

News story: Defence Secretary hails modern partnership with Australia

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson during a visit to the The Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier. Crown copyright.

In his first trip to Australia as Secretary of State for Defence, Mr Williamson met his counterpart, Minister for Defence, Marise Payne, in Sydney. They examined how both allies can continue to adapt in the face of cyber-attacks and nuclear threats from North Korea and how best to counter global terrorism.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Britain and Australia both face intensifying, complex and evolving threats to our way of life. That is why it is so important our two countries stand side-by-side to stay ahead of those who want to harm us.

Two Royal Navy warships, HMS Sutherland and HMS Argyll, are heading to the region to continue the pressure campaign on North Korea, demonstrating Britain's role on the international stage.

We have a long and historic relationship with Australia but today we are modern, equal, and global powers with shared values and a commitment to make the world a safer place.

As part of this modern partnership the UK and Australia:

- Have more than one hundred people from all three services on exchange programmes between our nations, working together and learning from each other;
- Are part of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing organisation and work together on tackling shared threats;
- Hold annual meetings of foreign and defence ministers (AUKMIN) to coordinate responses to shared threats, such as Daesh;
- Work together on the mission to establish stability in Syria and Afghanistan, to which Australia is the largest non-NATO contributor;
- Combine on humanitarian missions, such as: the two Malaysian airline

incidents, Ebola in Sierra Leone and disaster relief in Vanuatu;

- Police the seas as part of the Combined Maritime Forces, to provide security and stability on the seas, including tackling drug and weapon smugglers;
- Work together on science and technology, and defence equipment;
- Additionally, Royal Navy ship HMS Sutherland will visit Australia in February and March, allowing further opportunities for the two naval forces to collaborate.

The UK Defence Secretary also met Minister for Defence Industry, Christopher Pyne, in Canberra today (Monday 12 Feb) to discuss exciting new defence export opportunities as Britain prepares to leave the European Union.

The Type 26 Global Combat Ship is a key example of this and has been shortlisted for Australia's Future Frigate Programme. The cutting-edge warship would not only boost the partnership between the two countries, but would bolster Australia ballistic missile defences and give them an unrivalled anti-submarine warfare capability to face growing underwater threats.

Mr Williamson went on to meet Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, Michael McCormack, to talk about issues impacting and sharing research on Veterans and the successes of the British Armed Forces Covenant.

Australian forces recently solved a 103-year-old mystery when they discovered His Majesty's Australian Submarine AE1, the first Allied submarine lost in World War One, off the coast of Papua New Guinea.

[Press release: Major step forward for Wisley junction upgrade](#)

Under the plans, the interchange between the M25 and the A3 will be redesigned to create four dedicated link roads for all drivers making left turns at the junction while drivers turning right will use a new enlarged junction roundabout.

The A3 will also be widened from three lanes to four between Ockham and Painshill in both directions with two lanes remaining over the M25. A new access road providing better, safer access to several local roads and RHS Garden Wisley will be created. The A245 will also be widened near the

Painshill junction to accommodate three lanes of traffic leaving and joining the A3.

Two options for the upgrade were initially put to the public last winter before a preferred option was announced in November. Since then, Highways England has been developing the proposals, including detailed discussions with key stakeholders and residents, including RHS Wisley, Painshill Park and others. Now, a six-week consultation on the updated proposals is underway.

Highways England Regional Delivery Director for the South East Chris Welby-Everard said:

This consultation will help determine the final proposals we end up taking forward for planning permission, so I'd encourage anyone with an interest to get involved and have their say.

Around 100,000 drivers each day use this busy junction to switch between the M25 and A3, with a further 170,000 drivers passing through the junction daily, often getting caught up in rush hour congestion and tailbacks.

We have worked hard on developing the plans further since we announced the preferred option last year. As well as making a real difference to peoples' journeys, we are proposing better, safer access for the local roads that currently turn directly on to the A3 and offering significantly upgraded crossing points for people on foot, by bike or on horseback and making sure we respect the protected environments nearby. This consultation is an excellent chance to help shape our plans.

This package of improvements will create extra capacity at the junction and the surrounding area and, on opening, will shave up to five minutes off journeys made through the junction during the morning and afternoon peaks.

