

Speech: Opening of the RBLI Invictus and Victory Houses

INTRO

It's a huge pleasure to be here today to open these magnificent new apartments and meet their future occupants who I look forward to chatting to in a few minute's time.

I remember standing across the road from here three years ago not long after I'd been appointed Defence Secretary. Back then there was nothing but a barren patch of land and set of ambitious plans.

Three years later what a transformation! The unwavering drive of Royal British Legion Industries unstinting support of the Morrison's Foundation, the ABF The Soldiers' Charity, Chelsea Barracks Foundation, and unending ingenuity of Blesma, have not just produced modern adapted homes and tranquil gardens but an entire village, a community fit for heroes.

It's not only RBLI who have transformed three years on. So too has defence. And, in the face of intensifying threats, the respect I have, the public have, for our courageous personnel has soared to new heights.

REMEMBERING

This year we've had particular cause to reflect on their service and sacrifice. We've remembered the Great War and the mud and blood of Paschendale that triggered the creation of RBLI itself.

We've commemorated the 35th anniversary of the Falklands conflict. This weekend I'll be in the Middle East to mark three years of our Counter Daesh campaign.

But the reason we're here today the reason the Government has put almost £2m into this project through Libor funding is because our relationship with the veteran community is about much more than respect.

RESPONSIBILITY

First, it's about our responsibility, the nation's responsibility, to serve those who served us.

That means helping solve critical housing problems so former soldiers, sailors, or pilots, single-male or female veterans, older service personnel and their families, and those who have suffered life changing injuries, can get the vital accommodation they need.

I asked the Brigadier why they named one of these blocks Victory House instead of referencing any particular victory. His answer was profound. He said the name was chosen to honour the everyday victories those little

critical steps that our veterans achieve as they work towards recovery and independence and build new lives.

RECOGNITION

Second, we're here today to recognise what our veterans still have to offer. It's no coincidence the other block is named Invictus.

Three years ago the first Invictus Games showed the nation and the world how despite appalling injuries our brave men and women remained capable of achieving amazing things.

In a few days' time our latest Team GB Invictus athletes, will be taking to the field once more in Toronto in a bid to outdo their predecessors.

Whether they come home with bronze, silver, or gold all will have proved worthy of the title of that immortal poem Invictus, "unconquered".

And this village is making sure they will continue making a difference by offering its inhabitants employment opportunities and the chance to shape the community in which they live.

REAFFIRM COMMITMENT

Thirdly, we're here to rededicate ourselves to the service of our veterans today and tomorrow.

This is only the beginning. Phase 1 might be over but there's a plan for Centenary Village to grow with more family housing and a new community center. I look forward to returning here in two years' time when RBLI celebrates its centenary year, to find that first spade in the ground and phase 2 well underway.

But there's something that matters as much as these houses. That's the example you're setting. By forging powerful partnerships between charities like RBLI and Cobseo, and between local leaders, you're turning the Armed Forces Covenant into practical reality, so that no-one who belongs to the forces' family suffers disadvantage.

You are the Armed Forces Covenant made manifest.

Today we open a house named victory. It is your victory.

CONCLUSION

So let me salute you on a marvellous achievement.

You've built homes for the heroes who helped build our future.

You are an inspiration. And I wish you, and all who live here, every success in your future endeavours as I officially declare these two great houses, open.

I now declare Invictus and Victory House open.

News story: Defence personnel embracing fourth industrial revolution by developing skills

Speaking at the UK's flagship defence equipment conference, Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI), Mr Ellwood said that in order to tackle current and future threats, the Ministry of Defence was embracing the fourth industrial revolution and developing its skills base.

The Minister outlined the MOD's work on this in three areas:

1. Broadening the defence talent base.
2. Working with industry to attract the right people and jobs.
3. Collaborating across Government to reinvigorate interest in science, maths, engineering and technology.

Efforts to broaden the MOD's talent base includes increasing diversity, with a target of 10% of the workforce coming from ethnic minority backgrounds by 2020 and 15% of the workforce being women. The MOD is also the country's largest employer of apprentices and is stepping up its commitment by looking to increase that number by 50,000 in the next few years.

