

# Press release: Training introduced to help faith leaders support their communities

Over 300 faith leaders will benefit from new training to support their leading roles within communities, Faith Minister Lord Bourne today (8 February 2019) confirmed.

Developed following direct consultation with faith leaders, the Faith Leader Training programme will empower faith leaders with the confidence and knowledge to meet the changing needs of their congregations.

The voluntary training will be delivered in-person and online and will focus on improving the capacity of faith leaders to identify issues like domestic and sexual abuse and mental health concerns, as well educating them on equalities legislation and UK marriage law.

The initiative will help places of worship to have well-qualified, informed and confident faith leaders able to better support their congregants and signpost them to the relevant professional services.

Faith Minister Lord Bourne said:

Faith ministers are the heart and soul of our communities, acting as role models and leaders and providing support and guidance to their congregations.

Our Faith Leader Training programme recognises this central role and will ensure they are able to better support their congregations.

It is the first-step as we follow our commitment in the Integrated Communities Strategy green paper to support and listen to our faith communities

The Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion have been selected to deliver the training following an open tendering process.

They have a strong track record of working collaboratively with different faith communities across the UK. Their rich experience and expertise will help ensure the programme addresses the needs of faith communities in ways that are constructive, relevant and meaningful.

Andrew Davies, Director of the Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion:

Great leadership can have a transformative effect upon an organisation. Our faith communities are doing amazing work up and down the country and one of the reasons for this is the exceptional dedication, vision and passion of their leaders.

This training initiative will support them in their continued pursuit of excellence and help ensure that our faith leaders are confident in engaging with some of our pressing social challenges, committed to the highest standards of governance and effective and fulfilled in their ministries.

In designing and developing the Faith Leader Training programme, the government has engaged directly with faith leaders of various faiths and denominations to help collaboratively shape and structure the curriculum and ensure the training offer meets the needs of religious ministers themselves.

Imam Qari Asim, Senior Imam at Leeds Makkah Mosque and Executive Member of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board:

I welcome a dynamic and focused training programme for faith leaders as I believe that enhancing faith leaders' capacity to minister confidently in the British context will help them to engage and support their communities in a much more effective and cohesive way.

In March 2018, this government published the [Integrated Communities Strategy green paper](#), which invited views on our vision for building strong, integrated communities where people – whatever their background – live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

We anticipate the Faith Leader Training initiative will complement the following programmes:

- **Strengthening Faith Institutions (SFI):** A programme which helps places of worship build effective governance structures, develop robust financial management procedures and support Charity Commission registration
- **Register Our Marriage (ROM):** A campaign working with faith communities to raise awareness on elements of marriage legislation (i.e. the need for UK religious marriages to be registered / the fact that spouses are not protected by English law in unregistered religious marriages which have been conducted in the UK).

---

## [Press release: UK Hydrographic Office welcomes Secretary of State for Defence to Taunton](#)

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has today welcomed the UK's Secretary of State for Defence, the Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP, to its Taunton headquarters.

The Secretary of State met with UKHO staff to talk about its role in supporting maritime navigation, safety, security and marine development around the UK and worldwide, and was given a tour of its new office.

As a leading hydrographic office and marine geospatial information agency, the UKHO plays a critical role in supporting the UK government's National Security Strategy (NSS) and in fulfilling the Government's obligation to provide navigational charts and publications to ships transiting UK waters.

Working with several UK and international partners, the UKHO also carries out work under government programmes such as the Overseas Territories Seabed Mapping Programme and the Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme to improve global standards in safety, hydrography and navigation. This includes collecting and processing marine geospatial data to help governments protect the environment, develop infrastructure (such as ports) and support disaster planning and resilience. These factors support the sustainable economic growth for coastal states across the world including Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, St Helena, Guyana, Vanuatu and Tuvalu.

The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP, Secretary of State for Defence, said:

For 200 years UKHO has been central to trade and commerce across the globe, supplying over 90% of the world's ships with the products they need to navigate international waters safely.

The UKHO embodies the spirit of a Global Britain – sharing the UK's world leading expertise to develop relationships and trade with partners around the world. With 95% of the UK's trade carried by sea, the work done at this facility is vital to not only supporting safety of our ships but supporting the UK's thriving ocean economy.

The Secretary of State's visit also comes as UKHO continues to contribute to the UK Government's Geospatial Commission, an expert committee with the Cabinet Office set up to maximise the value of all UK Government data linked to location, and to create jobs and growth in a modern economy.

Drawing together the combined expertise of HM Land Registry, the Ordnance Survey, the British Geological Survey, the Valuation Office Agency, and the Coal Authority – as well as UKHO – the Geospatial Commission will drive the move, to use this data more productively – which could unlock up to £11 billion of extra value for the economy every year.

