

Press release: Scotland's HALO Trust is leading mines clearance and supporting the local economy

International Development Secretary Priti Patel praised Scotland's HALO Trust for taking the lead in bringing British ingenuity and bravery to mine clearance in some of the world's most fragile countries, during a visit to the organisation's headquarters just outside Dumfries today.

Ms Patel announced support to HALO, Manchester-based Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Norwegian People's Aid, which will help to make 15 million square metres of land safe again and enable 15,000 community visits to educate people – especially children – on the dangers of living with landmines.

The UK Government's work with HALO is a key part of the economy in Dumfries and Ms Patel met with many local businesses who contribute to Britain's lifesaving work overseas and help to create jobs in the UK.

This included Penman Engineering who make armoured vehicles; Soltyre, bespoke tyre makers for rough terrain; and ScotJCB who make heavy duty machinery.

Ms Patel was joined by the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell, during her visit.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

Landmines are indiscriminate weapons of war that maim and kill innocent children every day. Scottish organisations like HALO Trust are at the forefront of the UK's efforts, bringing British ingenuity, determination and bravery to save lives and make some of the world's most fragile countries safer and more stable.

I'm pleased to have met with so many of the local companies that provide the specialist equipment HALO needs to carry out its dangerous and difficult work – they represent the best of British expertise.

By involving British businesses in our lifesaving work overseas, we are supporting local economies right across the UK and helping to create and protect jobs.

Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell said:

This is a great example of how the UK's aid commitment to help those most in need around the world also works here at home in our national interest. Scotland is at the heart of the UK's

international aid efforts – with hundreds of staff working in East Kilbride as well as contracts going to many Scottish companies.

The companies working with the HALO Trust are making a real contribution to some of the poorest communities on earth – and in doing so are creating jobs and driving growth in Scotland. This is just one example of why our aid strategy is so important and why we are so proud to be meeting our commitment as a world-leader in international aid.

HALO Trust is one of the leading global NGOs on demining. Since 1988 the HALO Trust has destroyed over 1.6 million landmines and nearly 12 million unexploded ordnance. The HALO Trust currently works in 20 countries or territories. Last year they:

- made 74 million square metres of land safe, directly benefitting 1.8 million people
- destroyed 395,000 mines and unexploded ordnance
- delivered mine risk education session to 330,000 children and adults (including 91,500 children)
- ensured that 61% of cleared land was released for agriculture which is vital for communities

The UK is one of the world's leading contributors to demining. New support announced earlier this year at Kensington Palace will make safe land, equivalent to the size of over 20,000 football pitches, and help 800,000 people live their lives free from the threat of mines.

Notes to Editors

- Today's announcement is an £8.1m funding extension to the current Global Mine Action Programme, which is delivered by HALO, MAG and Norwegian People's Aid.
- This funding allocation is for the financial year 2017/18.
- Local companies in Dumfriesshire have benefitted from over £5 million of business from the HALO Trust over the past 10 years.
- The UK's work removes and destroys landmines, but also focuses on education to ensure the local community is aware of the risk.
- The UK was a founding signatory of the Mine Ban Treaty and a number of UK organisations such as Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and the Halo Trust are at the forefront of global efforts to make the world mine-free.
- With concerted effort we can make a real difference. Through the support of UK aid, Mozambique was declared mine-free in 2015, joining 26 countries that have completed mine clearance in the past 20 years.
- More than 60 million people still live with the daily threat of injury or death and the basic rights of safe access to health services, education, agricultural land and infrastructure continue to be denied to communities around the world.
- The UK government confirmed it would be tripling its support for demining this year at an event at Kensington Palace.

News story: Process update on the Secretary of State's consideration of the proposed merger between 21st Century Fox Inc. and Sky Plc.

Process update, 8 August 2017.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has written to Ofcom under section 106B(2) of the Enterprise Act 2002, seeking further clarification in relation to representations made on the Secretary of State's referral decision.

After assessing the large number of representations made in relation to the Secretary of State's referral decision, a number of these raise new evidence and/or comment on the Ofcom assessment.

Any referral decision by the Secretary of State must be taken on the basis of a valid assessment of all the relevant evidence. For this reason the DCMS has asked Ofcom to advise on a number of points arising from these representations. The Department has asked that the advice is provided as soon as possible and no later than 25 August 2017.

