

News story: FCO Minister for Asia and the Pacific Mark Field visits Vietnam

During his visit, Mr Field will chair the 6th UK-Vietnam Strategic Dialogue together with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Bui Thanh Son. They are expected to discuss a broad range of issues, including bilateral trade and investment; cooperation in education, science and innovation; the UK-Vietnam defence relationship; and global issues such as the illegal wildlife trade.

Minister Field will separately meet Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh to discuss regional security and human rights as well as UK-Vietnam trade and investment and post-Brexit relations.

The Minister will also have a meeting with Vice Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Ha Cong Tuan to discuss the illegal wildlife trade and the role which Vietnam can play to lead action in South East Asia and at the 2018 London Conference on IWT following the Hanoi IWT Conference in 2017

The Minister will visit the Hanoi Stock Exchange to promote UK financial services. He will also visit the National Hospital of Tropical Diseases to promote the UK's research, innovation and education collaboration with Vietnam.

His programme will also include a visit to a bear rescue centre to witness first hand its work on combating the illegal wildlife trade, and where he will meet representatives of NGOs to talk about the upcoming 2018 illegal wildlife trade conference in London.

Minister Field said:

I am delighted to be here in Hanoi for the UK-Vietnam Strategic Dialogue, celebrating the forty fifth anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two countries. I hope this visit will help to deepen our already strong partnership and will identify areas for further cooperation.

There is much more we can do to work together in areas such as trade investment, defence links, research and innovation as well as important global issues such as combating serious and organised crime, the illegal wildlife trade and modern slavery

News story: Minister for Asia and Pacific Mark Field returns to Thailand for Strategic Dialogue

The Minister's main focus, along with his Thai counterpart, His Excellency Mr Virasakdi Futrakul, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, was the third UK-Thailand Strategic Dialogue. They covered a wide range of topics including Brexit, trade and investment in Thailand, science and innovation, education and the illegal wildlife trade.

Minister Field said:

I am delighted to be back in Bangkok and to have the opportunity to meet my Thai counterpart for wide-ranging discussions. As Prime Minister Theresa May has said, the UK is a country that goes out into the world to build relationships with old friends and new allies alike, a great, global trading nation that is respected around the world.

Our relationship with Thailand is an important element of this, and spans a broad range of issues from bilateral trade and investment to regional security.

In Bangkok, Mr Field met with Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha to deepen the UK-Thailand relationship and to explore opportunities to increase our bilateral trade and prosperity.

Mr Field also met the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, General Surasak Karnjanarat, to discuss how the UK and Thailand can cooperate on tackling the illegal wildlife trade and climate change.

Following his visit to Bangkok, Minister Field travelled to Hanoi in Vietnam.

News story: The Maritime Enterprise Innovation and Research Conference 2018

The Maritime, Enterprise, Innovation and Research (MEIR) unit are looking for key technologies that will significantly improve the ability for unmanned/

autonomous systems to operate in the underwater environment, by expanding their use and employ-ability for military and commercial use. Proposals will be welcomed through the [DASA Open Call for Innovation](#).

The MEIR challenges will be briefed in detail at the MEIR Conference at the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow) on 24 January 2018. MEIR members, which include the Royal Navy and MOD subject matter experts, will be on hand at this event to discuss the technical detail behind the challenges.

Representatives from the DASA team will be present to discuss how the Open Call will support this.

There are 2 specific challenges for which the Royal Navy seeks innovative technologies to resolve, by:

- Providing, or contributing towards, low power, high accuracy navigation for unmanned underwater vehicles (UUV).

This challenge is based on the fact that current UUV navigation systems tend to rely on relatively high power inertial systems. A low power solution would enable greater endurance or increased capability, and utility could be increased through expanding the ability to navigate without input from other traditional autonomous navigation sensors (for example, GPS).

- Allowing longer duration operations from autonomous systems.

