

[Press release: Minister for Europe supports Armenia's progress towards parliamentary democracy](#)

The Minister will meet President Sargsyan, Prime Minister Karapetyan, Speaker of the National Assembly Parliament Babloyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nalbandian and other senior officials. Sir Alan will hear firsthand about Armenia's political and economic reform programme and will reiterate UK support for the ambitious reforms to enhance the resilience and prosperity of the country.

The UK has been supporting the government's reform programme, including helping the National Assembly prepare for its greater oversight powers, supporting the Ministry of Justice implement an anti-corruption strategy and working with the Ministry of Defence to embed European Human Rights standards in the Armenian armed forces.

In a speech to the National Assembly of Armenia, the Minister will champion the important role of parliament in a democracy, and in turn the role of parliamentarians in representing the people who elect them.

Ahead of his visit, the Minister of Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, said:

My first visit to Armenia is an opportunity for me to celebrate the UK's support to Armenia in its consolidation as a democratic, resilient and prosperous country. Over the 25 years since we established diplomatic relations, co-operation has flourished across a range of spheres – including political, commercial, educational and cultural.

We believe there are further opportunities to deepen our co-operation. I look forward to meeting President Sargsyan, Prime Minister Karapetyan, Foreign Minister Nalbandian and other high level officials in Armenia. I will outline the UK's readiness to support Armenia's efforts to embed democracy, good governance and human rights and explore ways to boost trade between our 2 countries.

Following his visit, the Minister gave an update on how the UK is supporting Armenia's constitutional progress:

[Sir Alan Duncan's visit](#)

Further information

[Press release: Report 13/2017: Fatal collision at Woodbourn Road, Sheffield](#)

Summary

At 10:02 hrs on 22 December 2016, a pedestrian, who had just got off an inbound tram at Woodbourn Road tram stop, was struck and fatally injured by an outbound tram travelling from Sheffield city centre towards Meadowhall. The pedestrian was using the crossing at the northern end of the tram stop at the time. The crossing, which runs over both tracks, provides a pathway between the inbound platform and Woodbourn Road. No one was waiting at the outbound platform and no one on board the outbound tram had requested that it stop, so it was travelling non-stop through the platform at around 13 mph (21 km/h).

The tram driver did not see the pedestrian approaching the crossing. Until shortly before the collision, the tram driver's attention was focused on looking in the tram's mirrors and not on looking ahead. Consequently, the driver did not see the pedestrian in time to take action to prevent the accident. Other possible factors that might have contributed to the accident were that the driver was wearing sunglasses, which might have reduced the visibility of the pedestrian who was in a shaded area, and the driver's concentration level might have been reduced by that stage of the journey. The pedestrian was seemingly unaware that the tram was approaching the crossing and the tram did not give an audible warning to indicate that it was passing non-stop through the tram stop. An underlying cause was that Stagecoach Supertram had not assessed the risk of trams in service running non-stop through tram stops when it first introduced the system of request stops around 1999. The RAIB also found inconsistencies between the training and assessments for new tram drivers when making non-stop movements through tram stops and the operational standards that drivers are required to follow for such movements.

Since the accident, Stagecoach Supertram has reported it has taken action to mandate audible warnings for all non-stop movements through tram stops and to reduce driver distraction due to looking in mirrors. It has also updated its risk assessment to include trams in service running non-stop through tram stops and implemented measures to reduce the risk of collisions with pedestrians. These reported actions address factors which otherwise would have resulted in RAIB recommendations.

Recommendations

The RAIB has made two recommendations. One recommendation is addressed to Stagecoach Supertram and relates to the continuance of its work to review its training material against its operational standards so that they are made consistent. The second recommendation is addressed to UK tram operators, in

conjunction with UK Tram Limited, and relates to setting up an industry working group to monitor the development and application of new pedestrian detection technology to alert drivers to potential collisions with pedestrians.

The RAIB has also identified three learning points. The first highlights the importance of tram operators actively assessing and managing the additional risk to users of foot crossings associated with trams making non-stop movements through tram stops. The second reminds tram drivers to only use driving mirrors for essential tasks related to the safe operation of the tram during non-stop movements through tram stops. The third is for tram drivers about understanding how sunglasses can affect their vision when passing from sunlit to shaded areas, particularly during the winter months when the sun is low.

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

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[Press release: Joint UK-Pakistan Statement on trade](#)

Pakistan and the UK enjoy a shared history and a shared future. At this pivotal moment, marking 70 years of diplomatic relations, we reconfirm our ambition to build shared prosperity between our two countries.

