

# [Press release: Statement on Asad regime's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states](#)

Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan said:

It is utterly unacceptable that the Asad regime has recognised the so-called "independence" of the breakaway Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The Russian military intervention in Georgia in 2008 and its subsequent recognition of the breakaway territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as so-called "independent states" was an unacceptable violation of the sovereign rights of Georgia. Russia's actions continue to undermine Georgia's rightful territorial integrity.

This move will do nothing to bring peace closer. Once again, both the Syrian regime and Russia are aggressively trying to undermine the rules-based international order.

The British Government reiterates its full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and to UN Security Council Resolution 1808 which reaffirms the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.

## **Further information**

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan on Twitter [@AlanDuncanMP](#) and [Facebook](#)
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- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

## **Media enquiries**

For journalists

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## [News story: First plot stone unveiled at new service accommodation site in Wiltshire](#)

Lieutenant General Nick Pope CBE, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, together with Mr John Leary, Lovell's Major Projects Director unveiled the stone with representatives of the Army Basing Programme (ABP), Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and Lovell in attendance.

Work is well underway across the Salisbury Plain Training Area to prepare for the Service personnel returning from Germany in 2019 under the ABP. A critical construction activity is the provision of Service Family Accommodation. This constitutes the building of 917 new homes at 3 sites on Salisbury Plain; Bulford, Larkhill and Ludgershall. In addition, ABP has purchased 100 homes of open market housing at Tidworth. The build of new homes represents a significant investment on Salisbury Plain and is critical to enable the final units to relocate to Wiltshire from Germany and within the UK in 2019.

General Pope said:

The new homes that Lovell are providing on behalf of the Army Basing Programme is testament to the Army's commitment to invest in our estate providing 21st century living and working facilities for our soldiers and their families.

Since Ministry of Defence contracted with Lovell in November 2017, work is now well underway across all 3 sites. At Bulford, where 225 new homes are being built, the Roads & Sewers works are largely complete and over a third of the foundations have already been laid. The Bulford programme is the most advanced of the SFA sites and timber frame installations have commenced.

Alongside the groundworks element, Lovell has also been undertaking enabling works including 2 new section 278 access junctions and the installation of its administration/welfare facilities and storage compound. These facilities coupled with strong supply chain relationships will allow Lovell to deliver this prestigious project at the fast track rate required in order to ensure homes are ready for the returning Service personnel and their families.

Mark Duddy, ABP Programme Director said:

I am really impressed with the speed of delivery and the amount of progress that has been made since the contract was signed in November; we remain firmly on track to deliver the required new homes to enable the units to return from Germany in 2019. This project is an excellent example of how we are updating the estate by providing first class living accommodation for our Service personnel.

John Leary said:

Lovell were delighted to host today's event to mark the commencement of superstructure works on our SPTA scheme. We were honoured to welcome Lieutenant General Nick Pope CBE to unveil our commemorative stone, representing a significant milestone at the Bulford site and for the SPTA SFA project as a whole. We look forward to continuing to work with the ABP, WYG and our supply chain partners to ensure timely delivery of high quality SFA for our Service families.'

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## **[News story: Dr Peter Groves to be new chair of the Devices Expert Advisory Committee](#)**

Formed in 2015, the [Devices Expert Advisory Committee \(DEAC\)](#) is responsible for providing independent, external expert input and advice on a wide range of aspects relating to medical devices to support the Agency in its role to ensure that medical devices are acceptably safe and are used both safely and effectively.

Dr Groves is a consultant cardiologist at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and previously sat on DEAC as representative for Wales and was Deputy Chair. His experience includes a period a Director for Cardio-thoracic Services in the Health Board and he is current Chair of the [NICE Medical Technology Appraisal Committee](#).

Dr Ian Hudson, Chief Executive Officer at MHRA said:

I am very pleased Dr Groves has accepted this appointment as Chair of DEAC and I and the Agency are looking forward to working with Dr

Groves, who brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the role.

As medical devices become ever more complex and diverse, the role of DEAC in providing independent external input and advice is increasingly vital to the work of the Agency.

I would also like to express my thanks to Dr Nightingale, our outgoing and founding chair, for all the support and expert advice he has provided during his tenure.

Dr Groves said:

I am delighted to have been appointed as Chair of DEAC and look forward to working closely with colleagues at MHRA. The DEAC has an important role in providing clinical advice to MHRA in maximising patient safety and I am honoured to be taking on the leadership of such an esteemed group of professionals.

