

News story: Africa Minister Stewart: UK stands shoulder to shoulder with Uganda

During his first visit to Uganda in his new role, the Minister emphasised the UK's strong relationship with Uganda and continued partnership in tackling serious challenges in the region. This united approach saves lives and builds prosperity in Uganda, while helping to combat insecurity in neighbouring South Sudan, supporting huge numbers of refugees to rebuild their lives.

The Minister met people living in Impevi refugee centre, which hosts over 120,000 refugees, where he saw how UK aid is providing vital food, water and shelter to those in need. Increasing violence in South Sudan has forced millions of people to flee their homes to escape starvation and unimaginable horrors, with over 2,000 seeking refuge in neighbouring Uganda every day.

The Minister met with President Museveni to discuss bilateral trade between the UK and Uganda and strengthening the Commonwealth. They also discussed the ongoing crisis in South Sudan and the IGAD led peace process, Uganda's continuing work in Somalia and their support for family planning.

Minister for Africa Rory Stewart said:

"I am delighted to be visiting Uganda and to meet President Museveni. The UK places great value in our relationship with Uganda and I look forward to strengthening this relationship yet further as the new Minister for Africa.

"The importance of Uganda's role in the region cannot be overstated and it is vital to securing a lasting peace in South Sudan. South Sudan faces a worsening humanitarian crisis with over half the population in desperate need and ongoing violence forcing almost four million people to flee their homes and unimaginable horrors, with almost half seeking refuge in neighbouring countries like Uganda.

"The UK stands with Uganda as it manages the fallout of this tragedy. We are committed to both addressing the root causes of forced displacement, but also sustainable support to Uganda in responding to the influx of refugees. Thanks to UK aid, refugees reaching Uganda are receiving shelter, food, medical care, a measure of safety and the hope for a future in the region. This is in everyone's interests".

The UK is supporting Uganda in managing its growing refugee crisis by providing emergency support as well as helping strengthen services in the local host communities through rapidly upgrading infrastructure, hospitals and schools. On a visit to Vurra Cope Primary School in Rhino Refugee Settlement, where over 2000 of the 3000 students are South Sudanese refugees, the Minister saw how UK support is enabling these children to get back into education and give them hope for the future.

Minister Stewart also met beneficiaries of a UK supported family planning programme in Uganda, which is helping to provide integrated family planning and sexual reproductive health services to vulnerable young people in the area. This was in the same week as the landmark London Family Planning Summit at which the UK increased life-saving assistance to ensure women across the globe have access to modern contraception. The UK recently announced an increase in family planning support to Uganda which will help 380,000 additional women to get access to modern family planning methods, enabling them to finish their education, get better jobs and provide for their smaller, planned families to escape the cycle of poverty.

In the last year, UK aid in Uganda has fed 650,000 people, vaccinated 235,000 children, provided healthcare for 65,000, sheltered 181,000, provided clean water for 40,000 and essential relief items for 64,000 people.

Press release: A20 near Dover returns to national speed limit

Drivers using the A20 to Kent are benefitting from faster journeys this morning (Tuesday 18 July) after the national speed limit was reinstated overnight.

The work is part of an upgrade to a project known as Dover TAP, which helps relieve congestion in Dover town centre by managing peaks of traffic arriving at the port, and meets a commitment made by Highways England to restore the national speed limit ahead of the summer getaway.

A 40mph speed restriction, which has been in place since 2015, was removed at 8pm on Monday evening, and the A20 approaching the port of Dover is now operating at the national speed limit. The temporary 40mph limit will now only be used when the traffic lights that control traffic on approach to the port are in use.

Highways England Regional Director Simon Jones said:

I am delighted that we've met this key commitment to restore the national speed limit on the A20 in time for the busy summer holiday season. Removing the 40mph limit will speed up journeys for the many thousands of people who'll be using Dover to get away on their holidays this summer, as well as people living and working in Dover.

