,000 miles of road, the department will have a clearer-than-ever picture of where investment is needed. Through this understanding, the department will be able to advise local councils where they could invest in areas that may need it most, improving road user safety on some of our busiest local roads.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Road markings play a vital role in keeping everyone who is using the road safe, so making sure they're up to standard is imperative.

This funding will allow for advanced AI learning technology to assess the condition of the markings to improve the safety of our roads for all users.

DfT will undertake the health-check in close partnership with the Local Condition Roads Innovation Group (LCRIG). LCRIG, will in turn use the services of Gaist, a small SME based in North Yorkshire, to use machine learning AI technology that will review close to 150 million high definition (HD) images of our roads. The analysis will provide a clear assessment of where investment by councils could be utilised.

Poor road markings pose an issue for all road users, from cyclists to motorists. Poor road marking quality can make it difficult for road users to distinguish whether they can park on the side of the road, overtake or know how wide a lane is. This means road user safety can be put at risk due to a lack of clarity. By having a stronger road map of where markings need improvement, these issues can be rectified.

Paula Clayton-Smith, Managing Director, Gaist, said:

We are using over 146 million HD road images from our national databank and cutting-edge AI technology to assess over 96,000 miles of classified roads as part of this project. This is the largest exercise in assessing road marking readiness ever undertaken in England. Gaist are proud to have the AI capability that puts an SME UK business at the forefront of technological advances.

The funding will also go towards a survey of councils around pavement and footway conditions, which will help outline where funding could be targeted.

The department is also planning to assess sections of the [National Cycle Network](#), building on the audit undertaken by cycling and walking charity Sustrans, to better understand the condition of the network. This will help continue our commitment to promote walking and cycling and improve our public spaces. All three stocktakes combined underline the department's commitment to making roads and cycleways safer for their users, and to improve the quality of local roads up and down the country.

The funding announcement comes on the same day that bids open over the next 4 year for £348 million of worth of funding to improve our local roads, through the Challenge Fund and Pinch Point fund.

Reflections on the Security Council visit to Colombia

Briefing by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on the Security Council visit to Colombia

Thank you very much, Mr President. Let me continue where you left off with Day Two of the visit to the Security Council.

So on the 13th of July, the Council traveled to Caldono in Cauca, an area just been highly affected by conflict over the last five or more decades. Our first meeting there was with community leaders from Caldono and the surrounding region. Those leaders represented diverse stakeholders, including local indigenous authorities and civil guards, women's groups, Afro-Colombian groups, human rights defenders, cooperatives of rural workers and the Church. These stakeholders expressed their concerns regarding several challenges which were hindering their work: a lack of channel for democratic participation at the local level; slow pace of implementation of the transitional justice and crop substitution aspects of the peace agreement;

polarization of the national political discourse; and killings and threats against community leaders and human rights defenders. And on this last point, I'd like to note with concern that one woman community leader decided not to attend the meeting with the Security Council due to threats that she had received the night before. And I think all of us would hope that no further threats are made against her or against her colleagues who were able to attend the meeting with us.

This meeting was an important opportunity for Council members to hear firsthand from those whose daily work focuses on building peace at the local level in Colombia. The discussion with them brought to life many of the challenges outlined in the Secretary-General's report. We commend their ongoing commitment to their work.

From Calдона, the Council travelled to the Santa Rosa territorial area for training and reincorporation, where we met government representatives, including Foreign Minister Holmes Trujillo, who we see here today, and Presidential Adviser Archilla, local authorities and ex-combatant residents. We also toured a productive project where ex-combatants and community members were growing tree tomatoes for sale in local and external markets. And we heard about other such projects. In meeting, our open meeting, the government representatives outlined the efforts the government has been taking to roll out the development plan with a territorial focus in Cauca in concert with local indigenous authorities. We also heard about government-led reintegration programmes in the surrounding area.

Regional and local government representatives reaffirmed their commitment to peace. Local indigenous authorities called on the national government to accelerate implementation of the peace agreement and expressed their concern about the killings of community leaders and overall insecurity in the region. FARC leaders and former combatants called for the consolidation of peace, the acceleration of implementation of the peace agreement and increased efforts to ensure political reintegration – especially ahead of local elections in October – alongside an increased state presence in areas previously occupied by the FARC-EP, where other illegal armed groups now threatened to increase their activity.