Visualisation of the proposed improvements at junction 10 on the M25 which includes free flow left turns, an increase from 3 lanes to 4 as well as new dedicated facilities for non-motorised users

The M25/A3 interchange is a key congestion pinch point on the strategic road network and has one of the highest recorded collision rates across the Highways England network. The proposed plans will help to reduce delays, make journeys more reliable, ease congestion and improve safety.

For more information on the consultation, public information dates and how to have your say, [visit the scheme website](#).

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.

Speech: Let's raise our ambitions for a cleaner, greener railway

Good morning.

It's a pleasure to be here today (12 February 2018).

And where better to discuss the knowledge economy than the British Museum?

A place 'full of unassailable facts', according to Trollope.

And a fitting backdrop for this Knowledge Quarter conference.

Since this kind invitation was extended, I have moved from being Universities and Science Minister to being a Minister in the Department of Transport and Minister for London

And the invitation followed me.

In fact, it was clear to me that even as I entered the world of bus lanes, cycle-superhighways and high-speed trains, there was no leaving the knowledge economy.

Our hard infrastructure of roads, railways and airports and our soft infrastructure, in the form of our human capital and the institutions that cultivate it, are of course intimately connected and mutually dependent.

And one of the reasons for the Knowledge Quarter's success as a cluster is certainly its hyperconnectedness, so obvious in its extraordinary transport links.

St Pancras, gateway to continental Europe, now restored to its Victorian splendour.

King's Cross Station, transformed in recent years and now catering for 50 million passengers a year.

Euston about to be transformed by HS2, with faster connections to Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds.

Multiple bus routes.

Six different underground lines, as well as the Elizabeth Line and, eventually, Crossrail 2.

The Knowledge Quarter is networked – a quality that's vital for the transmission of knowledge into practical applications in our economy.

Transport and travel have always been fundamental to the development and diffusion of knowledge.

We can see that in the collection that surrounds us at the British Museum today...

With its countless stories of exploration, adventure and discovery.

And it's that relationship – between transport and knowledge – that I'd like to discuss today.

During the 19th century, Britain developed from an agricultural economy to an industrial one.

But today, our economic performance is increasingly dependent on our human capital.

Skills, creativity and innovation are more likely to provide a competitive advantage than access to mass labour or natural resources.

At the same time, the relationship between the state, business and citizens is changing.

It was Sir Francis Bacon who said 'Scientia potestas est' – knowledge is power.

Today, we all have unprecedented access to information and knowledge.

Tweets and videos go round the world in an afternoon – and sometimes old ones come back to bite too.

Higher education, once rationed to a narrow elite, is now a mass undertaking.

Whereas only 19% of young people went to university in 1990, the proportion is now close to 46% – and this includes more people from disadvantaged backgrounds than ever before.

Technology and political devolution are combining to rebalance power away from the centre – and towards the region, the community, and the individual.

This might sound like a threat to some.

But it's actually an opportunity.

It's an opportunity that's at the heart of the government's [Industrial Strategy](#).

In our support for hard and soft infrastructure – from HS2 to broadband to

our universities and our world-leading science base.

In our creation of elected mayors and devolved authorities.

Building and supporting the knowledge economy across the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine – areas that were global leaders when the industrial economy was thriving, and that are now diversifying into new sectors.

We want the rest of the country to be as hyperconnected as you are here in London's Knowledge Quarter.

The new industries taking hold in these regions depend increasingly on innovation and specialist knowledge.

Sustainable energy and cyber security in Northern Ireland.

Manchester's media sector and science parks.

Digital hubs in Leeds and Newcastle.

And fast-growing creative industries in Wales.

But although new knowledge clusters depend on modern skills and innovation, something about them never changes.

Their reliance on good transport links and communications.

The Knowledge Quarter is itself actually part of a much bigger geographical network – sometimes known as the Golden Triangle – linking Oxford, Cambridge and London.

And containing one of the world's great science and innovation hubs.

Even within this extraordinary Golden Triangle, there is scope for better connectivity.

Which is why we're reviving the rail line between Oxford and Cambridge.

This route survived the Beeching cuts of the early 1960s, but was torn up a few years later by British Rail.

The closure of the line was one of the most regrettable acts of transport vandalism of the era.

Today, the corridor from Oxford to Cambridge is one of the fastest-growing areas of the country.

It contains not only brilliant universities, but also a great concentration of science and technology employers.

But transport connections between Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford are so poor they create a barrier between hubs of knowledge-based growth.

So we are restoring the old line.

And we aim to have it fully open by 2030.