The update comes two weeks after Highways England unveiled the 27 new electronic signs being installed along the road. Work on these permanent

electronic signs continues until later this summer, with a lane closure on the coast bound carriageway and additional restrictions as needed. The interim mechanical signs – most commonly used for roadworks – have enabled the national speed limit to be restored in the meantime.

Traffic lights have been in place at the end of the A20 dual carriageway near Dover since April 2015 as part of a trial to help manage traffic arriving at the port during peak periods, with a 40mph speed limit on the approaches to the traffic lights in place for safety. The trial was successful in reducing congestion in Dover town centre and also had a positive effect on air quality in the town.

The traffic lights have been used on more than 200 different occasions to keep traffic flowing through Dover town centre.

Now the arrangement has been made permanent and the new electronic signs, which have now been installed, have enabled the national speed limit to be restored along the road when the traffic lights are not being used.

Barbara Buczek, Port of Dover Director of Corporate Development and Operational Businesses, said:

The return of the national speed limit on the A20 will enhance journeys to, through and around Dover for residents, holiday makers and the nation's trade.

Alongside Highways England, the Port and its partners are always looking for new and innovative ways to improve the effectiveness and fluidity of traffic movements at Dover's nationally-critical European Gateway.

In total, 27 electronic signs are being installed, with 10 miles of ducting and more than seven miles of cabling to support the new signs. In addition, three weather stations will be added as well as four fog signs to enhance the real-time information provided to drivers.

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.

Press release: Young Brits to make German connections

Boris Johnson and Sigmar Gabriel have signed off on a doubling of funding for [UK-German Connection](#) (UKGC), which means an increasing the number of places available on the scheme.

The funding increase, to around £230,000 and matched by the German government, will expand the scheme's work in bringing together children and teachers in both countries to learn about each other's language, history, and culture.

The Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, said:

I'm proud to have agreed with German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel to enhance and expand the great work of UK-German Connection, including working to increase the number of young people learning German.

This agreement shows, once again, that the UK and Germany are the closest of friends and allies. It will allow more young Brits and Germans to benefit in new ways, exposing them to language, culture, and history of both countries.

Through this we can make the relationship between the UK and Germany even stronger for the future.

Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening, said:

Learning about different cultures is an integral part of education, and initiatives like UK-German Connection give young people first-hand experience of new language and history, which is why we are pleased to support it.

The agreement will allow UKGC to expand the range of services they already offer to those in youth groups and in the primary, secondary and further education sectors.

These programmes currently involve visits between British and German schools and youth groups, collaborative projects between students in both countries on our history and culture, creating links between schools including placing German teachers in the UK and the creation of a Youth Ambassadors network looking together at the future challenges faced by the UK and Germany.

Video on UK-German Connection

[UK-German Connection](#)

Notes to editors:

The new funding will mean the FCO contributing £90,000, DfE contributing the same amount, while the British Council will contribute £50,000. The German government will match this spending.

UKGC was established by the UK and German governments after the Queen's State Visit to Germany in 2004. Its work focuses on connecting young people in both countries, exposing them to each other's cultures and helping them to learn German and English. It delivers a wide range of programmes, including;

1. A Host-a-Teacher programme, in which German teachers take short-term secondments in UK schools. These link our schools, aid professional development and are often followed up with return visits to German schools.
2. Youth Ambassadors' scheme, where British and German teenagers work together to develop common projects. Recent examples include identity and the role of young people in society; Europe after the referendum; and living in a digital world.
3. School group visits to Germany, allowing our students to work with each other on thematic topics including our history and culture.

[Press release: Joint statement on the expansion of British-German youth and school exchange](#)

Today's younger generation will determine the future of the relationship between Germany and the United Kingdom. This relationship is characterised by shared European values and trusted co-operation that have grown over centuries. Fruitful and diverse economic, educational and cultural exchange, a wide network of civil society, and personal and professional links are at its heart. Contact between young people and the learning of each other's languages and history will continue playing a crucial role in shaping our future bilateral relations.

