

News story: New Royal Navy operations hub opens in Gulf

Prince Andrew Duke of York meets UK personnel at the opening of the United Kingdom Naval Support Facility at Mina Salman port in Bahrain today. Crown copyright

The Naval Support Facility will play a central role in the UK's ability to operate in the region, and will be the hub of the Royal Navy's operations in the Gulf, Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

Gavin Williamson Defence Secretary said:

Our Armed Forces are the face of Global Britain and our presence in Bahrain will play a vital role in keeping Britain safe as well as underpinning security in the Gulf.

Britain is a major player on the world stage and this new Naval Support Facility will help us tackle the growing threats to our nation wherever they are across the globe and protecting our way of life.

The facility will provide an enduring, self-sufficient operating base capable of meeting the needs of any British warship operating in the region including Britain's new aircraft carriers future flagships HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales. It will be home to just over 300 British military personnel and supporting civilians, and accommodates up to nearly 550 for short periods. The facility will also provide a key strategic base east of Suez for Britain, its allies and coalition partners.

The ceremony was attended by General Sir Chris Deverell Commander of the UK's Joint Forces Command, Commodore Steve Dainton United Kingdom Maritime Component Commander (UKMCC) and Prince Andrew Duke of York as well as HRH Crown Prince Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa and Field Marshal Khalifa Bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Commander in Chief of the Bahrain Defence Force.

Speaking at Mina Salman port, General Sir Chris Deverell Commander Joint Forces Command said:

With the opening of this base, the UK's presence in Bahrain and the wider Gulf is guaranteed into the future, ensuring Britain's sustained deployment east of Suez. In meeting HRH Crown Prince Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa today, I thanked him for the continued support from Bahrain which enables us to operate in the Gulf region.

Bahrain is longstanding British ally and both countries work closely across diplomatic, economic and security matters. What happens in the Gulf region has a direct impact on the national security of the United Kingdom, our prosperity and the safety of our citizens. It is vital that we work with close allies like Bahrain to tackle regional threats such as that posed by Daesh.

Transparency data: Deployment of oyster trestles to the west of Whitstable Harbour

In late 2016 the MMO was contacted by members of the public reporting concerns relating to the deployment of oyster trestles to the west of Whitstable Harbour.

Whilst it was understood that the Whitstable Oyster Fishery Company (WOFC) have deployed Oyster trestles in this location since 2009 the concerns were that the footprint and number of trestles had increased, over a relatively short period of time, in an area also used by swimmers, sailors and navigators.

In February 2017, in response to questions from members of the public the MMO [agreed to work with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Trinity House](#) to assess how oyster racks in the area may affect local navigation and safety.

Following an initial investigation by the MMO into the concerns raised, in July 2017, [independent experts commissioned by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency produced a report](#) looking at navigational risks in relation to oyster farm activity in the Whitstable area.

The report concluded that the farm's operations are acceptable as a low risk to marine navigation. It also recommended mitigation to reduce the risk even further, although acknowledging that the farm's owners have already adopted this in some instances.

[The MMO provided a further update on its investigation in February 2018](#) clarifying that after careful consideration it had concluded there was insufficient evidence to prove a criminal offence in relation to its remit under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. This update went on to explain that the MMO considered the oyster farm's activities met the requirements of the exemption relating to shellfish propagation and cultivation under the Marine Licensing (Exempted Activities) Order 2011 as amended (Article 13).

In March 2018, the MMO received further contact from members of the public alleging the deployment of additional oyster trestles which they felt

increased the risk to swimmers, sailors and navigators. Additional concerns also related to the propagation of non-native oysters.

The MMO can clarify that if the applicant seeks to expand the current site in future, it is likely that contact will need to be made with the MMO in order to ascertain whether a marine licence, or an additional exemption notification form, is required and the applicant has been advised accordingly. Any application for a marine licence would be consulted upon through the usual process and any notification in relation to an exemption will be placed on the public register.

The MMO is continuing to monitor the development and inspections are on-going.

Relevant marine licensing legislation

The deposit of an object or substance from a vehicle, vessel, aircraft or marine structure and or the construction of works in the UK marine area is a licensable activity under part 4 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act (MACAA) although the Marine Licensing (exempted activities) Order 2011 (as amended) ("the amended order") provides a number of exemptions removing the requirement to obtain a marine licence for some low risk activities where certain conditions are met.

In particular exemption 13 of the amended order covers the deposit and removal of any shellfish, trestle, cage, pole, rope, marker or line in the course of propagation and cultivation of shellfish when certain conditions are met.