The Minister also stressed that in order to face down current and future threats and challenges, Government needed to redouble its efforts to reinvigorate skills in science, maths, engineering and technology. Mr Ellwood outlined work which was going on across Government in this area, including the MOD's collaboration with the Departments for Education and Business.

Speaking at DSEI the Commandant of Sandhurst also announced a new initiative which will allow Sandhurst cadets to earn a degree while going through their commissioning course. Officer Cadets attending Sandhurst have always undergone demanding leadership and management training, without previously having their efforts recognised with an academic qualification.

Working with experts at Henley Business School and the School of Politics, Economics and International Relations at the University of Reading, a course has been specifically designed in Leadership and Strategic Studies for the British Army which will allow them to earn either a Bachelors or Master's

degree.

Tobias Ellwood's full speech will be available shortly.

Press release: Paedophile has sentenced doubled under ULS scheme

A 'House Parent' who sexually abused children while working at a boarding school in Torrington, Devon, will be locked up for longer. The Solicitor General referred the original sentence to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme.

Over a 9 year period from 1980, Stephen Joyce, 66, woefully abused his position of trust by sexually assaulting vulnerable students aged between 12 and 14. Incidents of sexual assault against one of the victims, a 12 year old boy, would last for hours and Joyce would 'reward' him with chocolate eggs. On one occasion, Joyce withheld money until the victim submitted to sexual abuse.

After pleading guilty to all offences, Joyce received a custodial sentence of 7 years and 2 months when he attended Exeter Crown Court in May. Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, argued that the original sentence was unduly lenient. The Court of Appeal has today increased his sentence to 14 years 4 months.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

"These young victims have been robbed of their childhood, and the abuse will have left lasting emotional damage.

"The original sentence did not reflect the seriousness of the offending. Crimes of this nature will not be tolerated and I am pleased that the Court of Appeal has increased the prison term."

News story: Drivers' hours: changes to fines for commercial drivers

If you drive a lorry, bus or coach, you must follow [rules on how many hours you can drive](#) and the breaks you need to take.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) can fine drivers up to £300 if they're caught breaking the rules. They can also be prosecuted or have their vehicle immobilised.

At the moment, DVSA can only fine drivers for:

- offences committed that day
- ongoing offences, like manipulating tachograph records, which record drivers' hours

Drivers will be fined for older offences

From Monday 5 March 2018, DVSA traffic examiners will start issuing on-the-spot fines for any drivers' hours offences committed in the last 28 days.

In a single [roadside check](#), DVSA traffic examiners will issue fines for up to 5 drivers' hours offences. It means you could be fined up to £1,500 in a single check if you've consistently broken the rules.

It won't matter if the offences took place in Great Britain or elsewhere.

The rules will also apply to drivers who don't live in Great Britain. However, they'll need to pay any fines immediately, before being allowed to continue their journey. DVSA will immobilise their vehicle until they pay.

Fines to deter drivers from not resting properly

As well as giving fines to drivers for recent offences, DVSA traffic examiners have started issuing fines to deal with drivers who don't properly rest.

Lorry, bus and coach drivers must take a 45-hour rest break at least every fortnight.

Since 1 November 2017, DVSA has started to fine drivers up to £300 if they spend their full weekly rest break in their vehicle in places where it causes a problem. For example, if a lorry driver spends their full break in the cab of their lorry in a layby.

Illegal parking, noise and litter nuisance

Spending the weekly rest break in the cab can:

- contribute to drivers not properly resting
- expose drivers to poor living conditions

It can also cause problems in local communities. In some areas, lorry drivers have parked illegally or inappropriately while taking the 45-hour break, and have caused residents to complain about noise, litter and anti-social behaviour.

During 2016, authorities in Kent took action against 3,700 lorry drivers for

parking illegally or inappropriately.

Targeting problem areas

DVSA traffic examiners will target places where this is causing the biggest problems, such as residential areas and laybys.

DVSA will also work with its counterparts in other countries to deal with overseas operators whose drivers regularly do this.

Devastating consequences of driving tired

Crashes involving tired lorry drivers can be devastating. Almost a quarter of injuries in accidents involving lorries are fatal or serious.