All effort continues to carry out this process in a transparent and timely way. The Department's letter to Ofcom and Ofcom's response will be published in due course.

Press release: Extended bankruptcy for insolvency practitioner

An investigation found that after being appointed liquidator of a limited company, negligence by Ms Sharma, 55, resulted in a significant liability to creditors of the company.

The bankruptcy restrictions undertaking Ms Sharma has given to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy means she will be bound by the restrictions set out in insolvency law until July 2025. These restrictions include acting in the management of a limited company and acting as an insolvency practitioner.

A bankruptcy order was made against Ms Sharma on 30 June 2016. Ms Sharma's restriction follows an investigation by the Insolvency Service, which found that following her appointment as liquidator of a limited company on 21 September 2011, she acted negligently and that this negligence resulted in a liability to creditors of that company of £625,236 and that this materially contributed to Ms Sharma's bankruptcy.

The bankruptcy order was made on 30 June 2016 on the petition of the liquidator of a failed limited company, presented on 11 May 2016.

Commenting on the case Gerard O'Hare, the Official Receiver for Nottingham said:

The Insolvency Service will take firm action when we find that qualified professionals, who subsequently become bankrupt, have acted negligently in carrying out their duties.

In this case, Ms Sharma's negligence in carrying out her duties as an Insolvency Practitioner has caused a loss to the creditors of a liquidated company amounting to in excess of £625,000.

These proceedings should serve to protect the public from any future misconduct by restricting Ms Sharma's ability to act as an insolvency practitioner in the future and should act as a deterrent to others.

Notes to editors

Gagen Dulari Sharma is of Birmingham and her date of birth is 25 September 1961.

If the Official Receiver considers that the conduct of a bankrupt has been dishonest or blameworthy in some way, he or she will report the facts to the court and ask for a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order (BRO) to be made. The court will consider this report and other evidence put before it, and will decide whether it should make a BRO. If it does, the bankrupt will be subject to certain restrictions for the period stated in the order. This can be from 2 to 15 years.

The bankrupt may instead agree to a Bankruptcy restrictions Undertaking (BRU) which has the same effect as an order, but will mean that the matter does not go to court.

There are restrictions set out in insolvency law that the bankrupt is subject to until they are discharged from bankruptcy – normally 12 months and include that bankrupts

- must disclose their status to a credit provider if they wish to get

credit of more than £500

- who carry on business in a different name from the name in which they were made bankrupt must disclose to those they wish to do business with the name (or trading style) under which they were made bankrupt
- may not act as the director of a company nor take part in its promotion, formation or management unless they have a court's permission to do so
- may not act as an insolvency practitioner, or as the receiver or manager of the property of a company on behalf of debenture holders
- may not be a Member of parliament in England or Wales

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

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.

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

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[News story: 33 employers awarded gold for supporting the Armed Forces](#)

The Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Awards is the highest badge of honour for organisations which have signed the Armed Forces Covenant and demonstrated outstanding support for those who serve and have served.

The ERS Gold Awards recognise employers who actively support the Armed Forces community in their workplace and also encourage others to follow their lead.

The award scheme, which attracts entries from companies in every part of the country and in the private and public sectors, has seen a rapid increase in participation since it launched in 2014.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

These companies have shown the gold standard of commitment to supporting members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families. They have taken meaningful steps to ensure the Defence community are not disadvantaged by the sacrifice they make in helping keep this country safe. The actions of these employers make it crystal clear that regardless of size, location, or sector, employing people with military skills is good for business.

Commenting on their Gold status, Mark Carne, Chief Executive of Network Rail said:

Network Rail has a long tradition of supporting our armed forces and in employing ex-service personnel and Reserve staff. There are plenty of similarities between Network Rail and the Armed forces – the challenges and pressures, where every day is different, requiring a professional can-do attitude and strong teamwork ethos.

A large number of our workforce come from an Armed Forces background and have thrived in our organisation providing the skills that are critical to our Railway Upgrade Plan and helping us to build a bigger, better railway for Britain.

We are extremely proud to have received this recognition of our work and continued commitment to support the Armed Forces community.