This challenge is based on expanding system range and endurance through advanced energy management and generation, energy scavenging and storage, and the use of low power systems.

MEIR aims to bring together Users, SMEs, Tier1 Industry partners, DASA and Defence Innovation funding to develop a clear exploitation path to solve/assist solving complex maritime problems in the underwater environment through creativity and collaboration.

If you are interested in registering for this event, please get in touch directly with the University of Strathclyde on corporate-events@strath.ac.uk

News story: Civil news: next steps in 2018 civil contracts tender process

We are contacting organisations from 4 January 2018 with updates and guidance on next steps about their bids for 2018 civil contracts work.

This follows the closure of tenders for Civil Legal Advice (CLA) and face to face contracts on 10 November 2017.

We will be advising organisations that:

- bid for a face to face contract but whose application failed to reach the minimum threshold to be given further consideration
- have been successful in bidding for face to face contracts in the Housing & Debt category
- have been shortlisted for a CLA contract

Notifications for the remaining categories will follow in due course.

How will these announcements be made?

We will formally write to each affected organisation using the e-Tendering system, advising them of the status of their tenders, in the week beginning 2 January 2018.

We anticipate that all notifications will have been sent out by Wednesday 10 January 2018.

Applicants bidding for face to face housing and debt contracts who have not been notified by 10 January should contact us through the e-Tendering message board.

What about notifications for other categories?

We will notify applicants who have bid for other face to face categories of law in March 2018.

When will new contracts begin?

Services under new face to face and CLA contracts will begin on 1 September 2018. Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS) contracts will follow on 1 October 2018.

How long will the contracts last?

Each contract will initially run until 31 August 2021, with an option for the Legal Aid Agency to extend for up to a further 2 years.

What will happen next?

We will continue to consider tenders in line with the process set out in the Information for Applicants (IFA).

Provider enquiries

Update concerning announcement published on GOV.UK Legal Aid Civil Tender 2018 page:

[Civil 2018 contracts tender](#)

News story: New Falklands Chief Justice appointed

On instructions from the Secretary of State, His Excellency the Governor has formally appointed Mr James Lewis QC as the Honourable the Chief Justice of the Falkland Islands.

Mr Lewis was officially sworn in by the Governor at a ceremony held at Government House on Thursday 4 January.

Governor of the Falkland Islands, Nigel Phillips CBE commented:

"I am delighted to be able to welcome James as the new Chief Justice for the Falkland Islands.

"James and his wife have a longstanding interest and connection with the Islands, a huge breadth of experience in the judiciary and working with other Overseas Territories. I know James will receive a warm welcome from the community."

A specialist in both civil and criminal cases, Mr Lewis was called to the bar in 1987 after serving for a number of years with Her Majesty's Armed Forces. He was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 2002.

Mr Lewis commented:

"I am very much looking forward to taking up the appointment of Chief Justice and getting to know the Falkland Islands.

"My interest in the Falkland Islands was first sparked whilst on standby for the Falklands war as a young second lieutenant in 1982. Subsequently my wife visited the Falkland Islands in 1983 as a journalist and guest of the 1st Battalion The Coldstream Guards. Indeed, at home we display a framed copy of the front page of the Penguin News published on the day victory was declared (presented to my wife by the then editor of the paper).

"My interest in the region has been further inspired by my recent expedition to the Antarctic this year when I visited both Scott's and Shackleton's huts, islands in the Ross sea, and the New Zealand subantarctic islands."

Mr Lewis and his wife, have another connection to the Islands: "My wife's former secondary school teacher, who became a family friend, was the late Geoff Moir DFC, who taught at Fox Bay West and was very involved with the Falkland Islands Association."

Mr Lewis takes over from Simon Bryan QC, the previous Chief Justice who has recently been appointed as a High Court Judge.

Governor Phillips said:

"On behalf of the whole community I would like to thank Simon for his support over the last few years and wish him and his family well for the future."