Rear Admiral Tim Lowe CBE, Acting Chief Executive, UKHO, said:

We are delighted to welcome the Secretary of State for Defence to visit UKHO, meet our expert staff and see first-hand the important work that we are doing. As a world-leading Hydrographic Office and marine geospatial agency we are continuously working to enable the maritime and marine sectors for the UK Government, as well as our friends and allies around the world.

This is an exciting time for UKHO as we build on a strong legacy of support to the mariner and continue to diversify and transform the way we develop and deliver our products and services. Last year we invested significantly in both our technology and our people – as evidenced by our expanding science and technology teams, which comprises experts across data science, scientific analysis and software engineering disciplines.

Hydrographic and marine geospatial data is fundamental to anyone operating in the marine and maritime domain and can hold the key to increased prosperity for the UK and our Overseas Territories. We hope that this visit continues to raise awareness of the important role that UKHO has to play in the sustainable development of our oceans at home and abroad.

---

## [News story: CMA to launch in-depth investigation of Tobii / Smartbox merger](#)

Tobii and Smartbox design and supply technology to enable people with complex speech and language needs to communicate. These solutions include specialised hardware and software, such as speech generating devices.

As part of its initial, Phase 1, investigation the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) found the deal could lead to less choice, higher prices and reduced innovation for customers.

The companies are the leading suppliers in this sector, and each other's main

competitors. As such, the CMA is concerned that the merged company would face little competition, which could lead to a reduced range of products being offered, higher prices and fewer new products being developed.

In January, the CMA said [that it would refer the merger for a full investigation](#) unless the parties offered acceptable undertakings to address the CMA's competition concerns. Tobii offered undertakings intended to address the CMA's concerns. After careful consideration, the CMA was not confident that these would resolve the concerns in a clear-cut manner. The CMA has therefore decided to refer the merger for an in-depth Phase 2 investigation.

A decision on the merger will be made by a group of independent panel members supported by a case team of CMA staff. More information can be found on the [Tobii / Smartbox case page](#).

---

## [Press release: UK Government delivers further devolution to Scotland](#)

The UK Government today handed over the last of the powers which the Scotland Act 2016 transfers to the Scottish Parliament.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell welcomed the significant landmark which means Holyrood can now legislate in every area where the Scotland Act 2016 has given it power to do so – reinforcing its standing as one of the most powerful devolved parliaments in the world.

The Act, delivered the recommendation of the cross-party Smith Commission, which was established following the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. Significant powers already devolved to the Scottish Parliament include £12 billion worth of income tax and £2.9 billion worth of welfare.

The Scottish Secretary said:

In the 2014 independence referendum Scotland voted decisively to remain in the UK and the UK Government has respected that decision by honouring our commitment to deliver further powers for the Scottish Parliament on the recommendations of the Smith Commission.

As a passionate supporter of devolution I was proud to lead the Scotland Act 2016 through the UK Parliament to Royal Assent. It is a truly significant milestone that all sections of the Act are now in force, reinforcing Holyrood's position as one of the most powerful devolved parliaments in the world.

More than 20 years on from the first Scotland Act gaining Royal Assent in 1998, devolution is working well. So I urge the Scottish Government to take the threat of another, divisive, independence referendum off the table and work with us in exercising their extensive powers for the good of Scotland.

Section 27 of the Scotland Act 2016 devolves legislative competence to the Scottish Parliament for Welfare Foods schemes. The UK and Scottish Governments are working together to agree on a timescale for the transfer of powers relating to these schemes.

---

## [News story: Scottish Secretary travels to Iceland to boost Scottish trade links](#)

Scottish Secretary David Mundell is in Iceland today [Friday 8 February] on a short visit to build trade links between the country and Scotland.

As the UK prepares to leave the EU, Mr Mundell will use his visit to Iceland to strengthen and grow Scotland-Iceland business relationships.

Mr Mundell will visit biotech company Ossur, the HB Grandi Fish processing plant and the University of Iceland. He will also meet the Icelandic fishing minister. The Secretary of State will be the guest of honour at an LGBT diversity reception at the British Embassy in Reykjavík, celebrating the UK and Iceland's shared commitment to LGBT rights.

Speaking ahead of his visit, Mr Mundell said:

As the UK prepares to leave the EU, it is vital that we do all we can to promote trade with partners, both old and new, around the world. Scotland and Iceland have strong cultural, academic and economic connections, and I look forward to building on these with my trip this week. I will be promoting Scottish business and skills – particularly in fishing and biotech – and I hope we will be able to further develop those relationships in the future.

The UK and Iceland are significant partners, with trade between the two countries worth around £1.5 billion in the year to September 2018, and Icelandic companies have a number of high-tech and asset investments in the UK. In addition, both Scotland and Iceland have strong fishing and fish processing industries.

Iceland and the UK share a number of international interests, including on security, climate change and human rights. Some 320,000 UK nationals visit Iceland every year, including on direct flights from Glasgow and Edinburgh.