Royal Marines veteran Chris Girdwood, Technician at Gold Award winner Combat Pest Control, added:

It has been great working with Combat Pest Control, not only because they have trained and supported me in my career but also because they do so much supporting the wider military community

The Ministry of Defence also announced today that following a stringent assessment, seven recipients of the 2014 ERS Gold Awards have retained their Gold status:

BAE Systems Hewlett-Packard Enterprise (HPE)
Barclays NHS Nottingham University Hospitals Trust
BT NHS Scotland
Carillion

The 2017 Employer Recognition Scheme Gold award winners are:

Airbus	Hull City Council	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Balfour Beatty	Inverclyde Council	Shropshire Council
City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust	Kuehne + Nagel	Skanska UK Plc
Combat Pest Control	Laing O'Rourke	Sodexo UK & Ireland
DHL	Liverpool City Council	Mabway Ltd
DXC Technology	ManpowerGroup UK	South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
ER Systems Global	Metropolitan Police Service	Transport for London
FDM	Morson Group	West Midlands Fire Service
Forth Valley Chamber of Commerce	Network Rail	Wiltshire Council
General Dynamics UK	NHS Golden Jubilee Foundation	Wolferstans Solicitors
Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	North West Ambulance Service	X-Forces

[News story: UK Government bids to unlock new markets for scotch whisky](#)

Scottish Secretary David Mundell met with representatives of the Scotch Whisky Association and Diageo at the iconic Caol Ila distillery on Islay, to discuss how the UK Government is laying the groundwork to reduce export tariffs on Scottish produce.

Whisky is worth around £5 billion to the UK economy, and accounts for three quarters of Scotland's total food and drink exports. The UK Government is ensuring that, as we leave the EU, the industry is able to tackle tariffs and boost overseas sales.

The Department for International Trade has already established 11 working groups to strengthen trade and commercial ties with key trading partners around the world, including the United States, Australia, China, India, Mexico, South Korea and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Ministerial trade dialogues have also been established with Taiwan, Vietnam, India, Kazakhstan and Brazil.

Mr Mundell said:

Scotch whisky is a world-class product, globally recognised for its quality and heritage, and the industry employs thousands of people in Scotland and around the rest of the UK.

We are determined to open up new markets around the world for the very best whisky our distillers have to offer – and to drive down any tariffs they face.

By strengthening ties with key partners, identifying new markets and tackling tariffs, the UK Government is paving the way towards an even brighter future for Scotland's whisky industry.

David Mundell tours the Caol Ila Distillery

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

With the recent uplift in trade, we should raise a glass to our exporting success and further help UK businesses make the most of an ever-growing demand for top-selling British products such as scotch whisky as part of a Global Britain.

Reducing the costs for companies to sell overseas will become one way of further opening up free trade routes and boosting sales, and that's why I've tasked my international economic department to look at how we can support more businesses to build their brands abroad.

For scotch whisky, export tariffs currently range from zero to over 150 per cent. The UK Government is looking at how future trade agreements could reduce export tariffs for iconic Scottish goods such as scotch, smoked salmon and gin.

Mr Mundell also visited the building site of the Ardnahoe distillery, set to be the ninth distillery operating on Islay when it opens in 2018. Overlooking the Sound of Islay and Paps of Jura, it will bring even more jobs to Scotland's third biggest industry, which already employs more than 7000 people in Scotland's rural communities.

Touring the site of the Ardnahoe Distillery

Karen Betts, Scotch Whisky Association chief executive, said:

The scotch whisky industry is delighted that the Scottish Secretary, David Mundell, is visiting Islay. He'll see the fascinating Islay distilleries, famous for their smoky malts. He'll see too the importance of the scotch whisky industry to Islay's local communities, and how whisky production there contributes more broadly to the Scottish and UK economies.

Notes:

The Scotch Whisky Association published a report at the beginning of this year on its economic impact in the UK, estimating that:

- Scotch Whisky adds £3.2 billion of value to the UK economy and a further £1.7 billion through indirect and induced impacts
- 10,800 people are directly employed in the industry with a further 29,300 indirect and induced jobs
- Around 90-95 per cent of these impacts are in Scotland with 5-10 per cent in the rest of the UK.