

Press release: Highways England's intelligent network of the future

In a vision of the future outlined today the government company said an intelligent network coupled with connected vehicles would improve how efficiently roads are maintained and at the same time improve safety. In another development drones could also be used to fly overhead and report back on incidents, improving response times.

In its [Strategic Road Network Initial Report](#), published today (13 December 2017), the company says technology will play an increasingly major role in keeping people moving, and the country connected.

It also stresses the importance of keeping existing roads properly maintained, and that it does so in a way which minimises disruption to road users and local communities. The report will be used to inform the government's next road investment strategy which begins in 2020.

Highways England Chief Executive, Jim O'Sullivan, said:

We are delivering a record £15 billion of government investment to give people safe, efficient and reliable journeys, and provide businesses with the links they need to prosper and grow.

Because people's journeys are important to us we are setting out our high level aspirations which will help ensure the network continues to drive economic growth, jobs and prosperity, and keeps traffic moving today, and into the future.

We encourage people to read our report and feedback through the Department for Transport's consultation, which is also launched today.

Since it was created in 2015, Highways England has completed 18 major road improvements and has a further 15 currently in construction.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

This government is making people's journeys better, faster and safer to give people better access to jobs, schools and their community.

We are planning to spend more than ever before to upgrade England's motorways and major A roads from 2020 through to 2025.

The Initial Report outlines eight aspirations for the next road period:

- focus on operations, maintenance and renewals
- build the smart motorway spine of the network
- roll out expressways
- undertake transformational investments
- deliver a balanced programme
- renew focus on small schemes
- deliver through refined designated funds
- prepare for the future

The Department for Transport has also today launched its consultation, into Highways England's Initial Report. Their consultation will run until Wednesday, 7 February 2018.

The results of it will be used by the department to help develop the next Road Investment Strategy which the government is expected to publish in 2019. It is then that detail on specific road projects will be outlined.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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Speech: “Today’s conditions in the Rakhine state do not yet allow for the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of refugees to their homes”

Thank you Mr President.

And I’d like to begin by thanking our briefers, and if I might particularly say to Special Representative Patten what a profound and incredibly moving testimony you have given this Council. And your final words that inaction must not be allowed to take place is vital for us all. I think you’ve brought to life a truly horrifying picture, so I commend you for that.

And I’d like to thank Undersecretary-General Feltman for his update on the situation one month after this Council adopted an important Presidential Statement, which included calls for an end to the violence, a safe returns process, humanitarian access, and for the root causes of the crisis to be addressed. I am grateful to you for your continued engagement on this crisis. It is vital that the UN continues to remain engaged.

Because the stark reminder, if anyone needed it, that Special Representative Patten has given us is of the horrors that these Rohingya refugees have suffered, a stark reminder that this is first and foremost a human tragedy, and which this Council must keep its attention.

Over the past month, we have seen some initial steps in response to this Council’s Presidential Statement, which we welcome.

In particular, the recent agreement concerning the voluntary repatriation of refugees, signed by the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh on 23 November.

The Government of Myanmar’s continued commitment to the Annan Commission recommendations and to the development of Rakhine State through the Union Enterprise mechanism are also worth highlighting. And we welcome the announcement of the new Advisory committee. We support initiatives that promise to build a better future for all communities in Rakhine, without discrimination and regardless of religion or ethnicity. The Commission’s recommendations remain a particularly important blueprint for the future given their wide support.

However, Mr President, there remains much more to be done and it is right that the situation remains on our agenda.

I want to draw particular attention to the agreement concerning voluntary repatriation of refugees. Now, this is a step in the right direction, but today's conditions in the Rakhine state do not yet allow for the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of refugees to their homes that this Council called for last month.

1,000 to 3,000 people are still fleeing in fear from the Rakhine state into Bangladesh every week. There are continued reports of intercommunal tensions and arson attacks, as Undersecretary-General Feltman set out. As we have said many times before the violence and human rights violations must stop.

