

Press release: Minister for Human Rights visits the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel

I have just returned from my first official visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) and Israel.

I was pleased to meet Palestinians in East Jerusalem, Hebron, and Abu Nuwar Bedouin Community in Area C of the West Bank. I heard from human rights defenders about the impact of Israel's occupation and saw the assistance that UK aid is providing to some of the most vulnerable in Palestinian society. I had a positive first meeting with Prime Minister Hamdallah to discuss these issues, the situation in Gaza and reaffirm the UK's commitment to strengthening the UK-Palestinian Authority relationship. In my role as Minister for Human Rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, I met with the Palestinian Minister for Religious Affairs Youssef Ideiss, and hosted an interfaith roundtable.

In Israel, I was humbled to attend the State Opening Ceremony for Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day at Yad Vashem. I had constructive meetings with Israeli ministers Tzachi Hanegbi and Ayelet Shaked, re-affirming the UK's commitment to our bilateral relationship with Israel, and raising our human rights concerns relating to the occupation, including the issue of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention. I also met with Israeli companies working on counter terrorism technologies, to discuss what more we can do together to prevent terrorist use of the internet.

I remain deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza, and in particular by the high number of Palestinian deaths in recent weeks. With the Palestinian leadership I reaffirmed the right of the Gazan people, as indeed all peoples, to protest peacefully. It is important to understand the role Hamas continues to play in fomenting the violence. The UK recognises that Israel has the right to protect its borders against Hamas and other terrorist groups but as I said to Israeli Ministers, they must show restraint and consider carefully its use of force in response to future protests.

In my engagement with both Israelis and Palestinians I stressed the importance of addressing the underlying causes of the economic and humanitarian situation, and in particular to improve movement and access for people and goods.

My visit illustrated the urgent need for progress towards a two-state solution, so that Israelis and Palestinians can finally live with the peace and dignity they deserve.

News story: 2018 Clinical Excellence Awards round closed

The 2018 National Clinical Excellence Awards round closed at 5pm on Thursday 12 April 2018.

ACCEA will review and score all applications and announce results at the end of the year.

New awards will be backdated to 1 April 2018. Renewals will be renewed from 1 April 2019. Unsuccessful renewals will cease on 31 March 2019.

As in previous years, we will publish personal statements for successful applications.

Press release: Emergency humanitarian UK aid package to DRC as violence escalates

Harriett Baldwin visits a camp for displaced people in the DRC. Photo: Connie Fisher

During a visit to a camp for displaced families in Kalemie in the DRC, Africa minister Harriett Baldwin denounced recent escalations in violence across the east of the country and announced an emergency package of UK aid support which will provide additional lifesaving food, water and medical care to hundreds of thousands more people in desperate need.

This includes:

- giving over 390,000 more people access to clean drinking water
- providing over 85,000 more people with food or assistance to meet urgent food and other basic needs
- reaching over 38,000 more children suffering from malnutrition with vital nutrition support
- providing essential medical care to over 240,000 more people, including drugs for pregnant mothers

The UK recognised the crisis early and the Department for International Development (DFID) was one of the first donors to step up support.

The minister also called on the international community to increase support

urgently for the country, announcing this humanitarian package as leaders from the international community are set to gather in Geneva today (Friday 13 April) for a UN pledging conference for the DRC.

Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

I have seen for myself the devastating impact of this terrible crisis – but UK aid is already on the ground and with today's emergency package, we are providing a vital lifeline for more desperate mothers and their starving children who have been forced to flee their homes.

This is a major humanitarian crisis and I have pressed for the DRC to fully recognise the scale of suffering, and cooperate with international efforts to help the millions of Congolese people affected. It is important that international partners also urgently step up their support.

The DRC has huge potential to be a prosperous nation, but it's vital we work now to establish the political stability which will create the foundations for future growth and a safer and brighter future for all Congolese people. Key to this will be credible, constitutional and inclusive elections in December 2018.

DFID's humanitarian response is already reaching over three million people across the country with lifesaving aid.

During her visit minister Baldwin asked to meet with President Kabila. She met with representatives from across government, including opposition candidates and the DRC's electoral commission (CENI), to stress the vital importance of the DRC holding credible, constitutional and inclusive elections by the end of this year, to help tackle some of the root causes of violence and suffering in DRC.

[News story: New regulations to double the use of sustainable renewable fuels by 2020](#)

Tough new biofuel targets coming into force on Sunday (15 April 2018) will double the use of renewable fuels in the UK transport sector within 15 years, cutting the sector's reliance on imported diesel.

Changes to the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) will compel owners

of transport fuel who supply at least 450,000 litres a year or more, to make sure the mix is at least 12.4% biofuel by 2032.

Currently the industry, which supplies fuel to transport companies such as haulage firms and airlines, is only expected to meet a target of 4.75% biofuel.

