

Contract awarded to clear UXO from Mappleton Beach

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has awarded a £1.5-million contract to Brimstone Site Investigation Ltd to remove unexploded ordnance (UXO) from Mappleton Beach at former air weapons range, RAF Cowden.

RAF Cowden was used as a bombing range from 1959 to 1998. Over the years it has been subject to extensive coastal erosion which leaves UXO on the beach. To date, UXO has been removed by the Royal Air Force and British Army with minimum disruption.

Preliminary work started on 1 February and DIO has engaged with local authorities, landowners, councils and organisations including the Ramblers to make the public aware of clearance activities. To minimise the potential impact on the public and address any concerns, DIO will monitor noise levels and engage with Natural England to ensure environmental licenses are in place and assessments have been carried out.

The site will be regularly monitored and cleared of UXO by Brimstone Site Investigation Ltd over the course of up to four years. Signs and red flags will warn the visiting public when activities are taking place and which area of the beach is closed.

Adell Vass, DIO's Head of Regional Delivery Central said:

We are pleased to announce the award of this contract to Brimstone Site Investigation Ltd and look forward to working with them.

The safety of the public is our first priority. Warning signs have been placed and red flags will be visible when activity is taking place. Unexploded ordnance is dangerous, and the public are reminded to adhere to the warning signs and not pick up or remove any objects as it could cause serious injury.

Aaron Florence, Managing Director from Brimstone Site Investigation Ltd said:

This marks a pivotal moment in defence engagement, the very first time DIO has awarded a long-term contract for clearing explosive ordnance on public land to a commercial organisation. Brimstone's success during the tender process is testament to our deeply dedicated and skilled team. Bringing to bear decades of military and commercial explosive ordnance disposal expertise, novel technology, and unbridled commitment to the local Cowden community.

Brimstone is delighted to engage with DIO's specialist teams to deliver a first-class service in land remediation and threat

reduction and we stand poised to begin this next chapter with DIO and the MOD. Our innovative approach in using drone technology, machine learning, and other technical solutions stand us apart.

Precautions have been put in place to ensure the safety of the workforce. Staff and contractors on site are following the latest government and social distancing guidelines to help protect against Coronavirus.

The public are advised not to touch or pick up any items of UXO. If you find any UXO or witness a member of the public handling UXO, please report it by calling 999 or speaking to a member of the Brimstone staff on site.

Minister Adams' statement on the situation in Myanmar (February 2021)

Nigel Adams, Minister of State at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, said:

I would like to update the House on the situation in Myanmar.

On Sunday evening, Myanmar's armed forces, the Tatmadaw, seized control of the country, declaring a state of emergency in the early hours of Monday morning. The country is now under the effective control of the Commander in Chief and the military Vice President Myint Swe.

At around 0200 local time on 1 February, the Tatmadaw began detaining politicians and civil society leaders across the country, including the democratically elected Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint.

The Tatmadaw has said that this state of emergency will continue for a year. The army has taken control of the airports. Only military broadcasters are still on air and phone lines and the internet remains at risk of being disconnected again.

The military's actions follow on from their accusations of fraud during November's elections. Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy won by a landslide, and the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party's share was drastically reduced. While there were significant concerns about the disenfranchisement of minority groups such as the Rohingya, there are no suggestions of widespread irregularities. International observers, such as the Carter Centre and the Asian Network for Free Elections, found no evidence of significant irregularities in the elections.

As such, the UK considers the election result to credibly reflect the will of the people, and that Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party

are the rightful winners of the election.

The Commander-in-Chief has indicated that they intend to hold new elections to replace the results of those in November 2020. Any dispute regarding the election results should be resolved through peaceful and lawful mechanisms.

The Myanmar Supreme Court is hearing a case on alleged irregularities but has not yet decided whether it has jurisdiction. The reports today of the arrest of the Chair of the Union Election Commission are deeply concerning.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the events of Sunday night have filled us all with a profound sense of revulsion and sadness. Our thoughts are with the people of Myanmar who have once again been robbed of their inherent democratic rights.