While we recognise the desire to move forward quickly, we can only support returns which are safe, voluntary and dignified. This will require independent, international monitoring to ensure the conditions are met.

The rights of the Rohingya must be respected by the Burmese Government, including freedom of movement and access to basic services and livelihoods. They must be allowed to return home, not to prolonged stays in IDP camps, and be given a pathway to citizenship.

The responsibility for making progress lies primarily with the government and security forces of Myanmar. And the actions they must take are already set out in the Presidential Statement agreed unanimously by this Council.

Mr President, let us recall that in that statement, this Council called for the UNHCR to be invited to be a full participant in the returns process. Myanmar recognises UNHCR's expertise but so far has resisted giving them the necessary role.

In that statement, we called for transparent investigations into allegations of serious human rights abuses and violations. Not just because those responsible must be held accountable, but also so that refugees have may have confidence in their eventual return. So far, all we have seen is a whitewash by the military.

In that statement, we called for full and unhindered access to Rakhine state for UN agencies, their humanitarian partners, and the media. But the government continues to severely limit access to Rakhine, making it impossible to deliver vital humanitarian assistance or verify the situation on the ground.

Mr President, the situation regrettably means that we must continue supporting refugees where they are right now.

The Government of Bangladesh, along with UN agencies and other humanitarian partners, continues to play a vital role, providing life-saving shelter and assistance. Unfortunately, it is likely that Bangladesh will need to play this role for longer than any of us would like.

It is critical, therefore, that longer-term plans are put in place to protect

and provide for refugees in Bangladesh and internally displaced people in Rakhine state. And it is critical, too, that these plans are properly funded.

On top of an annual program of \$210 million to Bangladesh, the UK has contributed \$79 million to the UN's current Humanitarian Response Plan, providing life-saving assistance and protection to the refugees and Bangladeshi host communities. But the plan is still only partially funded and in any case, it runs out in February 2018. We encourage the international community to step up its contributions.

Mr President, I want to turn briefly before concluding to the Secretary-General's appointment of a Special Envoy. It will be an important, sensitive role, so we support the Secretary-General in deliberating over the appointment carefully. When he or she is appointed, we call on Myanmar to engage with them openly and in good faith.

Mr President, I said at the beginning that SRSg Patten's briefing was a stark reminder that this is a human tragedy that the Council must not turn its attention from. We cannot change the horrors, the crimes that have already been committed. But that is all the more reason, then, that this Council must remain engaged, must remain seized of the situation, and must be ready to take further action if necessary to ensure the protection, justice, and progress.

Thank you.

Speech: "Lasting peace in Darfur can only be realised with the agreement of a permanent ceasefire and an inclusive political settlement"

Thank you Mr President.

I would like to thank the Prosecutor for her 26th report on the situation in Darfur, the unwavering commitment that she and her staff have shown to this investigation and for her briefing to the Council today.

The ICC has an important role to play in global efforts to end impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern and the United Kingdom fully supports its efforts to hold perpetrators to account and achieve justice for victims.

The UK welcomes the reduction of armed conflict between government forces and the armed opposition, as well as the extension of unilateral cessations of

hostilities by both sides. We are also encouraged by the improvements in humanitarian access and the operational environment.

Whilst the situation in Darfur is beginning to show signs for cautious optimism, the international community would be remiss to accept the narrative that the situation has normalised. As noted in the prosecutor's report, the security and human rights situation remains volatile and unpredictable, particularly for Darfur's 2.1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Also, of particular concern is the continued use of sexual violence in conflict, although it is noted that reported incidents have purportedly declined during this reporting period.

As we have said many times before in this chamber, lasting peace in Darfur can only be realised with the agreement of a permanent ceasefire and an inclusive political settlement that addresses the root causes of conflict. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) will be vital in this regard. We note the Government's ongoing disarmament campaign but are concerned by the tensions and armed confrontations that have emerged as a result, and which threaten to undermine the recent improvements in the security situation.