We will do this through our trade policies, and through links between businesses in both countries. Currently, the UK supports Pakistan through the EU's trade preference scheme GSP+. This arrangement encourages economic growth and sustainable development in Pakistan. It also helps business and consumers in Britain.

As the UK leaves the EU, we recognise the need to ensure a smooth transition in our trading arrangements. The UK's firm intention is to maintain these preferences on a bilateral basis, with the generous access to UK markets that it brings. Alongside that, whilst the UK is still a member of the EU, the UK will continue to support Pakistan to benefit from the EU's GSP+ scheme, whilst in return Pakistan pledges to continue to make progress to improve human rights, labour rights, environment and good governance in line with the commitments made as part of the GSP+ scheme. The UK will also help Pakistan break down barriers to trade, and to use the opportunities this brings to create jobs and reduce poverty.

With more than 200 million consumers, Pakistan is an exciting market for British business. To support UK companies exporting to Pakistan and for Pakistani buyers of UK goods and services, the UK export credit agency, UK Export Finance (UKEF), support is to more than double to up to £400 million, meaning an additional £200 million to help UK exporters win, fulfill and get paid for export contracts, and Pakistan's buyers access finance to source high-quality UK goods and services.

Both governments are ambitious, to see more British trade and investment in Pakistan, as well as Pakistani businesses exporting to and operating in the UK. From textiles to pharmaceuticals, engineering and sporting goods, to finance, legal or business services, Pakistan has huge potential in the global economy. We are committed to work with businesses in both countries to strengthen these ties into the future.

For updates on the British High Commission's 70th Anniversary of UK – Pakistan relations and for more information on the Chevening Programme, please follow our social media channels:

[Press release: Waste criminals dump £750,000 clean-up bill on landowners](#)

Criminals who illegally dump thousands of tonnes of baled waste have cost land and property owners in the North East an estimated £750,000 in the last year, according to the Environment Agency.

The figure, which relates to the cost of removing waste dumped in fields and empty commercial properties lawfully, could be even higher if land is

contaminated or insurance premiums rise as a result. Dumped waste is also a major fire risk.

In a bid to stop waste criminals in their tracks, the Environment Agency is reaching out to property and land owners, commercial property agents, trade associations and local authorities. Their aim is to warn of the dangers posed by waste criminals and advise them, their clients and their members how they can better protect themselves.

Jamie Fletcher, Area Environment Manager, from the Environment Agency said:

Waste criminals operate throughout the country, offering to remove waste cheaply and then dumping it in fields or empty warehouses. They tend to move to new areas as enforcement agencies become wise to their activities. We know it's only a matter of time before they target us again so we're sending out a strong message: Waste criminals are not welcome here and we're doing everything in our power to deter and catch them.

We can't do it alone. We work closely with partners to share intelligence on illegal waste activity. And we're encouraging everyone to do their bit: for property and land owners to be vigilant and better protect themselves and for all businesses, organisations and individuals to manage their waste responsibly, preventing it from getting into criminal hands in the first place.

Land and property owners are advised to:

- Check any empty land and property regularly and make sure it is secure.
- Carry out rigorous checks on prospective and new tenants. Land and property owners have a responsibility to ensure anyone leasing their land/property complies with regulations. They may be committing an offence by allowing waste to be stored on land or property without the relevant permissions and could leave them liable to prosecution
- Be vigilant and report any unusual behaviour.

Advice for businesses

There are around 4,000 commercial properties across the North East thought to be empty, which are owned by up to 1,500 businesses and organisations, including fund management companies and local authorities.

The Environment Agency is also advising businesses and organisations of their responsibility to ensure their waste is managed appropriately. Anyone who produces, stores and manages waste is obligated to ensure waste does not cause harm to human health or pollution to the environment under waste under Duty of Care legislation.

Waste crime diverts as much as £1 billion per annum from legitimate business and the treasury. Since April 2011 the Environment Agency has invested £65.2 million nationally to address it. Its specialist crime unit uses intelligence

to track and prosecute organised crime gangs involved in illegal waste activity and to ensure any necessary action is taken against them.

The Environment Agency also works with partners to share intelligence on illegal waste activity and to put in place contingency plans to reduce the risk from a small number of abandoned sites at risk of fire.

Anyone who sees waste crime taking place is advised not to approach as these people can be dangerous. Report it by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

News story: PM statement on Saudi women gaining right to drive

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

As a long standing friend of Saudi Arabia I welcome the Kingdom taking this important step towards gender equality. The empowerment of women around the world is not only an issue I care deeply about, it is also key to nations' economic development. The UK will continue to work in close partnership with Saudi Arabia as it builds on this progress and delivers its ambitious programme of reform, Vision 2030.