The elections in 2020, though by no means perfect, were an important step on Myanmar's path to democracy. We, and others, welcomed them as a strong endorsement of Myanmar's desire for a democratic future.

Myanmar's transition has been troubled; a constitution rigged in favour of the military, a campaign of atrocities and systematic discrimination against the Rohingya and other minorities, and a faltering peace process. This coup threatens to set Myanmar's progress back by years, potentially decades.

As such, we are clear in our condemnation of this coup, of the state of emergency imposed in Myanmar, and the unlawful detention of democratically elected politicians and civil society by the military.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary both issued statements to this effect on Monday morning. It is essential that Aung San Suu Kyi, and all those unlawfully detained, are released.

We must receive assurances that their safety, wellbeing, and their rights are being respected. The state of emergency must be repealed, arbitrary detentions reversed, the outcome of the democratic elections respected, and the National Assembly peacefully reconvened.

We are aware that there is a risk that demonstrations could provoke a violent response, taking Myanmar back to the dark days of the 1988 uprising or the 2007 Saffron Revolution, in which scores of civilians were killed.

As to the UK response, we are pursuing all levers to ensure a peaceful return to democracy.

Firstly, we have made representations at the highest level within Myanmar to encourage all sides to resolve disputes in a peaceful and legal manner.

The Foreign Secretary had a call scheduled for later this week with Aung San Suu Kyi prior to her detention. We are clear in our demands that this call goes ahead, and we hope it will serve as an opportunity to confirm her safety.

I formally summoned Myanmar's Ambassador to the UK to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development office yesterday. In the meeting, I condemned

the military coup and arbitrary detention of civilians, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and made clear the democratic wishes of the people of Myanmar must be respected, and the elected National Assembly peacefully re-convened.

We are doing all we can, working with those in Myanmar, to support a peaceful resolution to this crisis.

Secondly, the international community has a role to play. We are engaging with partners, globally and in the region, to help align objectives and find a resolution to the crisis. We will work through multilateral fora to ensure a strong and coordinated international response.

As President, the Foreign Secretary is coordinating G7 partners on its response, aiming to build on its quick statement last week on Navalny.

The UK has urgently convened the UN Security Council who will meet later today. As a champion of the rules based international order, and democratic government, we are driving the international response, including in our role as President of both the G7 and UNSC, urging the military to immediately hand back power to the Government that was legitimately elected in November 2020.

ASEAN also has an important role to play, as do the principles of the ASEAN Charter, including the rule of law, good governance, and the principles of democracy and constitutional government. We continue to engage with ASEAN partners to support a regional response, including a meeting with the Thai Vice Foreign Minister this morning.

Third, it is the military's actions that instigated this coup. The UK already had a number of measures in place in response to the military's past, and ongoing atrocities: on 19 September 2017 the UK announced the suspension of all defence engagement and training with the Myanmar military by the Ministry of Defence until there is a satisfactory resolution to the situation in Rakhine.

The MOD no longer has a Defence Section in Yangon. The UK has also already imposed sanctions on 16 individuals responsible for human rights violations in Myanmar. We sanctioned all six individuals named by the UN Fact Finding Mission report, including the Commander-in-Chief and his Deputy. The Commander-in-Chief and his Deputy are the architects of the current political situation.

They also have the power to de-escalate the crisis and restore democracy. We will assess how best to engage with the military, if at all.

We have also enhanced private sector due diligence to prevent UK funds going to military owned companies.

The UK does not provide direct financial aid to the Government of Myanmar, but we do provide some targeted support, working through other international organisations and multilateral bodies.

In light of the coup, the Foreign Secretary has today announced a review of all such indirect support to the Myanmar government, with a view to

suspending it unless there are exceptional humanitarian reasons.

It is important that our response holds the military accountable. We continue to support the people of Myanmar.

We will continue leading the international response to this crisis and calling on the military leaders in Myanmar to relent, revoke the state of emergency, release members of the civilian Government and civil society, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, to reconvene the elected National Assembly, to respect the results of the November 2020 general election, and accept the expressed wishes of the people of Myanmar.

