

UK remains a steadfast partner to Lebanon

Minister of State for the Middle East and International Development Dr Andrew Murrison ended a two-day visit to Lebanon, reiterating the UK's long-term commitment to supporting a strong and prosperous Lebanon and announcing over \$41 million towards Lebanese host communities and refugees alike.

Dr Murrison met with President Michel Aoun, Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, MP's and senior business leaders. VIP also visited UK aid funded projects up and down the country supporting Lebanese host communities, with a focus on economy, education, demining, refugees and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

In the Bekaa, Minister Murrison visited an Informal Tented Settlement and saw how tech solutions (Iris scanning) are used to ensure UK aid only goes to those who need it the most to meet their most basic survival needs. He also met Syrian refugee families and heard from them about their living conditions and challenges they face in Lebanon, including how they view the prospect of returning to Syria.

In Tripoli, Minister Murrison met with host communities to see the positive impact UK aid is having on people's lives through the Lebanese Host Communities Support Programme (LHSP) in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNDP. He announced a new \$39 million to LHSP in support of delivering better public services, economic opportunities and promoting social stability to the most vulnerable Lebanese and refugees. He also met with MARCH NGO's youth group in Tripoli who have overcome barriers, transforming from two feuding neighbourhoods to partners working for a better future for their communities.

At the non-formal education centre run by UNICEF, Minister Murrison announced over \$2.5 million of UK aid funding to UNICEF's non-formal education programme. He saw how non formal schooling is delivered to out of school refugee and Lebanese children, and how the UK is working with the international community to ensure a generation of children do not miss out on education.

Continuing his northern visit, Minister Murrison visited the First Land Border Regiment along the Lebanese – Syrian border, which demonstrates the UK's strong support to the Lebanese Armed Forces, Lebanon's sole defenders, to train, mentor and equip the LAF's Land Border Regiments. And securing Lebanon.

Heading South to the village of Toul, he saw how UK aid support to the Global Mine Action programme is making safe over 1.1 million m2 of land, with over 6,500 men, women and children benefitting from mine risk education.

Minister Murrison also met with Syrian analysts to discuss the latest

situation of refugees in Lebanon and Syria.

Speaking at the end of his visit, Minister for the Middle East Andrew Murrison, said:

I am delighted to be on my first official visit to Lebanon as Minister for the Middle East, especially at a time when the UK and Lebanon's bilateral trade relations are growing stronger. The UK remains a steadfast partner of the Government of Lebanon, and supports the need for economic reforms so that Lebanon can fulfil its potential, including through increased trade and investment.

I reiterated the UK's recognition of Lebanon's generosity hosting people fleeing Syria, and got to see how UK aid is supporting both the host communities and refugees.

We have been clear: we want Syrians to return home safely, consistent with international law. The Syrian regime must immediately return to peace talks to end this senseless suffering.

[Small Business Commissioner stands down](#)



November 2019 update

Suzanne Burke, Head of Operations at the Office of the Small Business Commissioner, is currently acting as the Commissioner pending a substantive appointment being made. She will be exercising the Commissioner's functions, including those under the Small Business Complaints Scheme. An open recruitment campaign will begin after the general election.

With Suzanne Burke covering, Fiona Dickie's role in providing support and oversight to the Small Business Commissioner team has come to an end.

The important work of the Small Business Commissioner's Office continues while the process to recruit his replacement gets underway.

Fiona Dickie, the Deputy Pubs Code Adjudicator, will provide oversight in the Small Business Commissioner role until early November, pending the appointment of an interim Commissioner.

An open recruitment campaign to appoint a new Small Business Commissioner will get underway immediately.

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Last updated 22 November 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 22 November 2019 Recruitment postponed until after general election.
2. 11 October 2019 First published.

[DIO awards contract worth £17-million for next phase of work at Bassingbourn Barracks](#)

The MTMC delivers crucial pre-deployment training for approximately 12,500 personnel every year and has recently trained a battlegroup heading out to Afghanistan on Operation Toral. This operation sees British personnel training, advising and assisting their Afghan colleagues and providing protection and security.