It is therefore important that we offer as many young people as possible from our 2 countries the opportunity to get to know their peers in the respective other country in order to enhance mutual understanding.

In 2004, Federal President Köhler and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II expressed their joint wish to revive encounters between young people and

school pupils, recalling our mutual promise set out in the Cultural Convention of 18 April 1958 that we shall endeavour to promote the exchange of young people. In response, our governments created the bilateral initiative [UK-German Connection](#) in the summer of 2005. UK-German Connection has evolved into the central coordination point for all aspects of bilateral youth and school exchange.

Thousands of young people from Germany and the United Kingdom have taken advantage of the opportunity for reciprocal visits learning each other's language and fostering understanding about each other's lives. Everyone working on this initiative with great personal commitment and dedication, including the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#), the [Department for Education](#) and the [British Council](#) on the UK side, and [Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#) and [Pädagogischer Austauschdienst of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany \(KMK\)](#) on the German side, deserves our sincere gratitude. The [Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth](#) is responsible for the out-of-school youth exchange in Germany.

It is time to take the next step forward together. We want to intensify our governments' efforts in order to increase the interaction between our young people. To this end, we will this year double the existing funding available to UK-German Connection. In addition, we will strengthen the structural framework of UK-German Connection to ensure its long-term sustainability as a central coordination point. We both share the ambition for a substantially larger number of young people and teachers to benefit from future exchanges, to build cultural ties and strengthen language learning.

We regard our strengthened commitment to more school and youth exchange as a long-term investment for peace in Europe, for our security and prosperity – as friends and partners in Europe.

[Speech: Pride reception 2017: Theresa May's speech](#)

It is a very great pleasure to welcome you all to this reception today to celebrate the contribution that lesbian, gay, bi and trans people make to our country.

We meet, of course, during Pride season – a joyful time when communities come together in a spirit of freedom, tolerance and equality.

Pride in London a couple of weeks ago was a huge success and I'm sure that the first ever UK Pride, to be held in Hull, our Capital of Culture, this weekend will also be a huge success.

I'm delighted that we have some of the team from both, and other Pride celebrations, here today.

50th Anniversary

And of course this year is a special year because fifty years ago this month, the passage of the Sexual Offences Act in England and Wales marked an important step towards legal equality for LGBT people in the UK.

It was just one step, and it took many more years before it became widely accepted that a person's sexual orientation and gender identity are things to respect and celebrate. The law in Scotland did not change until 1980 and Northern Ireland in 1982. And only this year did my colleague John Glen's private member's bill finally extend this to the merchant navy, closing a sad chapter in our legal history.

This anniversary reminds us how far we have come, but also how long it has taken to get us here, and also how much more there still is to do. We should take this opportunity to remember the work of those who campaigned so long to deliver the change we have seen over the past fifty years. They braved abuse and ridicule, violence and legal persecution in their tireless quest for justice and human rights.

They knew that what they stood for was right; they fought for it with courage and determination; and they made our country a better place as a result.

Changing hearts and minds

And like millions of other people in this country, I have changed my own mind on a number of the policy issues which I was confronted with when I first became an MP twenty years ago. If those votes were today, yes I would vote differently. And when I was a member of the shadow cabinet before the 2010 general election, I was proud to establish a Contract for Equalities which first committed my Party to taking forward equal marriage. I was proud to give it my full support in government as one of the sponsors of the bill which delivered it. I believe that equal marriage will be one of the proudest legacies of my Party's time in office.

Equal marriage in England and Wales was passed with cross-party support and it is a great thing for our country that there is now a broad political consensus in support of equality and human rights. The UK Parliament is now one of the most diverse in the world, with forty-five out gay, lesbian or bi MPs – six more than in the previous Parliament. 17 of those are Conservatives and I am proud to lead a Cabinet with two out members, and to have other gay and lesbian ministers serving in government.

