

Press release: Bright future for Forestry Commission in England

New changes to strengthen the role of the [Forestry Commission](#) and protect England's forests for future generations have been announced today by Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey.

From April 2019 Scottish Ministers will take on full responsibility for their national forests – meaning the Forestry Commission will remain in England, continuing to protect, improve and expand some of the country's best-known landscapes, from the Forest of Dean to Northumberland's Kielder Forest.

The Commission will continue to manage more than 250,000 hectares of England's Public Forest Estate, with a new board of Commissioners established to oversee this.

The world-renowned Forest Research will remain as an agency of the Forestry Commission, working closely with partners across the UK.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Our forests and woodlands are vital for providing timber, protecting wildlife, and helping us improve our environment for the next generation.

Public forests in particular are one of our greatest national assets, and the Forestry Commission's work to enhance woodlands across England remains at the heart of our environmental ambitions.

These arrangements provide certainty for the Commission and its staff, helping some of our most precious landscapes thrive into the future.

The Forestry Commission will maintain its specialist forestry expertise, continuing to offer support, advice and guidance to land owners and managers responsible for England's woodlands.

The new Board of Commissioners will bring strong experience in commercial, community and environmental backgrounds that will complement the work of the new organisation.

The changes will coincide with the Forestry Commission's Centenary year in 2019.

Sir Harry Studholme, Chair of the Forestry Commission, said:

This is an exciting moment for the Forestry Commission. After

nearly a century of creating and managing Britain's forests, the transfer of formal responsibility for Scotland's forests to the Scottish Government will allow the Forestry Commission in England to increase its focus on the needs of English users.

This will strengthen the Commission in its role of safeguarding and protecting the Public Forest Estate now and for the next 100 years.

The English, Scottish and Welsh Governments will continue to work together to commission forest research, sustain high standards for forestry in the UK, and protect trees against pests and diseases.

Ends

Press release: David Davis: 'Our determination to face shared threats will not diminish'

Ahead of the negotiations later this week, David Davis paid a visit to Rome today to reiterate the UK's commitment to deepening its bilateral relationships with countries across Europe, after its departure from the EU.

Existing cooperation between both the UK and Italy was a key focus of the trip, which encompassed a visit to Operation Sophia HQ – the EU's joint operation to clamp down on people smuggling in the Mediterranean.

Operation Sophia has rescued over 35,000 people to date, with over 10,000 of these rescued using UK assets. The Royal Navy's HMS ECHO is currently supporting the operation.

The Secretary of State also met Under-Secretary for European Affairs, Sandro Gozi for discussions about the progress that is being made in the exit negotiations. With hundreds of thousands of Italian nationals living in the UK, the issue of citizens' rights is expected to be high up on the agenda.

Speaking after his visit, the Secretary of State, David Davis said:

As we leave the EU, we will not be retreating from our responsibilities as an outward facing nation: our ties to our friends and allies across Europe will continue to be close, effective and strong.

We have fond ties of friendship with Italy, both of which pre-date our membership of the European Union, and we are committed to

seeing them go from strength to strength long after our exit.

That is why I've come back to Rome, to convey the important message that our determination to face shared threats together will not diminish and that we are determined to get an exit deal that works for British and Italian citizens alike.

The trip marks the third time that the Secretary of State has visited Italy since last year's referendum.

Speech: Anne Milton: Good careers advice helps you to a rewarding career

I am delighted to be here today (7 November).

It is an opportunity for us to reflect upon the importance of people getting information, advice and guidance that helps them make decisions about their future learning, jobs and training and the role it plays in helping people of all ages to fulfil their potential.

Everyone in this room is committed to supporting young people and adults across the country to make the most of their talents and pursue a rewarding career. A talk from an inspiring employer that sparks new ideas, a work placement that opens new doors, personal guidance to explore options and develop a career plan. The work that you do is so important in helping people to succeed.

The importance of careers advice

Careers advice is the foundation upon which some of our biggest reforms will be built. New T levels will be a gold standard for technical and professional excellence. They are an amazing opportunity for young people to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to enter skilled employment in a particular occupational area.

Our apprenticeship reforms are putting employers in control and enabling them to develop their workforces now and for the future. There have been 1.1 million apprenticeship starts since May 2015 and we aim to reach 3 million by 2020.

This skills revolution is dependent upon people having the best possible advice about the career path they should take. One that makes the most of their talents.

Careers guidance is central to social mobility. It is about making sure that

people from communities in every part of the land can develop the knowledge and confidence they need to progress. And have a clear plan to help them get there.

Careers Strategy

I am tremendously grateful for the work that you do. That is why I want to give you a first insight into the Careers Strategy which we will be publishing shortly. I know many of you in this room have been waiting a long time for the Careers Strategy.