The government is also challenging the sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 6% by 2020 – which coupled with the RTFO changes will support the UK's low carbon fuel industry while helping make sure the UK transport sector is one of the most sustainable in the world.

Transport Minister Jesse Norman said:

We are committed to reducing carbon emissions from transport to tackle climate change, and to making the sector as sustainable as possible. Increasing our use of renewable fuels is a key part of this.

The changes we are introducing will double our carbon emissions savings from the RTFO scheme by doubling the use of renewable fuels and reducing reliance on imported fossil diesel.

This will deliver emissions savings equal to taking hundreds of thousands of cars off the road.

The changes to the RTFO scheme announced today will also, for the first time, reward and support the production of sustainable renewable aviation fuels in the UK.

Willie Walsh, chief executive of the International Airline Group, said:

Providing sustainable fuel production for aircraft with the same economic incentives given to road vehicles is long overdue. This is a major step forward to help the UK aviation industry meet its carbon reduction targets.

These incentives have enabled alternative fuel sources to be developed for cars and lorries, while aviation has traditionally been heavily dependent on fossil fuels. This government initiative will support our plans to build Europe's first waste to jet biofuel plant in Britain, creating UK jobs and growth".

The key changes to the scheme are:

- increasing the biofuels volume target from the current 4.75% to 9.75% in 2020, and 12.4% in 2032
- setting an additional target for advanced waste-based renewable fuels, starting at 0.1% in 2019 and rising to 2.8% in 2032

- setting a sustainable level for crop biofuels, an initial maximum cap of 4% of fuel in 2018, reducing annually from 2021 to reach 3% in 2026 and 2% in 2032
- bringing renewable aviation fuels and renewable fuels of non-biological origin into the scheme.

Nina Skorupska, chief executive of the Renewable Energy Association, said:

We welcome the increased targets for renewable transport fuels and are excited by the new regulations which will encourage the production of novel fuels for hard-to-decarbonise sectors.

The UK's renewable fuels have excellent environmental credentials and their manufacture supports almost 1,000 direct jobs, many of which are in the north-east. As transport is now the UK's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and air quality concerns are growing, this makes the transition to a cleaner system an imperative.

The majority of the biofuel used in the UK comes from waste. By introducing new targets, the RTFO promotes the development of cutting edge technologies to turn waste into valuable low carbon fuels.

The changes are in addition to the £22 million of government funding available to industry to develop waste-based advanced low carbon fuels in the UK for aviation and freight.

The new RTFO will contribute a third of the total savings from transport for the UK's carbon budget.

[Press release: GPS wristband for surfers among winning ideas from young space entrepreneurs](#)

A group of school children from Cornwall and a student from Wiltshire have won a competition for ideas on how satellites could improve life on Earth, Science Minister Sam Gyimah announced today (Friday 13 April).

Ellie Jones, Jessica Knight, both 15, Summer Jeffery and Emily Haddrell, both 14, from Truro, scooped £7,500 for the best group entry in the UK Space Agency competition with their Surf Safe concept. Ieuan Higgs, from Chippenham, received £7,500 for the best individual entry for his Infrastructure Planning and Development Analysis Tool.

The SatelLife Challenge supports the development of science, data handling and technological skills, complementing the Government's Year of Engineering campaign which is championing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics to the next generation.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

"The UK leads the world in building satellites and we want to encourage young people like those entering this competition to get involved in every part of our thriving space sector.

"The creative use of data from space can solve many challenges and help establish successful businesses. It's a vital part of the Government's Industrial Strategy to back the entrepreneurs of tomorrow as we build an economy that's fit for the future."

Ellie, Jessica, Summer and Emily's idea was for a wristband that uses satellite location data and communications services to identify the locations of swimmers and surfers in the sea.

Ellie Jones said:

"It was so exciting, finding out about the competition. We had never done anything at all like this before. As students living in Cornwall, the sea has always been important to us and from the very start we knew we wanted to do something involving the beach. It was such a surprise to find out we had won and every one was so happy when we got the email, for a long time, it didn't seem real.

"This whole experience has been amazing, we really enjoyed having the opportunity to do something like this. It has definitely given us the confidence to pursue STEM careers moving forwards."

When combined with tidal and rip tide data, this could provide real time tracking and identification of people approaching known danger areas, and provide coast guards or the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) with potentially life-saving information.

Jon Oxenham, RNLI's Community Safety Manager, said:

"It's great to see young people thinking about water safety and creating new ideas which could save lives at sea. At the RNLI we are always trying to find new ways to save lives through innovation, data analysis, and new technology."

Ieuan Higgs' winning idea was for a tool that would map change in urban areas using satellites and algorithms, identifying where building is taking place and potential sites for development.