As an interventional cardiologist, I am constantly reminded of the ability of medical devices to change the lives of patients. Ensuring that the NHS has timely access to new and innovative medical devices is critical to service improvement but ensuring their safety, as best we can, is a fundamental responsibility. The DEAC, under my leadership, will do all it can to support MHRA in exercising this important function.

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## **Press release: Citizen scientists look to the skies to help Dstl study**

Known as Project Argus, enthusiastic members from the Basingstoke Astronomical Society will look for and catalogue satellites and other objects orbiting the Earth.

They will be paying particular attention to a new device being deployed from the International Space Station which will send out a 'net' to catch old or unused satellites. The increasing problem of space junk means scientists across the world are looking for new solutions to bring down, or de-orbit, used satellites.

The project will gather a range of data which will be used to advise the Ministry of Defence on what equipment capabilities they need to effectively monitor the population of satellites and junk in the earth's orbit.

Andrew Ash, from the space team at Dstl, said:

Previously, we have used information shared by our US colleagues. Space is so crowded now, with more universities and other non-traditional partners launching satellites, that we may well need our own capability.

If we can harness information which some very good amateur astronomers are collecting, we can assess whether we can use an off-the-shelf solution. This has the potential to save a huge amount of money for the MOD. We're hoping that the astronomers will all be contributing to some valuable work and a research paper at the end of the trial.

For more information contact the Dstl press office on 01980 956845 or 07384 210107.

Email: [press@dstl.gov.uk](mailto:press@dstl.gov.uk)

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## **Press release: New measures to beat plague of nuisance calls**

Bosses of companies which plague people with unsolicited nuisance calls could be fined as much as half a million pounds under new proposals to make them personally liable if their firm breaks the law.

The UK data protection watchdog revealed last week it had recovered just over half (54 per cent) of the £17.8 million in fines issued for nuisance calls since 2010, as companies go into liquidation to avoid big penalties.

This follows latest estimates by Ofcom showing British consumers were bombarded with 3.9 billion nuisance phone calls and texts last year.

As it stands, only the businesses themselves are liable for fines of up to £500,000, and some directors try to escape paying penalties by declaring bankruptcy – only to open up again under a different name. The Insolvency Service can also disqualify people from boardroom positions and failure to adhere to this ruling could lead to a prison sentence.

But new Government proposals being consulted on will provide the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) with the powers it needs to hold company directors directly responsible with further fines of up to £500,000.

**Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries Margot James**

**said:**

Nuisance calls are a blight on society and we are determined to stamp them out.

For too long a minority of company directors have escaped justice by liquidating their firms and opening up again under a different name.

We want to make sure the Information Commissioner has the powers she needs to hold rogue bosses to account and put an end to these unwanted calls.

**Steve Wood, Deputy Commissioner (Executive Director- Policy), Information Commissioner's Office, said:**

We welcome these proposals from the Government to make directors themselves responsible for nuisance marketing.

We have been calling for a change to the law for a while to deter those who deliberately set out to disrupt people with troublesome calls, texts and emails. These proposed changes will increase the tools we have to protect the public.

The Government has already made it easier for regulators to fine those breaching direct marketing rules, forced companies to display their number when calling customers and increased fines for wrongdoers.

Ofcom data suggests this action is working. The total complaints made to the ICO and Ofcom about nuisance calls have fallen for the second year in a row.

The Government has also:

- Introduced a measure in the Digital Economy Act 2017 to make it a requirement for the Information Commissioner to issue a statutory code of practice on direct marketing;
- Amended the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR) to require all direct marketing callers to provide Caller Line Identification;
- Lowered the legal threshold at which the ICO may impose a monetary penalty on organisations breaching PECR (a previous requirement to prove that the call caused alarm or distress was removed);
- Made it easier for the ICO to more effectively share information with

Ofcom in relation to nuisance calls through an amendment to the Communications Act 2003;

- Given the ICO the power to issue monetary penalty notices up to £500,000 for serious breaches of PECR;
- Introduced a ban on cold calling in relation to claims management services through the Financial Claims and Guidance Act 2018, except where the receiver has consented to such calls being made to them. The 2018 Act also includes powers to ban cold calls from pension providers; and
- Given £500,000 to Trading Standards to help install call blocking devices installed in the homes of vulnerable people.

## **Notes to editors**

- For more info call DCMS press office on 020 7211 2210.
- The consultation closes in August.
- Government would amend the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations legislation to make directors liable for nuisance call fines.
- ICO will consider the level of fine based on evidence – (whether it applies to a company, director, or both).
- If a firm has multiple directors, each could be liable for a fine.
- In 2016/17, the Information Commissioner issued 23 companies more than £1.9m of fines for nuisance marketing.