The visit to the tree tomato productive project allowed the Council to see how agriculture plays a central role in the reintegration of former combatants and to hear from them about their collective efforts and commitment to reintegrate into civilian life. The former combatants were proud of the results their project has shown over the six months since it began and were now looking to expand past the local market and sell directly to national and international supermarkets and distribution channels. Members of the Security Council showed their appreciation for the quality of the tree tomato product in their personal consumption, and without wishing to name names, I would simply suggest to those stakeholders that if they are looking for an external export market, they might start with Russia. This visit to the field was an important complement to our day in Bogota, and we are grateful to the verification mission, the government, the FARC, the former combatants, the community leaders and all other stakeholders who were involved in the organisation of the visit and the discussions we held. And we

welcome very much the commitment of all whom we met to building and sustaining peace in Colombia.

Thank you, Mr President.

Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on the Security Council visit to Colombia

Thank you, Mr President and for the second time today, welcome.

We have just spoken in the previous session about our visit, but I think it was truly invaluable for all of us to see for ourselves the situation. And I believe, we have all returned with stronger understanding as a result. And lastly, may I thank Carlos Ruiz Massieu for his briefing to the Council and through him to his colleagues on the ground and all the hard work they are doing.

We share the Secretary-General's report's assessment that now is a critical moment for the peace process in Colombia, because almost three years on Mr President, the Colombian Peace Accords continue to set a positive example to the rest of the world. And in that light, we welcome the commitment of President Duque and his government to the peace process, which he reaffirmed, and members of his government reaffirmed, repeatedly during the Security Council's visit last week. We particularly welcomed President Duque's request in consultation with FARC members that the Security Council should extend the United Nations Verification Mission's mandate by one year. We look forward to giving this request due consideration with our Council colleagues in the coming months.

We are pleased to see that the Truth Commission, the Commission for the Disappeared, and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace have all started their work. And we also welcome the government's efforts to clearly set out a plan for ending threats and attacks against community leaders, social leaders and human rights defenders.

So Mr President, we will continue to work with the Colombian Government as it builds on these successes to ensure a lasting peace in the country. And we see three key areas of focus for this work:

First, it is clearly crucial that rural reform efforts be accelerated as this is one of the interlocking sets of commitments of the Peace Agreement. This goes hand in hand with rural development. The Government has drawn up many promising plans for development over the past year and has approved a number of projects. But the Government itself says that the time has now come for concrete action. And while we recognize the significant political hurdles the Government faces, we fully support President Duque's efforts to build consensus. We hope that progress on the Development Plans with a Territorial Focus, land ownership and registration processes, and crop substitution initiatives can help Colombia build confidence in its commitment to peace. Now, we know it will not happen overnight, but we know too, that the government is committed to results soon, which we think is essential for the

ongoing peace process implementation.

Secondly, the Colombian government should give full political and financial support to the institutions which work for peace. We welcome the signing of the law governing the Special Jurisdiction for Peace as well as the beginning of work by the Commissions for Truth and the Disappeared. I think it's fair to say, Mr President, we had an inspiring meeting with representatives of those three bodies. They face a huge task, but they are hugely impressive people. But to inspire confidence among the Colombian people, these institutions must be well resourced and given public support by the Government.

Thirdly, the intimidation and killing of social leaders, community leaders, and human rights defenders continues to damage confidence in the perceived commitment of the government to the Peace Agreement. Now, I think we all recognise the difficulties and complexities after our visit in particular seen situation on the ground. But we believe the Colombian government must continue its efforts to enforce the rule of law in rural areas, to prevent attacks against community leaders, and bring those responsible to justice. In many regions of Colombia, insecurity is increasing the risk that citizens might lose faith in the state's ability to provide safety. The risk is not only to this, but to future peace processes.

Let me take this opportunity again to commend our SRSG and the Verification Mission for their valuable work, where they have a crucial role in supporting the government in its work to build a lasting and sustaining peace. And again, let me welcome the Government's plans, activities, commitment, and achievements to date.

Mr President, we said many times on our visit how important it is that there is an inclusive Colombian peace process supported by all sections of Colombian society. The Colombian peace process is a bright spot on this Council's agenda and a shining example to the world. And I thank all Colombians for their determination to ensure a sustained peace.

Thank you, Mr President

[Lord \(Tariq\) Ahmad address to the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom](#)

Thank you. Good afternoon. It's an honour to be amongst such a distinguished group of world leaders all committed to the freedom of religion or belief. And may I say I'm grateful to the United States for bringing us together but particularly to Secretary Pompeo and to you Ambassador Brownback.

Sam, if I may. Your partnership, your friendship is of incredible value and we look forward to strengthening that further. Your Excellencies it is said in the innocence of a child we find our most profound answers. My little boy Mansoor who is studying at a Jesuit Catholic school asked me recently, "Daddy, what kind of Muslim am I?"