About 40% of sleep-related accidents involve commercial vehicles.

According to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), driving while tired may be responsible for:

- 1 in 5 of all accidents
- up to a quarter of serious and fatal crashes

6,300 drivers' hours fines were given to lorry drivers by DVSA between April 2015 and March 2016

Source: [Vehicle enforcement data for Great Britain](#)

In addition to the devastation caused to families and communities, road collisions cost the economy an estimated £16.3 billion a year, and add pressure on the NHS and emergency services.

Protecting you from unsafe drivers and vehicles

DVSA Chief Executive, Gareth Llewellyn, said:

DVSA's priority is to protect you from unsafe drivers and vehicles.

These tougher fines will help us to take stronger action against any drivers or operators who break drivers' hours rules and will help make our roads safer.

There's no excuse for driving while tired. The results of falling asleep at the wheel of 40 tonne lorry can be devastating to families and communities. Any drivers breaking these rules is putting other road users at risk and could face losing their licence and livelihood.

James Firth, the Freight Transport Association's Head of Licensing Policy and

Compliance Information, said:

For some years, DVSA officers have been virtually powerless to take effective action against non-UK HGV drivers who may have committed a string of offences in the days and weeks before the vehicle is stopped.

These new powers mean the enforcement authorities will be more able – and more likely – to take action against all drivers who are found to have repeatedly flouted these critical road safety laws.

Press release: UK aid continues to arrive for Hurricane Irma victims

[VIDEO: Jemone's story, a recipient of UK aid on the British Virgin Islands.](#)

Over 60 tonnes of UK aid has now reached the Caribbean to support the victims of Hurricane Irma, with another 60 tonnes on the way on board HMS Ocean.

British military troops along with DFID logisticians supported the restoration of electricity to the main power station on the British Virgin Islands as part of the ongoing recovery operation.

Six UK medical health experts have been deployed to Antigua to assess the capacity of healthcare provisions on affected islands in the region.

The team, made up of experts from UK-Med and Public Health England, will measure the current state of public health and any potential threat of disease breaking out.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The Government has been working non-stop to get vital assistance to the victims of Hurricane Irma in the last week.

Aid continues to arrive on the affected islands on a daily basis, and we'll continue to do all that is needed to get people back on their feet.

We are also looking at long-term recovery on the islands. We want to get families back into houses, and schools and hospitals working again as soon as possible.

Yesterday (Thursday), a flight carrying aid reached Turks and Caicos Islands delivering over 150 shelter kits and 720 litres of water.

Further flights carrying UK aid arrived in the affected areas earlier this week. Two of these flights, headed to Anguilla, delivered nearly five tonnes of food and water

A flight carrying three tonnes of food and water also arrived in the British Virgin Islands. This much-needed aid has already been distributed on Tortola alongside 40 shelter kits in Road Town.

Elsewhere, British aid experts quickly sorted and arranged for the delivery of 1 tonne of food aid including biscuits, fish, vegetables and sausages, in addition to 38 packs of water and shelter kits in BVI. The items were distributed to 130 families using a school as a shelter after their homes were destroyed in the hurricane

A senior civil expert has been deployed to the Caribbean to coordinate the entire UK Task Force following Hurricane Irma. Chris Austin, recently based with DFID in Afghanistan, will oversee civilian and military operations as part of the UK's response.

This week, Prime Minister Theresa May announced an additional £25 million to support Hurricane Irma recovery efforts, on top of £32 million announced last week. The announcement takes the UK's support to the disaster to £57 million.

The funding will continue to meet immediate needs and early recovery.

Several hospitals, schools, roads and other public services remain affected following Hurricane Irma, and the support will help to get basic infrastructure and services up and running again.

Additionally, the UK government is doubling any public donations made to the Red Cross appeal for the hurricane's victims up to £3 million.

Aid also continues to be distributed by British military personnel and the Red Cross, coordinated by DFID.

The overall UK response today involves over 1,000 military personnel, 60 police officers, and 30 aid workers.

The aid on HMS Ocean includes over 5,000 hygiene kits containing essential items such as soap and a torch, 500,000 water purification tablets and 10,000 buckets.