Now I know that my Party has a mixed record on LGBT issues and, like other parties, we have made mistakes in the past. But there are things we are proud of too. It was a Conservative MP, Humphry Berkeley, who first tried to change the law on homosexuality in the 1960s, before he lost his seat and a Labour MP, Leo Abse, took up the cause. It was a Conservative peer, Lord Arran, who took the Bill through the Lords. A future Conservative leader, Margaret

Thatcher, was amongst the MPs who voted for it. A Conservative Health Secretary, Norman Fowler, put in place a world-leading response to the AIDS crisis in the 1980s – and I think that Norman is here with us this afternoon. John Major ended the ban on lesbian and gay people serving as diplomats. And of course David Cameron delivered same sex marriage.

So I am proud that, just like the country as a whole, my Party has come a long way. Respect for the rights of LGBT people is now an indelible part of modern Conservatism and modern Conservative values – and that is how it will always remain.

And I want to say something very directly. Because I know that there is concern about the agreement which we have made with the DUP. But this agreement does nothing to weaken the Conservative Party's absolute commitment to LGBT equality and human rights.

And let me be even clearer. When it comes to those rights across the United Kingdom, I want all British citizens to enjoy the fullest freedoms and protections. That includes equal marriage. Now with devolution in the UK, that is not a decision for the UK Government to make. But my position is very clear. I think that LGBT people in Northern Ireland should have the same rights as people across the rest of the UK.

LGBT rights are human rights

And our ambitions are not just restricted to this country: because LGBT rights are human rights – and as a UK Government, we will always stand up for them.

In some Commonwealth countries discriminatory laws still exist – often directly based on the very laws which we repealed in this country fifty years ago. So Britain has a special responsibility to help change hearts and minds and we will ensure that these important issues are discussed at next year's Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference, which we will be hosting here in the UK.

In countries where human rights are abused and people face violence and persecution, the UK will continue to challenge, at the highest political levels, the governments concerned. That is the case with the sickening treatment which LGBT people are enduring in Chechnya today. It is a mark of shame for the Russian Federation, and we have made that clear to the Russian government.

As we leave the EU, Britain will forge a new global role and we will use our position to provide even stronger global leadership on this issue in the years ahead.

At home, we know that the battle has not yet been won. Everyone should be free to enjoy their lives free from harassment and discrimination, happy and proud of who they are. In particular, no child should ever be made to feel afraid or ashamed because of who they are. We need to do all we can to build a country which works for everyone, where people of all backgrounds are free

to be themselves and fulfil their full potential.

So we are supporting schools to tackle homophobic bullying. We have seen encouraging signs that it is in decline, but we must keep up the work to tackle it. Part of that is ensuring that there are strong and positive role models for young people and just earlier this afternoon, before I came down here to this reception, I was delighted to be able to bestow a Point of Light award on someone who has worked to ensure those role models are more visible.

Rory Smith experienced homophobia in the classroom when he was growing up, and to help other people facing the same challenging experience, he returned to his old school as an adult to help speak out about his experiences as a gay teenager. He helped set up a charity, 'Just Like Us', which sends other positive LGBT role models into schools to share their experiences, challenge stereotypes and inspire young people to be themselves.

But while homophobic bullying may be in decline, we know that transphobic bullying remains a very serious problem. Indeed when it comes to rights and protections for trans people, there is still a long way to go. That is why the government is reviewing the Gender Recognition Act and we hope to make an announcement very soon on the action we will take to reform it by making it less medical and less intrusive.

Conclusion

Fifty years on from the 1967 Act, we can look back on a great deal of progress made, but we do so in the sober realisation that there is a long way still to go. I say to the tireless campaigners here today, and to those who are not: your inspirational work has created a better future for LGBT people in Britain and around the world. I hope you all have a fantastic time here at this reception. Thank you to everybody for all that you do.