

# News story: Penny Mordaunt represents UK Prime Minister at Sahel Conference

Representing the UK Prime Minister alongside world leaders including President Macron of France and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Ms Mordaunt announced further support to help strengthen security across the Sahel, where extremist groups including Da-esh, Al Qaeda and Boko Haram often operate freely.

The Sahel area of Africa (Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso) is beset by trafficking, violence, instability and extremism – which present significant future risk to the UK. The Sahel also has the fastest growing population in the world and the humanitarian situation is acute and precarious – 21.7m people don't have reliable access to their next meal.

As announced by Prime Minister Theresa May and President Macron of France at the UK-France Summit last month, the UK is providing £50m of lifesaving UK aid to the area, three chinook helicopters for strategic airlift and considering options to enhance UK diplomatic presence in the Sahel – in order to tackle significant future threats.

The additional support announced today will help improve the accommodation of Niger's army, who are currently living in tents while tackling armed groups along the border with Mali, and will contribute to emergency medical evacuation airlift provision.

The International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

The Sahel is one of the poorest places in the world, where over 40% of people struggle to live on less than \$2 a day, and where violence, conflict and extremism are widespread.

It's essential we act now with our European partners to help the Sahelian nations build security and stability, while continuing to deliver emergency humanitarian aid to those in desperate need.

By helping to keep hundreds of thousands of people safe from starvation and harm, we are tackling the causes of both migration and terrorism, to keep Britain safe.

- Today the International Development Secretary announced £2 million non-ODA CSSF for the G5 Sahel Joint Force to be spent over the next two years. The G5 Joint Force is a Sahelian regional security initiative and so this will involve supporting Sahel states to improve their own security. This will include:
  - Better infrastructure to improve the living conditions of the Nigerien G5 battalion – who are currently living in tents while tackling armed groups along the border with Mali.

- support to medical evacuation for G5 forces for troops in need of urgent medical care.
  - The announcement was made at the G5 Pledging Conference which saw international donors such as France and Germany provide additional funding to support the G5 Joint Force.
  - The G5 countries are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.
  - The humanitarian need in the Sahel is acute and precarious. 21.7m people don't have reliable access to their next meal – that's 1/3 of the population of the UK. The Sahel is poor relative to the rest of Africa, and the Human Development Index rankings in the region are amongst the lowest in the world.
  - Extremist groups such as Da-esh, al-Qaeda and Boko Haram already operate freely in much of the Sahel, and the area risks becoming a place of shelter for displaced extremists. It is also beset by widespread trafficking in people, drugs, weapons and illegal wildlife.
  - The Sahel is also a key transit zone for modern slavery from Nigeria and the key illegal migration transit route for those travelling from West Africa to Libya and Algeria.
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## [Press release: Welsh Secretary calls on Welsh Government to improve welfare standards in Welsh slaughterhouses](#)

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns has called on the Welsh Government to take further steps to drive up animal welfare standards in Wales as the UK Government today (23 Feb) laid legislation in Parliament to make CCTV cameras mandatory in slaughterhouses in England.

The legislation will come into effect in England from May 2018, once it passes through Parliament, at which point businesses will have six months to comply. It forms part of a package of reforms implemented by the UK Government designed to drive up welfare standards.

### **Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:**

This legislation is a clear demonstration of the steadfast and focused commitment the UK Government has to ensuring the highest possible animal welfare standards in the UK.

There is clearly a real strength of feeling among the public that all animals should be treated with the utmost respect at all stages of life and be subject to the highest possible welfare standards.

I would urge Welsh Ministers in Cardiff Bay to listen to those

voices and to investigate fully what further steps they can take to apply the same legislation to slaughterhouses in Wales to ensure the highest standards of animal health, welfare and food safety across the board.

**ENDS**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

In August 2017, the UK Government's Environment Secretary Michael Gove launched a consultation on the plans to deliver a manifesto commitment for CCTV to be required in every slaughterhouse in England in all areas where live animals are present, with unrestricted access to footage for Official Veterinarians – reassuring consumers that high welfare standards are being effectively enforced.

[A summary of responses](#) published in November showed that of almost 4,000 respondents, more than 99% were supportive of the plans.

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## **News story: Export win for UK food producers as lamb market reopens in Saudi Arabia**

British sheep farmers and meat producers will now have the opportunity to take advantage of the increasing demand for our high quality, delicious food and drink in Saudi Arabia – where total UK exports were worth over £152 million last year. Top exports in 2017 included sweet biscuits (£13m), chocolate (£10.9m), butter (£6m) and cheese (£5.1m).

The eagerly awaited deal has been secured by the government, working with the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) and UK Export Certification Partnership (UKECP) lifts a 20 year long ban on exporting British lamb after the BSE crisis.

The deal follows the Prime Minister's announcement last month that the Chinese government has agreed to progress lifting the BSE ban on UK beef exports to China, and is another boost to the UK's flourishing food and drink exports – which reached a record level of £22 billion in 2017.

Food minister George Eustice said:

This is a significant development for our British lamb farmers and meat producers, with the potential to boost jobs and bring millions

of pounds into an industry which guarantees quality from farm to fork.

As the global appetite for the UK's delicious food and drink products grows, we are supporting more of our farmers, fishermen and producers to take advantage of the world of opportunity that export markets have to offer.

AHDB International Market Development Director Phil Hadley said:

This is great news for the sheep industry and for lamb processors and producers in the UK who are keen to look at new, non-EU markets.

The announcement is the result of ongoing and detailed work between all parties and is a testament to the high regard and quality of UK lamb.

The news comes as British businesses promote their products at Gulfood, the world's largest annual food and beverage trade show currently being held in Dubai.