I commend this statement to the House.

Raising ambition to tackle climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean

Friends, good afternoon from London. It is a real pleasure to join you all today for these incredibly important discussions.

I want to thank you for the great climate action we that have already seen from so many of you in the region.

So, if I take some examples. We've had ambitious new Nationally Determined Contributions from Chile, Colombia, Jamaica, Costa Rica and many others.

And as well as the commitment from Barbados to go fossil fuel free within the decade.

And I am really enormously grateful to all of you who made announcements at the Climate Ambition Summit in December. And really showcased climate leadership at the CARICOM Moment of Ambition event the day before.

But of course, we have much more to do collectively. Now, we must build on the momentum that's being created.

I think we all recognise this is an absolutely vital year for our planet.

We know – because the science tells us- that the world must halve its emissions over the next decade if we are to limit global temperatures in line with the Paris Agreement.

We also know that if we continue on our current course we will unleash catastrophe, putting this region's stunning biodiversity, its countries, its

small island states vulnerable to climate change in much more peril.

And we know that we must rapidly increase our efforts to adapt and build our resilience.

So, COP26 must genuinely be the moment that countries, and companies, and cities and regions, all of us collectively, unite behind the Paris Agreement.

And it is all about putting the world on track to make Paris a reality.

In this, the UK's COP26 Presidency looks to our Latin American and Caribbean friends for support and action.

And I request and I ask that you to work together, and with international partners, throughout this year, to explore the key issues in the negotiations.

And to engage with the events convened by the UK and Chile COP Presidencies, to help make progress on the UNFCCC process.

In this, environment ministers play an absolutely vital role. And the UK's Embassies and the COP26 Regional Ambassador Fiona, stand ready to support you.

And urge you to come forward with robust adaptation plans and communications, and to announce net zero targets, with NDCs and long-term strategies to take you there. And clear policies and plans to make these targets a reality.

Given this region's unique biodiversity, action on nature is particularly important.

This is another priority for our COP26 Presidency.

And I thank all of you who have been involved with today's Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade Dialogues, and encourage all of you to look at the Dasgupta Review – published today – talking about the economics of biodiversity.

Finally, I ask you to seize the opportunities presented by the move to clean, resilient growth, by aligning your own Covid-19 recovery packages with the Paris Agreement.

I do recognise that this region has been particularly hard hit by the pandemic.

But it is by investing in clean recoveries today, that we support jobs and growth, both now and in the future.

Let me give you an example: wind and solar now cost less than fossil fuels in two thirds of countries. And that trend is continuing will undercut commissioned coal and gas almost everywhere by 2030,

And we also know from the International Renewable Energy Agency that by

boosting renewables investment we could have an extra 7 million more jobs worldwide, compared to if we continued on a business as usual track.

Here in the UK we have demonstrated that green growth is absolutely possible. Over the past 30 years we have managed to grow our economy by 75 per cent whilst cutting our emissions 43 per cent.

And last year, our Prime Minister launched a plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, to support a quarter of a million jobs and help drive our recovery.

This places climate action at the heart of our plans for the economy.

So, I encourage all of you here today to work with your Ministries of Finance to do the same. Because collaborative working across each government is going to deliver what we all want.

And I urge you to work to support green recoveries around the world.

And of course, the UK COP26 Presidency is also working to get finance flowing.

We are working the MDBs – multilateral development banks – with private investors to drive investment. Particularly to vulnerable countries. And with a particular focus on adaptation.

And I am very much calling very loudly on donor countries to raise the \$100 billion a year in international climate finance that has been promised and is a matter of trust for so many.

The UK government itself has doubled its own contribution to £11.6 billion over five years. And £3bn of that, some days ago Prime Minister Johnson announced, will go to nature.

Friends, in conclusion, the Paris Agreement gave us a wonderful framework to address the threat of climate change.

To make it a reality, we must now step up. Raise our ambition, take action. And seize the opportunities presented to build a clean and sustainable recovery that we all want to see and that our people absolutely deserve.