By reconnecting the two university cities with rail services, and by linking up Milton Keynes, Bedford, Bicester and Bletchley in the Golden Triangle, we aim to create a knowledge corridor that will drive growth and jobs for generations to come.

To develop more of these hubs across the country, we're carrying out place-based Science and Innovation audits.

To build new consortia and smart regional specialisations.

We also want to deepen connections between knowledge hubs across the UK.

From Scotland to Cornwall to Northern Ireland.

It's vital we stimulate the knowledge economy by improving transport throughout the country.

That's why we're working with Transport for the North on its important plans for [Northern Powerhouse Rail](#).

And it's why we're transforming connections between Yorkshire, Lancashire and the Midlands by building HS2, linking 8 of our 10 biggest cities.

The biggest investment in the country's railways since the Victorian era.

But there's a clear problem with hypermobility that we must also acknowledge.

We're travelling twice as much as we did in 1970.

We're driving more than ever before.

And flying more than ever.

Many thought transport would become less necessary as the Internet grew.

But in fact the opposite has happened.

And while this mobility spurs economic growth, there's a price to pay.

In congestion.

Overcrowded trains.

Pollution.

And carbon emissions.

In fact there comes a point when too much travel undermines its benefits.

When congestion clogs the network and pollution destroys our planet.

We're at that tipping point today.

Congestion plagues the Knowledge Quarter and every major city in the country.

The average speed of vehicles in the centre of London is now just 8 mph during the day.

Trollope would recognise these paltry speeds.

That's a slow trot for a horse. If it carries on declining, we'll before long reach equine walking pace.

However, occasionally, an opportunity arises to make a breakthrough.

To invest in and roll out technologies that are true game-changers.

Providing completely new solutions to old problems.

And we have one of those opportunities today.

To rethink the way we plan and deliver transport services.

To end our reliance on fossil fuels.

With self-driving vehicles and smart infrastructure.

With digital communications that design transport services around the user.

Our opportunity – if we grasp it – is to make travel easier and more reliable.

To clean up transport emissions.

To diversify our transport industry into new markets, and stimulate knowledge-based growth in our economy.

All while continuing to enjoy the special advantages that good transport connections have always brought.

That's the challenge.

The pace of innovation in the automotive sector, with driverless vehicles about to change our lives in ways we are only now just grasping, is breathtaking.

So let me instead take rail as my example.

Here there has been less innovation.

Certainly – train services have grown at a remarkable rate since privatisation in the 1990s.

Particularly considering that our railway infrastructure was designed and built for a Victorian economy – not a 21st century one.

As a result we now have one of the most intensively used networks in Europe.

This government is injecting record levels of investment in the railway to help it cope with these pressures and to grow further.

But alongside increased funding, the industry also needs to modernise and to innovate.

Compared with other forms of transportation, progress has been palpably slow.

Yes, we've got real-time platform information.

Better train management allowing more services to run on existing tracks.

And big improvements in safety.

But the railways of today are ones that in many respects Trollope would again have no difficulty in recognising.

The pace of innovation needs to find a new gear.

Sometimes, those innovations can be relatively modest.

That's why in October we launched the 'First of a Kind' programme...

With Innovate UK and the Knowledge Transfer Network...

To speed up the delivery of new ideas and improvements to rail services.

Today I can announce that the [winning ideas from the programme's first £3.5 million competition](#) include:

A system to guide passengers to available seats when boarding.

Apps that will improve the travel experience for disabled passengers.

And programmes which will educate and inform long distance passengers about the sights they see from their window.

But other innovations have to be on a much bigger scale.

And that's why I am today announcing a new ambition.

I would like to see us take all diesel-only trains off the track by 2040.

If that seems like an ambitious goal – it should be and I make no apology for that.

After all, we're committed to ending sales of petrol and diesel cars by 2040.

If we can achieve that, then why can't the railway aspire to a similar objective?

Rail may be less carbon intensive than road transport.

That's why modal shift's so important.

Getting freight and passenger vehicles off the roads onto greener forms of transport.

But that does not absolve the rail industry from cleaning up its own act.

You may have seen stories recently about transport becoming the most polluting sector of our economy.

And the fact that rail emissions have actually increased in absolute terms. Up 33% since 1990.

This cannot go on.

Now – we are making progress on modernising rolling stock.

For example, the much derided Pacers are going.

Along with other long-standing members of the fleet like Intercity 125s....