It will be an important document that will set out what Government will do to ensure that everybody has access to the right advice, at the right time. A clear and accessible document, setting out the part we will all play in achieving this vision.

I am going to talk to you today about the four themes that will shape our Careers Strategy and continue to guide our approach as government works closely with schools, colleges, employers and other organisations to transform the life chances of people across the country.

Gatsby and Careers Leaders

First, we need a high-quality careers programme in every school and college. There are some examples of excellent and inspiring provision, but we know that many schools and colleges require more support.

The Gatsby Charitable Foundation's excellent report, [Good Career Guidance](#) was the result of an 18-month study looking at best practice in the UK and abroad.

It has resulted in eight Gatsby Benchmarks that define excellence. The benchmarks have had a really positive impact, as many of you have no doubt seen for yourselves.

Gatsby has been funding a pilot in the North East with 13 schools and 3 colleges to look at the impact of putting the benchmarks into practice.

At the start of the pilot, no school or college fully achieved more than three of the benchmarks and half did not achieve any. Now, two years on, 88% of schools and colleges are achieving 6 to 8 of the benchmarks and three schools are achieving all eight. That is a great success story.

That is hundreds more young people benefitting from world class careers support to help them achieve their potential. I want many more people to benefit in this way. That is why the Gatsby Benchmarks will be the bedrock of our Careers Strategy. Setting the standard for every school and college to work towards and support announced through the Strategy will be geared towards helping every school and college to achieve the benchmarks.

To make the Gatsby benchmarks happen in all schools and colleges will require effective leadership. A number of organisations have been looking at models

of career leadership. Teach First's recent report provides an excellent analysis of the skills and attributes required for the role and the steps they suggest we take to embed Careers Leaders in schools and colleges. I have been considering these recommendations carefully for our Careers Strategy

Encounters with providers and employers

Second, employers are an integral part of our approach. As Britain prepares to leave the European Union it is crucial to meet the skills needs of our economy, to provide opportunities for people to learn about different jobs and careers and to develop the skills and behaviours needed to thrive in the workplace.

The Careers & Enterprise Company has made outstanding progress. There are now over 2000 Enterprise Advisers working with over half of the schools and colleges in England providing support to develop a careers programme. They use their networks to help pupils get more experiences of the world of work and provide insight into the key skills needed by local businesses.

The Careers & Enterprise Company has already invested £1million in the first 6 Opportunity Areas and we will be allocating a further £1million to support the second wave of Opportunity Areas. The investment will deliver activities such as career learning, enterprise activities or careers talks. Every secondary school and college in an Opportunity Area will have an Enterprise Adviser and every student aged 11-18 in these areas will have access to at least four inspiring encounters with the world of work. This will focus support in areas of the country where social mobility is lowest.

Tailored advice, to meet individual needs

Third, we want to make sure everyone can benefit from tailored support. Personal guidance from a qualified adviser can have a real impact. I know that the careers profession has experienced many shocks in recent years and that organisations such as Careers England and the Career Development Institute are working tirelessly to raise the profile and status of the profession.

I very much welcome the CDI's register which we want schools, colleges and others to use to find a professional who can guide their pupils and students. The National Careers Service is also doing great work to help adults. Last year, more than 50% of adults seen by the National Careers Service moved onto an accredited training course or into employment.

We have already extended the National Careers Service contracts until September 2018 so this good work can continue. Last week, we announced a new Flexible Learning Fund to support projects that deliver learning in a way that is flexible and easy to access, especially for adults who are in work, or returning to work, and have low or intermediate level skills.

Data

Fourth, we want to make the most of the rich sources of information about

jobs and careers that exist. We know that there is a vast array of information and data available which has extraordinary potential to help people make informed decisions on the education, training and employment options available to them.

Yet it is also true that these information sources can be difficult to navigate and those who could most benefit from them are sometimes unable to.

More people now use data about the destinations of students when considering their options for jobs and training. The government already publishes this data on students' destinations, but we recognise that more needs to be done to make the data easier to interpret.

If we are to harness the potential of this data in a way that supports social mobility we need to ensure that everyone is able access and understand this information, including those who are not digitally confident.

These four priorities will form the bedrock of the Careers Strategy. I know you are eagerly anticipating it being published soon and I am absolutely committed to getting this right because it is so important for the future success of this country.

Thank you.

Statement to Parliament: Foreign Secretary's statement on Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and update on the campaign against Daesh

Mr Speaker, with your permission, I will make a statement updating the House on the campaign against Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

But I should like to begin by informing the House that I called the Iranian Foreign Minister, Mr Zarif, this morning to discuss the case of Mrs Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. I expressed my anxiety about her suffering and the ordeal of her family and I repeated my hope for a swift solution.