I, being a politician, turned it around and asked Mansoor, "What kind of Muslim do you think you are?"

He paused for a moment and with a great poignancy, he said "Daddy, a Christian Muslim?"

Freedom of religion or belief has long been at the heart of UK foreign policy and diplomacy. That innocent remark of my own son demonstrates the strength of the country that I am proud to represent, the strength of building relationships between communities of all faiths.

In Sudan this year, we hosted a Religious Freedom Conference in January. I am grateful to both our colleagues and friends from the United States and Canada which ensured that we saw the Hatoun term government drop restrictions on the opening of Christian schools.

We have also seen progress in Algeria over the past year. Our ambassador has hosted meetings between Christians and Muslim leaders and the space, the religious space for Christians and indeed Ahmadi Muslims has become slightly better, but more needs to be done.

Whilst we take pride in our achievements there is so much more that needs to be done, if real change is to be affected and that is why our foreign secretary commissioned an independent review of the situation of persecuted Christians and I am pleased to announce today that we have fully accepted the review's ambitious recommendations in full.

These include making religious literacy compulsory for all our relevant diplomats a personal priority for me. We will also work with parties to agree a Security Council resolution calling on governments in the Middle East and North Africa to ensure the protection and security of Christians and all faith minorities.

In conclusion, your Excellencies, as champions of freedom of religion or belief, all of us here recognise that it is a right that should be enjoyed by everyone everywhere.

Now is the time to be the voice to the voiceless millions of persecuted religious minority. Now is the moment, right here, right now, for our collective commitment to build that world free of religious bigotry and hate.

Now is the time to act. For our biggest challenge, your Excellencies is not when we stand up for our own rights and beliefs. The real test is when we stand up for the rights and beliefs of others.

Thank you.

Global collaboration to achieve the SDGs

Thank you Madam President. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement by the European Union and its Member States.

Urgent action is needed to accelerate delivery towards the Sustainable Development Goals. This year, the UK was glad to join other Member States in presenting our first Voluntary National Review. We remain committed to accelerating progress, with a focus on leaving no-one behind.

We are facing a climate emergency. This risks undoing development gains made in recent decades and could push an additional 100 million people into poverty by 2030. September's Climate Action Summit is a pivotal moment for urgent action on cutting emissions, building resilience and mobilising finance. The UK is delighted to champion resilience and adaption with Egypt and partner countries.

We are leading efforts to adapt and better cope with climate shocks. The UK has committed to align its Official Development Assistance with the Paris Agreement and is the first G20 economy to legislate for a domestic net zero emissions target by 2050. Internationally, we are on track to deliver our commitment to provide at least \$7.3 billion to help countries mitigate impacts of climate change and pursue clean economic growth. We look forward to working closely with the Secretary-General to deliver transformative outcomes at the Climate Summit and beyond.

Financing is another challenge. The UK is proud to spend the 0.7% target of GNI on official development assistance, but with an annual investment gap of \$2.5 trillion in developing countries, official development assistance alone is insufficient. For example, as a leading donor to regional preparedness for Ebola, we recognise that finance is urgently needed to further support preparedness in countries at risk of infectious diseases and to protect global health.

The UK's Voluntary National Review has reinforced the importance of partnerships. For example, we are focusing on mobilising private investment, and 'impact investing', by building the evidence base for public demand for sustainable investing at home. We want the international community to commit to a common framework for measuring impact, which will help unlock more impact investing capital to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

At this High Level Political Forum, the UK has sought to highlight peace, justice and strong institutions – all vital to achieving Agenda 2030. Concerted action and a whole-of-society approach are more important than ever

to deliver Goal 16. Closing civic space and restrictions on media freedom are significantly undermining efforts. Last week, the UK conference on media freedom announced up to \$19 million to pioneer bold approaches to keep media outlets independent.

Equality, including on gender, remains a priority for the UK. We must ensure global commitments are translated into real change on the ground. Inclusive growth to the benefit of all of society, including people with disabilities, must be prioritised. Our commitment to the Inclusive Data Charter highlights our determination to ensure that everybody is counted so that they have a fair opportunity in life.

Finally, the UK encourages Member States to commit to raising global ambition across all of the Goals, at the first SDG Summit in September.

Thank you very much.

Lead Commissioner's speech on a positive vision for countering extremism

Good morning everyone. My name is Sara Khan and I am the Lead Commissioner at the Commission for Countering Extremism.

It's great to be here – with a room full of people all committed to challenging extremism.

I'm honoured to be introducing the Home Secretary.

Today is one of the first major public interventions by government since the Counter Extremism Strategy was launched in 2015.