Thank you.

Working for the Parliamentary Counsel: Evlogi Kabzamalov

I joined the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel last year, after nearly 10

years of working as a tax lawyer in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. While I greatly valued my time spent in private practice, I had become increasingly drawn to working in the public sector. I wanted to broaden my horizons and use my legal skills to make a tangible difference to society. The job description of Assistant Parliamentary Counsel aligned well with these aspirations. It offered the opportunity to work on a diverse range of important legal issues, which is not possible in the increasingly specialised private sector.

In the short time I have been here, I have already worked on several coronavirus measures, on the UK Government's response to the Grenfell fire and on the renewal of the UK's armed forces legislation, among other matters. I have had the opportunity to peer into parts of society that I might never otherwise have been exposed to and to learn how they operate. I cannot imagine that many other legal careers would have been able to offer such variety.

Drafting legislation can be daunting and difficult. I was struck by how much brainpower was required to draft even a very short provision. I found the process to be far more rigorous than drafting a clause in a commercial contract. However, this makes it all the more rewarding when you finally manage to produce a coherent and water-tight draft. There is something quite satisfying about seeing a provision which you have helped to shape appear on Legislation.gov.uk

The job is not limited to drafting either. You have to become acquainted with the intricacies of parliamentary procedure and learn how to handle a bill through Parliament. This not only requires a sharp legal mind but good project management and people skills. You will have to build relationships with colleagues in the office, instructing government lawyers, the House Authorities and other stakeholders. This all makes for a very interesting and rewarding career.

I joined the office at a strange time, just as the pandemic was beginning. I only had a few weeks in the office before we all had to start working from home, but everyone has been very supportive and welcoming. I have been impressed by how well the office has managed the transition. The upside of these turbulent times is that it is definitely an exciting and dynamic time to be working as a drafter. I am very glad to have made the move.

Working for the Parliamentary Counsel: Andrew Wright

I joined the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) in 2019 after relatively short stints as a Judicial Assistant at a US law firm and as a government lawyer. I came across the OPC in that last role, while instructing

on a bill. I was impressed by the skill of the drafters I was working with and enjoyed the complexity and conceptual nature of bill work.

Drafters at the OPC specialise in drafting, rather than in any one area of law. The subject matter of your work as a drafter is ever-changing. So far, I have worked on bills in relation to withdrawal from and the future relationship with the European Union, investigatory powers, telecommunications, and corporate governance and insolvency. The topics of the next bills I help draft will most likely be entirely different.

The skill of a drafter is quickly getting to grips with an area of law and working out what needs to be done to give effect to the policy. That may involve making changes to the existing structure, or perhaps building a new one within, on top, or beside it. Connecting the legislative plumbing and wiring of what has been newly built into what is already there is all part of the challenge.

All of this needs to be done in a clear and coherent way. Attempting to do so can throw up inconsistencies within a policy and in how it fits with the wider policy landscape. Producing a draft also has the potential to reveal legal problems and policy questions a bill needs to say something about in order to give effect to its broader aim. Drafts develop iteratively and more of these issues are teased out with each iteration. This involvement in policy development is an important and rewarding part of a drafter's work.

The OPC places great emphasis on the training and development of junior drafters. As a junior drafter, I work closely with a senior drafter on a bill. I learn by the senior drafter carefully reviewing my drafts and discussing them with me. By the same token, I am expected to pull apart their drafts and to suggest improvements. This was slightly daunting to begin with, but each senior drafter I have worked with has been encouraging. Engaging with their work in this way is great for a junior drafter's development and I think discussing drafts is now one of my favourite parts of the job.

I have heard drafting being described as Marmite-y and I would agree. There is no getting away from the fact that drafting is hard and requires deep concentration. It is easily the most difficult thing I have done in my legal career. The job is immense amounts of fun, unique and by definition at the cutting edge of the law. If you enjoy thinking conceptually, have an eye for detail, and want a legal job that is creative, a career as a drafter might be for you.