

FCO Minister Wheeler visit to Fiji and the Pacific Island Forum

FCO Minister for Asia and the Pacific, Heather Wheeler, has chosen Fiji and the Pacific Island Forum, in Tuvalu, for her first official overseas visit since being appointed in the role.

Beginning in Fiji today (12 August), Minister Wheeler will be shown the impacts of climate change in the region and the visit some of the innovative projects that the UK and Fiji are pioneering to respond to these challenges.

While in Fiji, the Minister will also meet the Acting Prime Minister of Fiji, visit the Royal British Legion, tour the Makoi Women's Vocational Training Centre and speak at The University of the South Pacific.

Speaking ahead of her visit, the Minister for Asia and the Pacific Heather Wheeler said:

I am delighted to be travelling to the Pacific region for my first overseas visit as an FCO Minister. I am looking forward to discussions on the impacts of climate change in the region, and to deepen our already strong bilateral partnerships with Pacific Island Countries, many of whom are members of the Commonwealth.

As part of the UK's recently launched Pacific Uplift Strategy, I am keen to hear direct from Pacific Island leaders about the challenges facing Pacific Island Countries and seek opportunities to work together at the Pacific Island Forum and beyond, to deliver on our shared objectives.

On Wednesday (14 August) Minister Wheeler will travel to Tuvalu to attend the Pacific Island Forum and meet Pacific Island leaders to discuss a number of important global issues, such as better cooperation on climate change and the ocean, and on upholding the rules-based international system.

As part of the Pacific Uplift Strategy, the UK is increasing engagement in the Pacific region, which will see the diplomatic network doubled. UK representation in the Pacific will exceed that of any other European state by 2019. On 23 July the UK opened the first of three new British High Commissions, in Vanuatu. UK representation in Tonga and Samoa are planned to open later this year.

World Elephant Day: UK gives a helping hand to iconic mammals

A major UK Government-supported project has helped over 70,000 people and hundreds of elephants live side-by-side peacefully in Myanmar.

The Asian elephant's habitat ranges across 13 countries in Asia, but it is an endangered species with less than 40,000 remaining worldwide – less than one-tenth of the African elephant population.

In Myanmar, increased deforestation has resulted in wild Asian elephant numbers dropping from 10,000 in the 1960s to under 2,000 by 2004.

The UK is a global leader on the protection of elephants having introduced one of the world's toughest ivory sales bans last year.

Furthermore, UK aid funding from the Darwin Initiative has been critical in establishing a partnership project called 'Integrating biodiversity & elephants into peace & development'. Conservation group Elephant Family, together with partner organisations Wildlife Conservation Society, Compass Films and Grow Back for Posterity, are behind the scheme.

The coexistence programme is aiming to reach 12,000 families, which will make a difference to lives and livelihoods through education, poverty reduction and providing space for elephants through land-use changes, which is contributing to achieving the Global Goals.

Speaking on World Elephant Day (12 August), International Environment Minister Zac Goldsmith said:

World Elephant Day is a chance to celebrate the brilliant individuals and organisations around the globe who are dedicated to protecting this iconic species for future generations.

I am delighted to see the successes of Elephant Family's project to protect Asian elephants in Myanmar.

The Darwin Initiative is critical in supporting this type of international conservation project, and for ensuring local communities are central to conservation initiatives.

Myanmar still has the largest tract of intact elephant habitat in Asia and could support a larger number of wild elephants than the current estimated population of 2,000.

Projected growth of the human population in Myanmar is likely to increase pressure on elephants living in the natural environment because of habitat loss. The scheme from Elephant Family and partners works through educating

school children and also having a programme to inform local communities about land management.

Elephants have huge cultural and historical importance but, as a so-called 'keystone species', they also play a central ecological role in maintaining the biodiversity of the ecosystems in which they live.

Now in its third year, the project has been successful in facilitating forest and biodiversity protection. Through practical support, over 43,000 local people across 63 villages have been empowered about sustainable land-use management – helping tackle poverty alleviation through supporting the foundation of local livelihoods – through land tenure and ownership.

The project is working in communities located in south-central areas of Sagaing, Ayeywarwady, Bago, Mandalay and the south-eastern region of Tanintharyi.

Belinda Stewart-Cox, OBE, Elephant Family Trustee, said:

Through education, this project has promoted a better understanding of elephants, what causes conflict with people and how best to avoid it.

It's a highly practical project, aimed at every age group in communities that either do, or may soon experience conflict with elephants. It is also teaching communities how to map their land and manage it more sustainably.

Village representatives, schools and authorities across 190 villages have been trained in how to peacefully co-exist and value elephants – reaching over 12,000 families, and helping safeguard their livelihoods without harming elephants.

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

Projects like this 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.

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

Government doubles funding for on-street electric car charging

- Transport Secretary announces extra £2.5 million for chargepoints on residential streets
- extra funding means people who don't have their own off-street parking will have better access to charging infrastructure near home
- investment in charging infrastructure will support UK's move towards net zero emissions by 2050 and efforts to further improve air quality

Owning and charging an electric vehicle is set to become more convenient than ever thanks to an additional £2.5 million to fund the installation of over 1,000 new chargepoints, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced today (Monday 12 August 2019).

The funding will support the [on-street residential chargepoint scheme](#), launched in 2017, which helps people access charging infrastructure near their homes when they don't have off-street parking. It will go towards helping local authorities to install these chargepoints, which can be built into existing structures like lamp-posts. The scheme aims to encourage even more people to choose an electric vehicle by making it easier to charge their cars near home, following a 158% increase in battery electric vehicle sales compared to July last year.