Further information relating to exemptions can be found on the [marine licence exempted activities page](#).

Applicants are required to satisfy themselves that their proposed activities meet the terms of any exemption they intend to rely on. In the event that it is subsequently determined that an activity undertaken was not consistent with the activity described or not in accordance with the conditions contained in the relevant exemption, then enforcement action may be taken.

Propagation of non-native shellfish

The MMO understands that WOFC has obtained approval from [Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science \(Cefas\)](#) for the propagation of non-native oysters. As the regulator responsible for propagation and cultivation of non-native species of shellfish, any queries and/or concerns about this specific matter should be directed to Cefas in the first instance.

News story: Crescent Moon Visibility for Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr 2018

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News story: Civil news: CLA market engagement

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) will shortly be inviting tenders to award new Civil Legal Advice (CLA) specialist telephone advice contracts in the discrimination category of law.

CLA provides access to legally aided advice in specified categories of law, including discrimination, for eligible individuals. Most CLA advice is delivered by telephone but in some instances face to face advice may be provided.

The procurement process for CLA discrimination contracts is expected to open in late April, with services under new contracts commencing on 1 September 2018.

Before beginning the tender process, LAA is holding a market engagement event for organisations that may be interested in tendering for this service.

At the event LAA will provide information on:

- the tender process for CLA discrimination contracts
- the CLA service and contract
- the changes we intend to make to how CLA discrimination services currently operate

We will welcome feedback from attendees and will answer questions organisations may have. The market engagement event will be delivered via a web hosted event at 11 am on 16 April. We expect the session to last approximately 1 hour.

Organisations wishing to attend must register by 12 noon on Friday 13 April 2018 to secure their place.

[Register online](#) for LAA market engagement event.

Should a large number of applicants be interested in attending we may need to limit the number per organisation and/or representatives from prospective bidding organisations will be prioritised over third party consultants.

For those who cannot attend this event, information will be published on LAA's tender pages shortly afterwards.

Further information

Questions or requests to attend should be sent to civil.contracts@justice.gov.uk.

News story: Jo Johnson: unprecedented new powers for Transport for the North are 'crucial next step'

- Rail Minister attends first Transport for the North Partnership Board in Liverpool
- TfN now hold powers to drive forward long-term strategic transport projects and have proposals considered by government
- Rail Minister will also visit Liverpool Lime Street to see progress on delivering the Great North Rail Project worth well over £1 billion

Jo Johnson is encouraging the north to speak with one 'strong, unified voice' after meeting leaders from across the region in Liverpool today (5 April 2018) to discuss the unprecedented new powers of Transport for the North (TfN).

The Rail Minister called upon northern leaders to drive forward vital transport projects such as Northern Powerhouse Rail after he attended the first meeting [since TfN was legally established as England's first sub-national transport body](#) – backed by £260 million of government funding.

Rail Minister Jo Johnson said:

Between 2015 and 2020 the government will have spent over £13 billion – more than any other in history – to transform northern transport, boosting economic growth and unlocking the incredible potential of the great towns and cities of the north.

Establishing Transport for the North is a crucial next step in giving the north greater influence than ever over transport investment. It is imperative that the north now speaks with a strong, unified voice to identify where we can work together to transform journeys for people.

The fantastic progress on upgrades to Liverpool Lime Street, which will enable more trains every hour and direct services to Scotland, demonstrates our unwavering commitment to delivering the transport links the north needs.

With significant new powers to drive forward transformative projects like Northern Powerhouse Rail and smart ticketing, I am confident that TfN will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of northern transport.

[Transport for the North promotional video](#)

During his visit to Liverpool Lime Street, Jo Johnson met with Network Rail staff delivering major upgrades to platforms and signalling at the great Victorian station, as part of the Great North Rail Project.

With work to deliver an extra platform to be completed this summer, the upgrade will enable 3 new services per hour in and out of Lime Street.

Patrick Cawley, director of route sponsorship at Network Rail, said:

Our major transformation of Liverpool Lime Street is a key part of the Great North Rail Project, and it will be fantastic to show Rail Minister Jo Johnson what we've done so far and what work is currently being delivered while the station remains open.

Once complete in October this year, passengers will see completely remodelled platforms and 2 brand new platforms, increasing the total number to 10.

Longer, better managed platforms will accommodate longer trains, helping provide more space and seats for passengers. This is vital ahead of the significant increase in passengers expected in the coming years.