Old diesels being replaced by much cleaner trains featuring low carbon and NOx technology.

But we need to go further...

By decarbonising rail, we'll reduce pollutants and improve air quality, particularly in our semi-enclosed stations.

We will tackle this with the urgency it deserves by setting tough new environmental performance goals in each rail franchise which the train operators will have to meet.

Total electrification of our tracks is unlikely to be the only or most cost-effective way to secure these vital environmental benefits.

New bi-modes trains are a great bridging technology to other low emission futures.

Bi-mode trains fitted with modern diesels – which we started introducing last autumn on the Great Western line and on the East Coast Main Line in 2018 – are less polluting than the trains they replaced.

And as battery technologies improve we expect to see the diesel engines in bi-modes replaced altogether.

With batteries powering the train between the electrified sections of the network.

Or maybe in the future we could see those batteries and diesel engines replaced with hydrogen units?

Alternative-fuel trains powered entirely by hydrogen are a prize on the horizon.

I'd like to see hydrogen train trials on the UK railway as soon as possible.

Hydrogen offers an affordable – and potentially much cleaner – alternative to diesel.

And the technology has developed fast in recent years.

To the extent that Alstom is now testing a train which only emits steam and condensed water – yet is capable of 140 km per hour and a range of up to 800 kilometres.

Which matches the performance of regular regional trains.

Rolls Royce is also looking at this technology

So the next generation of trains is just around the corner.

To speed our journey towards a zero-carbon railway, the government is investing record amounts in public R&D to improve our knowledge base.

Through the environmental performance goals we are setting in each rail franchise, we will hold the train operators to account for progress.

These include reducing energy consumption of trains, depots and many stations.

We have tasked Arriva – the operator of the Northern franchise – to deliver an electric/battery hybrid on the Windermere branch from 2021.

But the drive to decarbonise must come from all sectors of the industry.

So today I am calling on the railway to provide a vision for how it will decarbonise.

And I expect the industry to report back by the autumn.

I want to see a clear, long term strategy with consistent objectives and incentives.

I want to see options like lighter rolling stock and alternative sources of power considered and analysed.

I want barriers to innovation removed, so ideas can be brought to market more rapidly.

And I want to see the railway industry show a lead on this crucial issue.

With train operators, Network Rail, and the companies that supply them – all working together as one team.

So let me finish this speech on a positive note.

Despite the challenges I've outlined today, I hope I've also communicated my optimism about the prospects for the future of transport in this country.

The organisations here in the Knowledge Quarter have a role to play in developing technologies and know-how that will help Britain to enjoy an even bigger advantage from transport in the future:

Increased mobility for every part of the community – yet less congestion.

More intensive use of the infrastructure – and yet more comfortable travel.

Faster journeys – yet fewer transport emissions. These goals are within our grasp.

A knowledge economy more innovative than ever.

So let's raise our ambitions – and realise them.

Thank you.

Press release: Film producer whose company raised £5 million from investors disqualified

The disqualification order was made against Mr Cowan following an investigation by the Insolvency Service which also commenced the winding up of [Warlord Productions Ltd](#) in the public interest.

Mr Cowan was the sole director of Warlord Productions Ltd a company which raised money from members of the public, who believed they were investing in a feature film, claiming it would have an A list cast. The film was never made.

The official receiver's investigation uncovered that the company set out to raise £2.5 million for the film Henry 5. Despite raising over £5 million from private investors, little if any of the money was used for film production. Instead, over £3.4 million, went in sales commissions, and of the remaining £1.6 million, £1.15 million was paid to two of Mr Cowan's other companies and £200,000 towards the purchase of a house without any security being taken.

To make matters worse, for almost half of its investors by value, the company did not keep records who the investors were, or how much they had invested. Consequently, if the film had been made, and had generated profits records weren't held that would have allowed returns to be made. When it became clear that the film would not be made, the company was not in any position to repay monies raised.

Anthony Hannon, Official Receiver in the Public Interest Unit, said:

Little if any of the large sums raised from the public were used for the stated purposes, and there has been detriment both to the investing members of the public and to the reputation of investment in the UK film industry.

The Insolvency Service will look closely at any evidence of misconduct and take appropriate action where directors have used investor monies for other purposes.

Mr Cowan is of Peacehaven, Sussex. His date of birth is February 1965.

Warlord Productions Ltd (Company No. 08379786) was incorporated on 29 January 2013 and was wound up in the public interest by the High Court on 1 July 2015.