A team of the Government's leading trade experts continue to provide guidance to UK businesses as they enter into overseas markets for the first time or consider expanding their current global customer base – ensuring they are poised to take advantage of the increasing opportunities Brexit presents.

This is complemented by the government's Food is GREAT campaign, which highlights the success of current exporters and showcases the UK's top quality food and drink. And in January industry representatives and government officials held the first meeting of the newly created Food and Drink Sector Council, who will work together to increase productivity and help exports grow further.

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## [News story: Aviation Minister hails 10-year high in Newcastle air passenger numbers](#)

The Aviation Minister, Baroness Sugg, today (23 February 2018) recognised Newcastle International Airport as one of the north-east's "great success stories" as new figures revealed a 10-year-high in passenger numbers.

The latest statistics show the airport enjoyed its best start to a year since

2008, with more than 283,000 passengers passing through its terminal in January alone. The figures show how travellers from across the world are taking advantage of greater connectivity in the north.

Baroness Sugg is visiting Newcastle International Airport today as part of Northern Powerhouse International Week, in which the government is celebrating the global success of businesses in the north.

And the airport, which is also today announced as an official [Northern Powerhouse partner](#), represents a fitting example of that success, with its new passenger numbers underlining the growth in tourism and business in the north.

### [Newcastle Airport video](#)

The rise comes on the back of a series of extra routes opening up at the airport in the past year, with new flights to a number of destinations including Egypt, Tunisia and Iceland.

Aviation Minister Baroness Sugg said:

These latest statistics just underline how the northern economy continues to go from strength to strength.

Newcastle International Airport is undoubtedly one of the north-east's great success stories, bringing thousands of jobs to the area and delivering vital links with countries around the world.

And we are determined to help boost productivity in the region even further, starting with the significant investment we're making in transport infrastructure to improve connections between the north's towns, cities and counties.

As passenger numbers grow, the need for better connectivity increases and the government is responding with more than £13 billion worth of investment in transport across the north through to 2021.

And with multiple daily flights from Newcastle to Heathrow, the region is also in line to benefit from an expanded Heathrow, with the potential for new jobs and business opportunities.

Northern Powerhouse Minister, Jake Berry, said:

I'm delighted to welcome Newcastle Airport as our newest Northern Powerhouse partner. With their international flights connecting the Northern Powerhouse to the wider world, boosting exports by millions of pounds and driving up visitor numbers to the region, they are helping create a truly global north.

The government will provide funding which will go towards upgrading the A1

and completing the route from Newcastle to London as well as improvements to the Tyne and Wear Metro, an important link between Newcastle Airport, Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland.

These projects will benefit from the biggest investment in the north for a generation underlining the government's commitment to improving journeys for people across the entire region and delivering greater connectivity to the north-east's largest airport.

Newcastle International airport supports more than 19,000 jobs with 4,500 of those on site and serves a catchment area which contributes more than £1.6 billion to the regional economy every year.

Nick Jones, Chief Executive Officer at Newcastle International Airport said:

I'm delighted that Newcastle Airport has been announced as an official Northern Powerhouse partner today by the Aviation Minister.

As the north-east's largest airport, we're already going a long way to facilitating a truly 'global north' and we're committed to continuing to help the region achieve its best in the future, whether that's through our work promoting the north-east to overseas visitors, our role as international gateway for the [Great Exhibition of the North](#), or simply our extensive worldwide connections.

Councillor Iain Malcolm, Leader of South Tyneside Council and lead of the LA7 shareholders, said:

Newcastle International Airport is hugely important to the north-east, both as a gateway for the region and as a generator of jobs and millions of pounds for the local economy. The airport is critical to the regional economy, providing connections across the world, either directly or via a number of major hubs. We have already demonstrated with Emirates that we can both secure and make a success of a game changing new air route.

The team behind Newcastle International Airport and its shareholders work tirelessly to open up new market for both our leisure and business customers and I am delighted that today the airport is being announced as an official Northern Powerhouse partner, which will help to further increase the important role the airport plays.

More than £58 billion and 15,000 jobs have already been created by foreign investment in companies based in the north of England and as an official partner, Newcastle International has committed to helping the north attract new jobs and more investment.

They will work jointly with a number of other partners to promote the strengths of the north in 4 key areas of:

- connectivity and transport
- skills, science and innovation
- quality of life and culture
- devolution

This formal commitment will see Newcastle International work to proactively promote and publicise the successes of the Northern Powerhouse. Passengers travelling through the airport will also see evidence of this with branding appearing across the site.

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## **News story: Fairer pay for criminal defence advocates in legal aid cases**

The reformed Advocates' Graduated Fee Scheme (AGFS) will ensure that pay better reflects the actual work being done by criminal defence advocates and that advocates are being fairly remunerated for work in more complex cases.

The changes will bring the scheme in line with modern practices, taking into account the fact that more and more evidence is submitted electronically.

The process of determining fees will be simplified so that advocates can better understand how they will be paid for their work before they take on a case.

The new scheme is part of ongoing reforms to deliver a modern and effective justice system, whilst ensuring that legal aid is available in cases where it is most needed.

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said:

These changes will create a simpler and more modern pay system for defence advocates in legal aid-funded criminal cases.

We have listened to the views of legal professionals to ensure that advocates will be paid in a way that better reflects the reality of the work they do.

The government previously consulted on the fee proposals and has taken on feedback from professionals to help shape the scheme.

Significant changes have been made to the original proposals to ensure that the vital contribution of junior barristers and solicitor advocates is better

recognised in the new scheme.

The changes will come into effect on 1 April 2018 and will keep spend on fees at the current level, so that the reforms come at no additional cost to the tax payer.

## **Notes**

The [AGFS consultation response](#) can be found on GOV.UK.