

Press release: Foreign Secretary condemns attempted missile strike on Riyadh

I am appalled by another attempted missile strike on Riyadh on 19 December. This is the second such shocking incident in six weeks, which yet again deliberately targeted a populated area.

I strongly condemn the Houthis for this attack, which they have claimed. Everyone will be outraged at the Houthi spokesman boast that they were targeting the Royal Palace.

I call upon all countries in the region to do what they can to implement UN Security Council Resolutions and prevent such attacks which are increasing regional tensions. I strongly support UN investigations into the origins of these weapons and welcome the UN's suggestion of a joint discussion of the relevant UN bodies to look into these threats and consider action against those responsible. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting Saudi Arabia as it faces regional crises and security threats.

News story: Webinar – 18 Jan – Simplifying the process of selling to the public sector

To make it easier for SMEs to sell to government, Crown Commercial Service is working to standardise terms and conditions and simplify the language used in contracts. Jason Waterman FCIPS is Deputy Director of Disputes & Policy Implementation and leading work on simplifying business for SMEs. In this webinar, Jason will discuss work underway and answer your questions on how government is easing the path to procurement.

Click [here](#) to register.

Press release: UK Minister for Africa condemns attack on aid convoy in Nigeria

Minister for Africa, Rory Stewart said:

“I condemn the attack on Saturday against a humanitarian convoy in Borno State, in which four people lost their lives. The UK continues to support the United Nations and humanitarian partners as they deliver essential food supplies to people affected by the current conflict – food that was lost in this attack.

“We call on all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and refrain from launching attacks against civilians or humanitarian operations. Life-saving assistance has been provided to 5 million people in the north east of Nigeria, this vital work to help people most in need must not be hampered.”

Further information

Press release: Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission priorities confirmed

Professor Sadie Morgan, Deputy Chair and Sir John Armitt, Chair of the Thames Valley Growth Commission

The priorities of the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission, which include equipping people with the right skills and providing high quality housing, have been announced during a visit by the new Chair and Deputy Chair.

Sir John Armitt, who was announced as the new Chair at the Budget, visited Bexley to outline the Commission’s areas of focus for the coming months. The Commission’s final report, which will lay out recommendations to government, will be published in spring 2018.

Sir John, who is former Chair of the Olympic Delivery Authority, replaces the former Government Advisor on Local Growth, Lord Heseltine, who stepped down from the Commission in March 2017. He is joined by Deputy Chair, Professor Sadie Morgan, co-founding director at the award-winning practice, dRMM Architects.

Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, said:

It's long been known that the Thames Estuary has vast economic potential and, as a government, we're determined to capitalise on this for the benefit of local communities and national growth.

The Commission, benefitting from refreshed leadership, will now build on its vision to unleash growth and boost productivity.

Sir John Armitt, Chair of the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission, said:

I welcome the opportunity to lead this vital piece of work. I look forward to engaging with all stakeholders to produce a compelling vision and delivery plan for this exciting area, which I believe can help drive the UK's economic growth.

Professor Sadie Morgan, Deputy Chair of the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission, said:

With a combined population of over three million and no shortage of great ideas, the Thames Estuary is brimming with opportunities. I am delighted to be supporting Sir John in helping all stakeholders to realise the exceptional potential of this region.

The Commission will draw together and develop existing plans into a vision to stimulate future growth for decades to come. I have a strong affinity with the Thames Estuary, having lived in the area all my life, and so look forward to being a part of this exciting journey.

The Commission will now focus on the following priorities:

- Sectors – creating internationally-competitive centres of excellence that build on the corridor's sector strengths, for example in ports and logistics, and making the most of growth sectors such as the creative industries
- Connectivity – making the most of planned investments such as the Lower Thames Crossing, and assessing the case for other investments that have been proposed, such as further river crossings and extending the Elizabeth Line to Ebbsfleet
- Communities – ensuring that people right across the corridor benefit from expected growth, including equipping them with the right skills, making sure high-quality housing is available, promoting use of the

river, and enhancing the Thames Estuary's natural environment

- Delivery – working closely with organisations and communities to develop a plan for delivering the vision, aligning with the Government's intention to explore ambitious housing deals in the area.