We therefore urge the Government of Sudan to pursue a balanced DDR and security sector reform, with full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and in close cooperation with UNAMID.

With regard to the currently stalled peace process, we urge all parties to capitalise on the recent security and humanitarian improvements by re-focusing their efforts on implementing the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) Roadmap.

The UK welcomes the progress that UNAMID has made in completing the first phase of its reconfiguration and the Government of Sudan's improved cooperation with the Mission. However, it is regrettable that the Government of Sudan has yet formally to agree to the opening of a temporary UNAMID base in Golo, Jebel Marra. This base is vital to ensuring a smaller UNAMID is able to focus its efforts on the Jebel Marra area, including supporting the provision of humanitarian assistance in this high need area. We therefore urge the Government of Sudan to agree formally to the opening of this base without further delay.

As UNAMID reconfiguration continues, it is crucial that the Mission and the Security Council closely monitor the impact of the reconfiguration on the situation on the ground, as well as the cooperation afforded to the Mission by the Government of Sudan. The UK therefore requests other Council members to engage constructively with the upcoming assessment of phase one of the reconfiguration and to consider carefully whether phase two remains appropriate.

Mr President, in adopting UN Security Council resolution 1593, this Council committed to support the Office of the Prosecutor in its efforts to investigate the situation in Darfur. In the twenty-six reports that have followed since, the Prosecutor has consistently reminded us of the need for

state cooperation and Council support in order to make progress in this investigation.

Mr President, in this regard, we must do better. We encourage our fellow Council member to consider carefully what more we, as a Council, can do to ensure that the Court receives the necessary support. The UK will continue to call on the Government of Sudan to meet its obligations under UN Security Council resolution 1593, and to cooperate fully with the Court, to execute outstanding arrest warrants and to fulfil its international obligations.

The United Kingdom continues to be frustrated that fugitives of the Court, including Mr Al-Bashir, Mr Harun and Mr Hussein, are still travelling to certain countries unhindered. We note the Chambers findings on 6 July that vis-à-vis the Court, Sudan cannot claim the immunity of Mr Al-Bashir as Head of State in the context of a request to arrest and surrender him to the Court. For our part, the United Kingdom will continue to raise our concerns with the relevant governments, including through the European Union, as noted in the Prosecutor's report. We renew our call to all States Parties to cooperate with the ICC and abide by their obligations under the Rome Statute. We also urge them to consult the Court if they feel that they are unable to co-operate with it for any reason.

We welcome and thank the Office of the Prosecutor for its continued efforts to achieve justice for victims in Darfur, despite the fragile security situation, access restrictions and lack of cooperation. The UK also appreciates the effort that the Prosecutor's Office has put into making the most effective and efficient use of the resources it has available, while recognising that the lack of resources does impact on its investigations.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the UK's commitment to supporting the Court, both as a State Party to the Rome Statute and as a member of this Council. We thank the Prosecutor again for her report.

Thank you Mr President.

Press release: Bradford Robber has sentence increased



Solicitor General Robert Buckland

A violent robber will spend more time in prison after Solicitor General Robert Buckland QC MP referred his original sentence to the Court of Appeal as unduly lenient.

David Berry, 32, committed a series of robberies between 29 December 2016 and 9 January 2017. On one occasion a victim was stabbed multiple times in the buttocks.

The robberies included breaking into a house, stealing a car from the driveway and stealing a delivery van and its contents. The driver was also dragged out of the van and thrown into the road. Berry then rammed two police cars in an attempt to escape capture.

In separate incidences, Berry also robbed 2 night porters who were working alone in hotels. In the second robbery, the night porter was beaten and stabbed with a knife.

Berry was originally sentenced to 8 and a half years in prison at Bradford Crown Court. He will now serve 15 years behind bars.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

These were planned robberies, involving weapons, which left a trail of destruction – including damage to two police vehicles. The original sentence failed to take proper account of the seriousness of the offences and I am pleased the Court has now seen fit to increase the prison term.

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