I also voiced my concern at the suggestion emanating from one branch of the Iranian judiciary that my remarks to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee last week had some bearing on Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case.

The UK government has no doubt that she was on holiday in Iran when she was arrested last year – and that was the sole purpose of her visit.

My point was that I disagreed with the Iranian view that training journalists was a crime, not that I wanted to lend any credence to Iranian allegations that Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe had been engaged in such activity. I accept that my remarks could have been clearer in that respect and I'm glad to provide this clarification.

I'm sure the House will join me in paying tribute to the tireless campaigning of Mr Ratcliffe on behalf of his wife and we will not relent in our efforts to help all our consular cases in Iran.

Mr Zarif told me that any recent developments in the case had no link to my testimony last week and he would continue to seek a solution on humanitarian grounds. I will visit Iran in the coming weeks where I will discuss all our consular cases.

I turn now to the campaign against Daesh.

In the summer of 2014, Daesh swept down the Tigris and Euphrates valleys, occupying thousands of square miles of Iraqi territory, pillaging cities, massacring and enslaving minorities, and seeking to impose by pitiless violence a demented vision of an Islamist utopia.

Daesh had gathered strength in eastern Syria, using the opportunity created by that country's civil war to seize oilfields and carve out a base from which to launch their assault on Iraq. Today, I can tell the House that Daesh have been rolled back on every battlefield.

Thanks to the courage and resolve of Iraq's Security Forces, our partners in Syria, and the steadfast action of the 73 members of the Global Coalition, including this country,

Daesh have lost 90% of the territory they once held in Iraq and Syria – including Raqqa, their erstwhile capital – and 6 million people have been freed from their rule.

When my Rt Hon Friend the former Defence Secretary last updated the House in July, the biggest city in northern Iraq, Mosul, had just been liberated.

Since then, Iraqi forces have broken Daesh's grip on the towns of Tal Afar and Hawija and cleared the terrorists from all but a relatively small area near the Syrian border, demonstrating how the false and failed 'caliphate' is crumbling before our eyes.

The House will join me in paying tribute to the men and women of the British armed forces, who have been vital to every step of the advance.

Over 600 British soldiers are in Iraq where they have helped to train 50,000 members of the Iraqi Security Forces and the RAF has delivered 1,352 air strikes against Daesh in Iraq and 263 in Syria – more than any other air force apart from the United States. I turn now to Syria where, on 20 October, the Global Coalition confirmed the fall of Raqqa after 3 years of brutal occupation.

The struggle was long and hard; I acknowledge the price that has been paid by the Coalition's partner forces on the ground and, most especially, by the civilian population of Raqqa. Throughout the military operation, the Department for International Development has been working with partners in Raqqa Province to supply food, water, health care and shelter wherever possible.

On 22 October, my Rt Hon Friend the International Development Secretary [announced another £10 million of UK aid](#), in order to clear the landmines sown by Daesh, restock hospitals and mobile surgical units with essential medicines, and provide clean water for 15,000 people.

The permanent defeat of Daesh in Syria – by which I mean removing the conditions that allowed them to seize large areas in the first place – will require a political settlement and that must include a transition away from the Asad regime that did so much to create the conditions for the rise of Daesh.

How such a settlement is reached is, of course, a matter for Syrians themselves and we will continue to support the work of the United Nations Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, and the Geneva process.

I am encouraged by how America and Russia have stayed in close contact over the future of Syria and we must continue to emphasise to the Kremlin that instead of blindly supporting a murderous regime – even after UN investigators have found its forces guilty of using sarin nerve gas, most recently at Khan Shaykoun in April – Russia should join the international community and support a negotiated settlement in Syria under the auspices of the UN.

Turning to Iraq, more than 2 million people have returned to their homes in areas liberated from Daesh, including 265,000 who have gone back to Mosul. Britain is providing over £200 million of practical life-saving assistance for Iraqi civilians.

We are helping to clear the explosives that were laid by Daesh, restore water supplies that the terrorists sabotaged, and give clean water to 200,000 people and health care to 115,000.

Now that Daesh is close to defeat in Iraq, the country's leaders must resolve the political tensions that – in part – paved the way for its advance in 2014.

The Kurdistan Region held a unilateral referendum on independence on 25 September, a decision we did not support. Since then, Masoud Barzani has stepped down as President of the Kurdistan Regional Government and Iraqi forces have reasserted federal control over disputed territory, including the city of Kirkuk.

We are working alongside our allies to reduce tensions in northern Iraq; rather than reopen old conflicts, the priority must be to restore the stability, prosperity and national unity that is the right of every Iraqi.