The scheme has already seen 16 local authorities prepared to install 1,200 chargepoints this year. The Transport Secretary is now doubling funding for the popular scheme to meet demand and accelerate the take-up of electric vehicles as the UK moves towards net zero emissions by 2050 and further improve air quality.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

It's fantastic that there are now more than 20,000 publicly accessible chargepoints and double the number of electric vehicle chargepoints than petrol stations, but we want to do much more.

It's vital that electric vehicle drivers feel confident about the availability of chargepoints near their homes, and that charging an electric car is seen as easy as plugging in a smartphone.

That's why we are now doubling the funding available for local authorities to continue building the infrastructure we need to super-charge the zero emission revolution – right across the country.

The allocation of funding for on-street residential chargepoints is part of the £1.5 billion investment underpinned by the [Road to Zero Strategy](#). The

strategy consists of one of the most comprehensive packages of support for the transition to zero emission vehicles in the world, supporting the move towards a cleaner, greener, accessible and reliable UK transport network.

As part of this, the government is also investing £37 million into British engineering to develop electric chargepoint infrastructure that could rapidly expand the UK chargepoint network for people without off-street parking and put the UK on the map as the best place in the world to own an electric vehicle.

Innovations to receive investment include underground charging systems, solar powered charging forecourts and wireless charging projects. Much like current mobile phone technology, wireless charging could mean an end to needing to plug your electric vehicle in.

Press release: World Elephant Day: UK gives a helping hand to iconic mammals

UK Government funding is successfully supporting the protection of elephants – helping local livelihoods, ecosystem function and global biodiversity

A truly global future awaits us after Brexit: Dominic Raab

As we strive for a better deal with the EU, we need to view that relationship in the context of our wider vision for the UK after Brexit. Fifteen years ago, when I was posted as a Foreign Office lawyer to The Hague, I remember my counterparts from Japan, Australia, South Korea and Brazil lamenting the introverted perspective of the EU and the UK – at the expense of the rest of the world.

It was a salutary warning. Today, the UK wants a strong relationship with our European partners. But Brussels isn't the only game in town. It's time we broadened our horizons, and my first visits as Foreign Secretary – to the US, Canada, Thailand and Mexico – have shone a light on the opportunities for a truly global Britain.

In the US, President Trump told me how much America values its close friendship with Britain, his high regard for our Prime Minister, and his enthusiasm for a free trade deal with the UK. How serious are they? After our

meeting, secretary of state Mike Pompeo told reporters that the US was poised “at the doorstep, pen in hand”, ready to sign a deal – which would boost business and enhance consumer choice on both sides of the Atlantic.

I also met vice president Mike Pence and national security adviser John Bolton, reflecting the fact that our relationship goes far beyond trade. Crucially, we work together to defend our shared values and to respond to security threats – whether by protecting international shipping from the menace of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard or striving to secure North Korea’s denuclearisation.

Few countries have been a better friend than Canada, which I visited earlier in the week. I spoke to business representatives, who committed to investing more in the UK, and discussed with Canadian foreign minister Chrystia Freeland the need for a smooth transition on our trade as we leave the EU.

Our vision for global Britain also involves promoting values. Ms Freeland and I pledged to work together to protect media freedoms globally. I heard about Canada’s experience of adopting a Magnitsky Act to impose visa bans and asset freezes on those responsible for gross human rights abuses. Once we’ve left the EU and regained control of our own sanctions rules, this government will implement the “Magnitsky” provisions of the UK Sanctions Act. That means human rights abusers anywhere in the world will face consequences for their actions, with any assets they hold in the UK frozen and a ban on travelling here. We will ensure that global Britain is not a safe haven for those who profit from torturing others.

Beyond old friends, we must deepen our ties with the world’s growth markets – from Asia to Latin America. So last week, I was delighted to take up an invitation from the Association of South-East Asian Nations to attend their meeting of foreign ministers in Bangkok. In fewer than 20 years, the total GDP of the ten nations in this club has expanded almost sixfold to nearly \$3 trillion today. Scarcely anywhere in the world could match this rate of growth. Now is the time to bolster our commitment to the Asia-Pacific region, develop stronger trade, and work together to ensure the stability that allows us all to prosper.

The final leg of my trip again reflects the opportunities of the future. Mexico has a population of 126 million and an economy of over \$1.2 trillion. UK exports to Mexico totalled £2.3 billion in 2017, up 18 per cent in one year. Red London buses, built by a Scottish manufacturer, now ride along Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico City.

But we can do better in Latin America. Here’s one example. Two thirds of Mexicans have no bank accounts – but half of them have a smartphone. That’s a great opportunity for innovative British businesses. With a bright future outside the EU, we will help Mexican firms trade more freely with the UK.

Wherever I travel, I take the Prime Minister’s message of optimism. We will remain strong European partners. But there is a wider world out there for us to re-discover. By the end of my first fortnight as Foreign Secretary, I have met the foreign ministers of 22 countries across the world. I am struck by

how much they want to strengthen their ties with us. They too see the great benefits offered by Brexit to deepen our partnerships around the world.

Together there is more that we can and will do to enhance global prosperity and stability and defend our shared values of freedom, democracy and tolerance. So, let's raise our game, rediscover our national self-confidence, and grasp the tremendous opportunities that lie ahead.

Further information