As the Commission's work has shown – and you all know this – we face very different challenges in 2019.

For the last 18 months, I've been discussing extremism...

With communities impacted by it; those working to challenge it and those who are sceptical of the agenda.

I've been sharing what I've heard with the government ahead of our report of my conclusions and recommendations due out in September.

I'm therefore looking forward to the Home Secretary starting to map out a refreshed direction for countering extremism.

If I've learnt one thing from my work over the last 18 months, it's this...

When we talk about 'extremism' we tend focus on what we're against.

I believe we need to start talking about what we stand for as a country and what we are defending.

Let's celebrate that we live in a wonderfully plural, tolerant and open-minded society.

An inclusive society embodied by our incredible and diverse world cup winning cricket team.

Let's be unashamedly patriotic, proud and positive when we're talking about countering extremism.

But I don't want to wait until September to share what I've found with you.

Today we have published academic papers on the Far Right.

Dr Chris Allen from University of Leicester, Dr Joe Mulhall from Hope Not Hate, and Dr Ben Lee from Lancaster University, have written about the modern and changing British Far Right.

From the violent and now proscribed neo-Nazi National Action to those targeting the mainstream with anti-Muslim politics, exploiting the free speech debate and distrust of the media and politicians.

Professor Hilary Pilkington and Dr Ajmal Hussain from Manchester University and experts from the Peace Foundation have brought together young men and women with Islamist and Far Right beliefs to begin a unique dialogue to help counter the extremist narrative

Finally, we have a paper from Dr Daniel Allington, Dr David Hirsh and colleagues, which uses innovative polling to explore the attitudes of the Far Left.

These are all important and powerful contributions.

Today we're also publishing figures from our call for evidence.

We had 3,000 respondents.

Many of you here today kindly shared your views and experience.

The headline is that just over half of respondents had witnessed extremism in some way.

Of these, two fifths reported seeing it in their local area and 45% had seen it online.

That's a shocking number and one I'm relieved government are responding to.

Our findings show extremism isn't confined to one race, one religion or

political ideology.

People are scared that violent extremists will incite or carry out an attack.

People are also deeply worried about the non-violent impact of groups exploiting local tensions to spread hate and division.

There are concerns from women, minorities within minorities and LGBT people... concerned that their right to choose how they live their life, or to talk about what is important to them, has been stripped away by repressive activists and community leaders.

There is a real worry about the intolerance, abuse and polarisation in our public debate and how this is linked to extremism.

The voices of victims of extremism have been missing from traditional counter extremism policy.

I believe we can, and must, do more to address the concerns we have heard.

In 2019 the threat is broad, it's severe and we need to keep up.

Yet we must guard our right to debate and speak our minds.

Our right to be radical.

We are free to protest, to speak truth to power and to be offensive.

This is our amazing – and at times infuriating – democracy.

Making sure it stays that way, is for me, the vital role of counter extremism.

We shouldn't lazily throw around the word 'extremism'. We need to use it with precision and care

We need to develop proportionate, open-minded and fair responses, based on our rule of law and human rights standards.

Leadership is essential in challenging extremism.

The government's 2015 strategy was an important milestone that laid the foundations for vital work.

But as I have made clear to the Home Secretary, there's a real need to update the strategy to keep pace with the nature of the problems in 2019.

Yet in a democracy the state must only have a limited role in countering extremism. We must all play our different parts.

Our new figures show that people expect to see politicians, social media companies, the media, faith and civil society leaders taking on intolerance, harassment and abuse in their own backyards as well as sounding the alarm about hate from outside.

Politicians in particular – whatever party you represent – my message is you all set the standard. And once this bar slips others are emboldened.

Before I finish I want to say thank you to the members of my expert group for their ongoing advice and challenge.

And he would hate this... but I'm going to single out Lord Anderson who is standing down after a year on the group.

I am so grateful for the time he put into the Commission. Few people bring such experience and thoughtfulness to this agenda.

Impartiality is crucial to this Commission.

In the last 18 months I've praised the government when they've made good decisions and I've criticised them when I don't agree with what they'd done.

I want to thank the Home Secretary for his unwavering support for my work and my approach.

But also, for his outspoken commitment to challenging extremism in all forms.

Few politicians have been as consistent and courageous in their approach.

Today he is going to start to set out plans for a new strategy.

I hope this work begins as I did today with a positive vision for the country we love...

I hope it unambiguously makes the case for our right to be radical...

And I hope it doesn't shy away from the breadth and severity of the challenges we face and the need for a proportionate, fair and open-minded response.

It is therefore with huge pleasure that I introduce Sajid Javid, the Home Secretary.