A general election will take place in Iraq next May, creating an opportunity for parties to set out their respective visions of a country that overcomes sectarianism and serves every citizen, including Kurds.

But national reconciliation will require justice, and justice demands that Daesh are held accountable for their atrocities in Iraq and elsewhere. That is why I acted over a year ago – in concert with the Government of Iraq – to launch the global campaign to bring Daesh to justice.

In September, the [Security Council unanimously adopted UN Resolution 2379](#), a British-drafted text – co-sponsored by 46 countries – that will establish a UN investigation to help gather and preserve the evidence of Daesh crimes in Iraq.

Every square mile of territory that Daesh have lost is 1 square mile less for them to exploit and tax and plunder, and the impending destruction of the so-called ‘caliphate’ will reduce their ability to fund terrorism abroad and attract new recruits.

Yet Daesh will still try to inspire attacks by spreading their hateful ideology in cyberspace even after they have lost every inch of their physical domain.

That’s why Britain leads the Global Coalition’s efforts to counter Daesh propaganda, through a Communications Cell based here in London, and Daesh’s total propaganda output has fallen by half since 2015.

But social media companies can and must do more, particularly to speed up the detection and removal of dangerous material and prevent it from being uploaded in the first place, hence my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister co-hosted an event at the UN General Assembly in September on how to stop terrorists from using the internet.

The government has always made clear that any British nationals who join Daesh have chosen to make themselves legitimate targets for the Coalition. We expect that most foreign fighters will die in the terrorist domain they opted to serve but some may surrender or try to come home, including to the UK.

As the government has previously said, anyone who returns to this country after taking part in the conflict in Syria or Iraq must expect to be investigated for reasons of national security. While foreign fighters face the consequences of their actions, the valour and sacrifice of the armed forces of many nations – including our own – has prevented a terrorist entity from taking root in the heart of the Middle East.

I commend this statement to the House.

Press release: New laws to set out UK and Wales trading future

The UK Government took an important step to minimise disruption and offer certainty to Welsh businesses and trading partners today taking forward the next two Brexit Bills to Parliament.

The UK Government has been working closely with the Welsh Government at all levels to ensure trade policy works for Wales and that businesses there will continue to benefit from existing trade deals after the UK leaves the EU.

The Bills will look to support Wales' growing exports, 61% of which went to non-EU countries in 2016, and foreign investment. In the last year alone, foreign investment created over 2,500 jobs from 85 new projects.

Key measures in the Trade Bill include provisions for the UK to implement existing EU trade agreements, ensuring UK companies can continue to access major government contracts in other countries and creating a new trade remedies body to defend UK businesses against unfair and injurious trade practices.

Further tax-related elements of the UK's trade policy will be legislated in the Treasury's Customs Bill – Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Bill – as part of the creation of a new UK tariff regime. This includes the trade remedies and unilateral trade preferences which provide preferential trade access to UK markets for developing countries.

Following a recent meeting with the Welsh Government in Cardiff, the International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox welcomed the commitments as part of the new legislation to work with the Welsh Government to create trade policies which work for Wales' businesses and consumers.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

There has never been a better time for Welsh companies to trade and export overseas and this Bill will provide businesses with stability and certainty to continue doing so.

We now have the opportunity to shape our own ambitious trade and investment opportunities in Europe and beyond, and put Wales and Britain firmly at the forefront of global trade and investment.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

This Bill will ensure that we support Wales' extensive global trade, reaching out to growing international markets, with 61% of its exports going beyond the EU, while supporting its existing

trade partners.

We want Wales to trade across the world on a level playing field and this Bill provides that, enabling us to continue our existing trade agreements and manage our own customs for the whole of the UK.

Trade Bill

The Trade Bill laid in Parliament today will:

- Create powers to assist in the transition of over 40 existing trade agreements between the EU and other countries;
- Enable the UK to have continued access to £1.3 trillion worth of government contracts and procurement opportunities in 47 countries – by becoming an independent member of the Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA);
- Establish a new independent UK body, the Trade Remedies Authority, to defend UK businesses against trade fluctuations and unfair trade practices; and
- Ensure the UK Government has the legal abilities for gathering and sharing trade information, as evidence to support UK businesses against surges in imports and unfair practices.

Customs Bill

The government also laid resolutions for the Customs Bill, which will enter Parliament shortly. The Bill will allow the government to create a standalone customs regime and amend the VAT and excise regimes including allowing the government to:

- Charge and vary customs duty on goods;
- Specify which goods pay what duty;
- Set preferential or additional duties in certain circumstances – for example, to support developing countries; and
- Maintain a functioning movement of goods from the day we leave the EU by continuing the VAT and excise regimes in line with the final deal reached in negotiations.