Ieuan, who is studying Computer Science at the University of Reading, said:

"I thought it would be an exciting opportunity to do a project on a topic I am very passionate about. I came up with my idea after combining my knowledge

of current space technology with my areas of interest in Computer Science – using both to form a realistic business solution I thought would be both useful and achievable. It came as a massive shock to see that I was one of the winners, but it was certainly a welcome one! This unexpected result has given me the confidence to continue researching and working on my ideas in my spare time.”

The competition is split into three age groups: 11 – 16; 16 – 18; 18 – 22, and a further seven entries from across the age categories were awarded £5,000. The judging panel was made up of experts from the UK Space Agency, the European Space Agency, the Satellite Applications Catapult in Harwell and industry.

All nine winning entries will be able to pitch their ideas to a panel of ‘dragons’ from the space sector. In 2017 the competition winners were offered a mix of support including an offer to build a prototype, thousands of pounds worth of space on Amazon Cloud Services, access to data, business development advice and a visit to a satellite factory.

With one in four of all telecoms satellites already built substantially in Britain, the government’s Industrial Strategy includes plans to work with the industry to grow the space sector and establish commercial space launch services from the UK for the first time.

Today’s announcement follows the news that Oxfordshire-based firm [Reaction Engines has secured a further £26.5 million](#) to support the development of SABRE™ – a revolutionary new class of aerospace engine combining jet and rocket technologies. The new strategic investors are Boeing HorizonX Ventures, the investment arm of the world’s largest aerospace company Boeing; and Rolls-Royce, which has been at the forefront of British engineering for over a century.

Full list of winners:

Ieuan Higgs, 20, from Chippenham, Wiltshire (Best individual project)

Infrastructure Planning and Development Analysis Tool: This tool would map change in urban areas using satellites – it would identify where building has or is taking place and areas where there is potential for development or where an area is becoming run-down. This change detection would use algorithms rather than be totally manual.

Ellie Jones, 15, Jessica Knight, 15, Summer Jeffery, 14, and Emily Haddrell, 14, from Truro, Cornwall (Best group project)

Surf Safe: This concept is for a wrist band that uses satellite location data and communications services to identify the locations of swimmers, surfers and other people just off the shoreline in the sea, which could be combined with tidal and rip tide data, to provide real time tracking and identification of people getting close to known danger areas. This could be used by coast guards, RLNI and other rescue agencies in the event of an

incident.

Kari Lawler, 15, from Castle Bromwich, Solihull

Capturing Earth's changes: An application that uses Machine Learning Deep Artificial Neural Network to regularly ingest and analyse Earth Observation data to learn what the Earth looks like, and detect changes and patterns across the globe. The application would also be able to identify the causes of natural disasters through providing details of historical events, to help with preparation and prevention in the future.

Dylan Todd, 17, from Totnes, Devon

Measuring LED usage: This idea would use a spectrometer from space to identify whether light from the Earth is emitted from LEDs or from standard lights. This is important because LEDs are better for the environment as they are more energy efficient and progress in this area is of interest to environmentalists and the scientific community as well as local authorities and governments.

Ben Schofield, 21, Thomas Green, 19 and George Nightingale, 19, from the University of Sheffield

Automated Person Detection: This idea uses drones for search and rescue. This is currently a military capability but the team showed how it could be used in a civilian capacity to identify life and deliver aid. They propose using machine learning to improve the ability of the drones to spot life.

Jasmine Hurley, 16, Jack Whinnom, 17, Megan Goss, 17, Kieron Robson, 17 and Matthew Jones, 17 from Bedlington, Northumberland

Displaced Person Aid: This idea looks at people who are internally displaced and how satellites can help meet their needs rather than those who are refugees. One opportunity for its use would be when there is a natural disaster such as a hurricane where it could provide information in advance for people who would need to move out of the way of the storm.

Thomas Franchi, 20, Christopher Law, 19, and Hammad Jeilani, 20 from London

MEDrone: This idea uses satellites and drones to help people in isolated areas who cannot access basic health care such as vaccines, birth control or medicine. This would use satellite data to find a remote region, then a drone to gather terrain data from the air, sending the information back via satellite. The drone would then land and allow people to use Skype to talk to health professionals. The drones could also transport swabs or samples and medicine.

Ella Richards, Eleanor Champion and Maddie Harvey, all aged 13,

from Truro, Cornwall,

Illness Tracker: This app aimed to map and model the spread of infectious disease. This would not only help individuals who wanted to avoid illness, but also health authorities in getting medication to the right place. It would use the GPS elements of satellites and comms for remote locations.

Tek Kan Chung, 18, from the University of Cambridge

Satellite Imagery for Traffic Management: This idea used satellites to identify traffic areas of problems and re-route people. The idea would use real time data, and then use pace cars to control traffic and reduce phantom traffic jams.