

News story: Minister for Europe statement on Bulgaria-Macedonia Friendship Treaty

On recent visits to Bulgaria and Macedonia I saw a strong commitment to improving relations between the two countries. I welcome the signing of the Bulgaria-Macedonia Friendship Treaty as a step in the right direction. Good neighbourly relations between Bulgaria and Macedonia are crucial to securing the stability of the region.

The UK fully supports the new Government in Macedonia as it introduces much-needed domestic reforms, and resets and improves its relationship with its neighbours. The UK and Bulgaria also share a deep friendship and we look forward to its Presidency of the European Council in 2018.

I hope that both Parliaments will now ratify the Friendship Treaty, to make the most of this opportunity for progress.

News story: Sellafield incident report – powder spillage (14 June 2017)

While carrying out analysis work in a Sellafield site laboratory, a worker spilled approximately 1kg of depleted uranium trioxide powder while moving a container.

The material is not harmful unless ingested or inhaled.

The correct safety procedures were followed and the immediate area was evacuated before returning to normal service on the same day.

Health checks confirmed the worker suffered no ill effects.

An internal investigation is being carried out.

The event has been rated 1 (anomaly) on the [International Nuclear Events Scale](#)

Sellafield is regulated by the [Office for Nuclear Regulation](#) and the [Environment Agency](#)

[See details of incidents at Sellafield before 1 August 2017](#)

News story: Companies House announces new Chief Executive

Louise Smyth has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of Companies House and The Registrar of Companies for England and Wales.

Louise Smyth has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of Companies House and The Registrar of Companies for England and Wales. She will take up leadership of the organisation in September 2017 and joins Companies House from a long career at the Intellectual Property Office, including roles as Director of IT, Director of Corporate Services and latterly as Chief Operating Officer.

Lesley Cowley, Companies House Chair said:

"I am delighted to announce Louise Smyth's appointment as the next Chief Executive of Companies House. We are at the forefront of the Government's agenda for economic growth by making it easy to start a company, simple to maintain company information and easy and quick for everyone to access company information. Louise will be tasked with leading the successful implementation of our challenging business plans, in order to make our vision of becoming the best registry in the world a reality".

Louise Smyth said:

"I am absolutely delighted to be given the opportunity to be Chief Executive of Companies House. I am very much looking forward to working with the team to build upon the great reputation of Companies House and to deliver exemplary services and operations for all our customers".

Notes

- The appointment of Louise Smyth follows an open competition overseen by the Civil Service Commission.
 - Louise will take up her post in September. She replaces Ann Lewis, who has been Interim Chief Executive and Registrar since the previous Chief Executive and Registrar, Tim Moss left the organisation in April this year.
 - Louise is currently Chief Operating Officer of the Intellectual Property Office.
 - Companies House can trace its origins to 1844, when the first Register of Joint Stock Companies was created. Louise will be the 33rd Registrar.
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News story: Hexavalent 6-in-1 vaccine to be made available to newborn babies

All babies born on or after 1 August 2017 will be offered protection against hepatitis B as part of our universal childhood immunisation programme, Public Health England has announced. This is in addition to continued protection against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and Hib.

The hexavalent vaccine replaces the existing 5-in-1 vaccine that children routinely receive. It is already widely used with around 150 million doses having been given in 97 countries in Europe and across the world.

There has been no change to the immunisation schedule or to the number of injections and children will continue to be immunised at the ages of 8, 12 and 16 weeks as part of the routine childhood immunisation schedule. The only change is to the components of the vaccine itself, which now provides extra protection for hepatitis B.

Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at Public Health England said:

Until today, only children at high risk of hepatitis B would be immunised. The introduction of hexavalent vaccine means that all children will now be routinely protected against this serious infection, which is a major cause of cirrhosis and liver cancer in later life. The hexavalent vaccine has been extensively tested and shown to be safe and is widely used internationally with millions of doses being given around the world.

The UK government has signed up to the WHO global hepatitis strategy to work towards elimination of viral hepatitis as a major public health threat by 2030. People with hepatitis B infection may not be aware that they are infected as chronic infection mostly has no symptoms. As adults are the majority of infected individuals, vaccinating children will protect them in childhood from potential exposure to infected household or family members. Vaccinating infants will essentially reduce the risk of infection and will provide longer term protection against future exposure risks.

News story: Councils share £75 million for major road improvements

Councils in England have been awarded funding to refurbish bridges, improve

junctions and boost flood defences as part of a multi-million pound government investment announced today (1 August 2017) by Transport Minister Jesse Norman.

Nineteen projects across the country will receive a share of £75 million of government investment for essential road maintenance.

Local authorities were challenged to put forward schemes which could make a real difference to road users. Winning projects include junction improvements, repairs and resurfacing, flood resilience measures, bridge and viaduct refurbishment, and improved drainage.

These improvements will cut congestion, reduce journey times and improve reliability, as well as helping to support local businesses and boost economic growth.

Transport Minister Jesse Norman said:

We are taking the big decisions for Britain's future by investing in the infrastructure the country needs and ensuring motorists have the well maintained roads they expect and deserve.

This investment will enable councils to repair roads and key infrastructure like bridges – boosting reliability on our roads so people can stay connected with family, friends and employment, while also keeping businesses connected with customers.

Most of the schemes will be delivered within the next 12 months, so many drivers will see an immediate impact.

Among the projects which will receive funding is a £4.6 million refurbishment of the A589 Greyhound Bridge in Lancashire enabling HGVs to access the bridge, boosting access for businesses and securing skilled jobs locally.

Road users in Devon will benefit from a major carriageway and drainage renewal scheme to regenerate the dual-carriageway stretch of the A361. This will improve access from Devon to the M5, supporting local businesses and aiding tourism in the region.

In Northumberland £5 million for crucial maintenance will repair and strengthen key routes for the rural and regional economy, giving a boost to tourism by making it easier for visitors to reach destinations such as Hadrian's Wall World Heritage site and Northumberland National Park.

The challenge fund is one part of the £6.1 billion being provided to local highway authorities in England, outside London, between 2015 to 2016 and 2020 to 2021 to help keep Britain moving and the economy growing.