The project includes the refurbishment of some of the existing buildings at Bassingbourn Barracks including accommodation blocks, social facilities, offices, classrooms and training areas. The existing medical and dental centres will also be refurbished together with the construction of 2 new training facilities. The work associated with this contract will provide infrastructure that will allow MTMC to train effectively in one location.

The works are part of Project Hercules and follows on from the first phase of work to bring the barracks back into use by the British Army. Project Hercules supports the MOD's continuing optimisation of the defence estate by co-locating capability and enabling the disposal of sites that the military no longer needs.

The first stage of the MTMC move saw its Kent-based elements relocate to Bassingbourn in December 2018. Work to be completed under this contract will allow the relocation of the other elements of MTMC from Chilwell Barracks in the Midlands. It will also allow the MTMC to be fully operational at Bassingbourn, with up to 1,000 staff and troops on site at peak times.

Gillian Naylor, DIO's senior project manager said:

We are pleased to announce the award of this contract to Kier Graham Defence Ltd to refurbish and improve existing facilities at Bassingbourn Barracks to enable the MTMC units to train effectively in one location. This is a great example of how DIO supports our armed forces by providing the places they need to live, work, train and deploy on operations.

Commander MTMC, Colonel Neil Unsworth OBE said:

I am delighted to see the contract award for the next phase of development here in Bassingbourn. The Armed Forces have long and proud linkages with the local community which we have already started to redevelop, and I look forward to seeing the growth of this in line with our development in Bassingbourn.

Mark Dady, Managing Director of Kier Regional Building Eastern, said:

We're extremely proud to continue our working relationship with DIO delivering crucial infrastructure at Bassingbourn Barracks to allow effective pre-deployment training in one location. This project builds on our extensive expertise in the defence sector, where we are currently on-site delivering new infrastructure to ready MOD Lyneham for the move of 5 Battalion REME as part of the Army Basing Programme.

Work is expected to start this month and complete in summer 2021.

[Godalming flood alleviation scheme is officially unveiled](#)

Properties in Godalming will be better protected from flooding thanks to a brand new flood alleviation scheme. The construction of the scheme cost approximately £4.5 million and the Environment Agency contributed approximately a third of the cost, through government grant-in-aid.

Godalming flood alleviation scheme, which will protect 90 properties, was officially unveiled today, Friday 11 October 2019, by the chair of the Environment Agency, Emma Howard Boyd, and South West Surrey MP Jeremy Hunt.

A 525-metre flood wall has been built along the banks of the Hell's Ditch to reduce flooding in the Meadow and Catteshall area. The new defence is built to withstand a flood with a 0.5% probability of one occurring in any year,

plus a provision for climate change. This is part of the Environment Agency's long-term approach to be better prepared for the increased level of risk that climate change will bring.

Godalming has a history of flooding, with 4 notable events in 1968, 1990, 2000 and 2013. During the most recent 2013 flood, Meadow and Catteshall Road area were flooded, with access from Meadow to Godalming severely restricted.

A removable flood barrier will complete the defence across Catteshall Road, put up only when flooding is predicted and the road needs to be closed. Two pumping stations have also been installed to pump out a combined total of 84 litres per second. The pumps catch water fed by the surface water drainage system and ground water and will pump water back to Hell's Ditch during times of high river levels.

The opening ceremony saw Environment Agency officers demonstrate the removable flood barrier on Catteshall Bridge. This flood barrier is customised for the scheme and can be put up quickly to stop flood water flowing from Lammas Land towards Meadow.

Emma Howard Boyd, the Environment Agency's chair, said:

This innovative flood scheme project is an example of how partnership working at all levels can achieve fantastic results. As the impacts of the climate emergency become more apparent, making communities like Godalming more resilient is the Environment Agency's top priority and builds on the Government's £2.6 billion investment in flood and coastal defences up and down the country.

The scheme has been developed as a partnership project between the Environment Agency, Surrey County Council, Waverley Borough Council, Godalming Town Council, Thames Water, Scottish and Southern Electricity and the local Godalming Flood Group supported by Jeremy Hunt MP.

In addition to building and maintaining flood defences the Environment Agency also runs a free flood warning service. You can sign up for free flood warnings on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) or you can call Floodline free on 0345 988 1188.

Godalming flood alleviation scheme is officially unveiled

Some 90 properties to benefit from greater protection from flooding.