The disqualification order was pronounced by Chief Registrar Briggs on 22 November 2017, with the deputy official receiver appearing on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Mr Cowan did not attend and was not represented.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences,

primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies.

The agency also authorises and regulates the insolvency profession, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

Further information about the work of the Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team is [\[available\]\(https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/bis-criminal-prosecutions\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/bis-criminal-prosecutions)

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7674 6910 or 020 7596 6187

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

Speech: Kenya's democracy is at a crossroad: Article signed off by Heads of Missions

Kenya is special. As diplomats living here, we see and admire daily the determination and creativity of the Kenyan people; the energy and innovation of Kenyan business; and the inspiring democratic journey that Kenya has made since independence. These and Kenya's many other achievements have made it a hub for the region and indeed for the continent and the world.

Like all democratic countries, including our own, Kenya's democracy is not perfect. But it can and should remain a source of strength, and an inspiration to all of us.

That is why, as friends, we are deeply concerned by recent political developments in Kenya. Both the government and the opposition have taken steps that have undermined Kenya's institutions, and driven wedges among its citizens.

A father of multi-party democracy has made unsubstantiated claims about elections and unilaterally sworn himself as "President", in deliberate disregard of the Constitution for which he so proudly fought.

The government, which should be the guarantor of liberty and freedom of expression for all under the law, has shut down television stations, seized

the passports of opposition leaders, refused to obey court orders, and deported a prominent opposition lawyer. These events follow two elections that left many Kenyans dead and many more livelihoods disrupted.

For friends of Kenya, alarm bells are ringing.

The ambitions of politicians are fundamentally weakening institutions, and breaking the bonds of shared citizenship, which Kenyans have built up patiently over decades.

We are concerned not because we presume to dictate how Kenyans should regulate their country's affairs – we don't. But as fellow democracies, we know our freedoms and rights were hard won, and how carefully we must cherish, strengthen and protect them if our nations are to thrive and prosper.

For democracy to work, leaders must govern justly on behalf of all citizens. When citizens disagree with the decisions leaders make, they dissent peacefully. Opposition provides a check on governmental power. A free media and civil society keep the public informed and facilitate dialogue, and that dialogue improves the policies and programs that leaders deliver to their citizens.

Institutions and Constitutions are not abstract things of interest only to lawyers. They are the only way to ensure that everyone can get justice regardless of gender, religion, wealth or personal connections; can build a better future for their family; and can have their voice heard in the decisions that affect their lives.

Today, Kenya stands at a fork in the road along its democratic journey. Its leaders need to take the right path for Kenya to succeed.

We strongly urge the government to comply fully with court orders and follow legal process in appealing or contesting them. Freedom of expression, freedom of the media, and all civil rights need to be protected. When individuals are arrested, their rights should be respected and due process followed. Citizens have the responsibility to protest non-violently, and security services should avoid unnecessary or excessive use of force. Whatever the conduct of others, the government has a special duty to protect democratic institutions and adhere to the Constitution and the rule of law at all times.

Meanwhile, the opposition must accept the decision of the Supreme Court to uphold the election of October 26. Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto are the legitimate President and Deputy President of Kenya. The opposition needs to accept this as the basis for the dialogue that it and many Kenyans want. Stoking and threatening violence are not acceptable, nor are extra-Constitutional measures to seize power.

As partners, we will do all we can to help; but only Kenyans can resolve the country's problems. We again call for an immediate, sustained, open, and transparent National Conversation involving all Kenyans, to build national cohesion, address long-standing issues, and resolve the deep-seated divisions

that the electoral process has exacerbated.

We are investing in Kenya and have great hope for the future. But Kenyans must summon now all their strength and resolve, reaffirm the Constitution, and put the country back on the path to democracy, prosperity, and security.

This op-ed was signed off by:

Nic Hailey High Commissioner for the United Kingdom

Robert F. Godec Ambassador of the United States

Jutta Frascch Ambassador of Germany

Alison Chartres High Commissioner for Australia

Sara Hradecky High Commissioner for Canada

Mette Knudsen Ambassador of Denmark

Anna Jardfelt Ambassador of Sweden

Victor Conrad Rønneberg Ambassador of Norway

Frans Makken Ambassador of the Netherlands

Tarja Fernández Ambassador of Finland

Kim Ramoneda Chargé d’Affaires a.i, France