Since it was established in March 2016, The Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission has been working to develop an ambitious vision and delivery plan for North Kent, South Essex and East London up to 2050. Home to 3.8 million people, the Thames Estuary is on the doorstep of both London and continental Europe, and has the potential to support growth right across the country. It also faces some real challenges, including significant pockets of deprivation.

The Commission ran a [call for ideas](#) from July to September 2016. There were over 100 respondents, including public, private and third sector organisations, and members of the public. The Commission has also held visits to the Thames Estuary, including along the river itself. Both the Commission and the government are grateful to all those who have provided input, and are committed to delivering a compelling vision and delivery plan in close collaboration with a wide range of partners.

Sir John Armit is Chair of the National Express Group and the City & Guilds Group, Deputy Chair of the Berkeley Group and the National Infrastructure Commission, and a member of the Board of Transport for London. He is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Institution of Civil Engineers and City & Guilds of London Institute. He was awarded the CBE in 1996 for his contribution to the rail industry and a knighthood in 2012 for services to engineering and construction.

Professor Sadie Morgan is a co-founding director at the award-winning practice, dRMM Architects. She became the youngest and only third ever-female President of the Architectural Association in 2013. In March 2015, Sadie was appointed as Design Chair for High Speed Two (HS2) reporting directly to the Secretary of State. She is also a member of the National Infrastructure Commission.

[News story: Education Secretary launches RSE call for evidence](#)

- Views of teachers, parents and young people to help shape first updating of relationships and sex education guidance since 2000

- New approach to combat online issues
- Follows confirmation that the subject will be compulsory in all schools, to help equip every young person for life in modern Britain

The government is asking parents, teachers and young people to help shape a new relationships and sex education curriculum that will help them stay safe and face the challenges of the modern world.

The current statutory guidance for teaching Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) was introduced in 2000. It currently fails to address risks to children which have grown in prevalence in recent years, including online pornography, sexting and staying safe online.

The guidance is being updated after legislation was passed by Parliament earlier this year to make relationships education compulsory in all primary schools and relationships and sex education compulsory in all secondary schools.

As part of that process, an eight week call for evidence will invite views on age-appropriate content on mental wellbeing, staying safe online and LGBT issues in the updated subjects.

The move to make RSE compulsory was welcomed by the teaching profession and organisations such as Barnardo's, Stonewall, the Catholic Education Service, NSPCC, Terrence Higgins Trust and the End Violence Against Women coalition.

Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

It is unacceptable that Relationships and Sex Education guidance has not been updated for almost 20 years especially given the online risks, such as sexting and cyber bullying, our children and young people face. Young people must have an education that teaches them the importance of healthy and stable relationships.

This call for evidence is about giving teachers, parents and especially young people a chance to help shape that new approach and I'd urge them to take part.

Currently only pupils attending local-authority run secondary schools – which represent around a third of secondary schools – are guaranteed to be offered Sex and Relationship Education as currently delivered.

The 'call for evidence' aims to gather views from people across England from all backgrounds on the content of this subject. It will look to establish:

- what teachers think they should be teaching their pupils to help them navigate the modern world they are growing up in;
- how parents expect their children to be taught this topic in a safe and

age-appropriate way; and

- what children themselves think they would benefit from understanding the most, and the online risks they are concerned with.

Ian Bauckham, who was awarded the CBE in 2017 for services to education, will lead this process. He is CEO of a multi-academy trust, executive head of a large 11-18 Church of England comprehensive in Kent and, as a National Leader of Education (NLE), works with many other schools in the region and more widely.

Ian Bauckham CBE said:

I warmly welcome the government's decision to seek views on these important topics. Since I started work as a teacher over thirty years ago, enormous changes have taken place both in the lives of young people and in the wider world in which we are preparing them to live. I hope that the call for evidence being launched now gives us the chance to find out about the best teaching and to improve provision for all our young people in all types of school.

The teaching of this important subject in schools is supported by the wider public. Recent surveys show that:

- 91% of parents believe all pupils should receive lessons to teach them about the risks of sexting, as well as other issues such as contact from strangers online; and
- 74% of 11 – 15 years old believe that children would be safer if they had age appropriate classes on relationships and sex education.