

Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on the Republic of North Macedonia



Following ratification of the Prespa Agreement, the Secretary General of the United Nations has been informed by the governments of Greece and Macedonia that the Prespa Agreement is now effective.

The UK Government has received a request from the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia to adopt and use the name and terminologies referred to in Article 1 (3) of the Prespa Agreement.

The UK Government will henceforth refer to Macedonia as the Republic of North Macedonia.

Following the conclusion of this historic agreement, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Both sides have now taken the necessary steps to make the Prespa Agreement effective. Her Majesty's Government congratulates the Governments of the Hellenic Republic and Republic of North Macedonia on their courage and determination in ending this long-standing bilateral dispute.

This is an historic moment for both countries. We look forward to working with North Macedonia and Greece both bilaterally and through the North Atlantic Alliance in the interests of European security.

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[Press release: The Minister for Europe meets Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister](#)

The Minister for Europe, Sir Alan Duncan, today (16 February) held a meeting with his Russian counterpart First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov, at the Munich Security Conference on 15-16 February.

A Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesperson said:

The Minister for Europe met First Deputy Foreign Minister Titov today in the margins of the Munich Security Conference.

Sir Alan underlined that we have deep differences, and the Russian state would need to choose a different path and act as a responsible international partner before there can be a change in our current relationship with Russia.

The Foreign Office Minister reiterated the UK's and Allies' firm stance in response to the Russian state's reckless use of chemical weapons in Salisbury.

He noted that functional channels of engagement are important to raise concerns and discuss international issues. But he made clear that Russia must address the concerns of the international community. This includes ending its destabilising activity in Ukraine; and the persecution of the LGBT community in Chechnya.

Sir Alan reiterated to First Deputy Foreign Minister Titov that the UK Government has no quarrel with the Russian people. The UK will continue to build and strengthen our cultural ties and people to people links with Russia wherever we can.

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[Press release: Justice Secretary unveils GPS tag rollout to better protect victims](#)

- satellite tracking to be rolled out nationwide by summer
- GPS tags to better protect victims of domestic abuse and stalking offences
- new tagging can toughen community sentences
- evaluation of pilot also published shows positive findings

Justice Secretary David Gauke today announced the national roll out of new GPS tags which will provide 24/7 location monitoring of offenders. This will help strengthen supervision, enforce exclusion zones and give victims greater peace of mind.

If a tagged domestic abuser or stalker enters a banned area or a gang member is found somewhere they should not be, this new capability will issue an automatic alert and their whereabouts will be known. Victims can now feel safer in the knowledge that any breach of an exclusion zone will result in an immediate alert. The tags also provide a tougher option for community sentences which can be used alongside requirements like alcohol or drug treatment programmes.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

GPS tagging will help to better protect victims and give them the reassurance that perpetrators will not be able to breach an exclusion zone without triggering an immediate alert.

I am confident that this important new technology will become a vital tool to increase public protection and strengthen options for tougher community sentences.

The GPS tags have so far been rolled out to 3 regions, the North West, Midlands and North East, with other regions due to go live in the coming months. The tags will be available across England and Wales by the summer.

The new technology is also set to be piloted in London (by the London Mayor's

Office for Policing and Crime) to monitor offenders released from prison who have been convicted of knife crime offences. Offenders will have their movements checked against locations of reported crimes, in an effort to tackle violence in the capital.

DCC Jon Stratford, Gloucestershire Police, NPCC Electronic Monitoring lead:

The potential benefits of using this new technology to better protect victims are recognised by the police service and we're working closely with the Ministry of Justice to identify a suitable joint implementation programme.

A wide range of offenders will be eligible for the new tags, including those subject to court-imposed bail, community orders and suspended sentence orders, as well as those on Home Detention Curfew and indeterminate sentenced prisoners released by the Parole Board.

Location monitoring can be used to:

- enforce an exclusion zone – an offender or individual on bail can't enter a specific location or area
- keep a given distance from a point or address, including victim's address or that of a known criminal associate
- monitor an offender's attendance at a certain activity – for example work or a rehabilitation programme
- monitor an offender's movements to support discussions with probation about an offender's lifestyle and behaviours

The tags will transmit an offender's location 24/7 to a specialist monitoring unit in Manchester and if an offender enters an excluded zone and breaches their conditions, they face being recalled to prison or returned to court.

Also published today are the [findings of an extensive evaluation](#) following a pilot involving 8 police forces, testing the delivery and usage of the GPS tags. The evaluation found that tags could have a positive impact on compliance, with the tags acting as a constant physical reminder of an offender's licence conditions. One offender who participated in the pilot of the project said:

I've walked in an exclusion zone before, not realising... that was before I had the tag on, so I wasn't really bothered about getting seen. Now, with the tag, I knew full well that if I go in to that exclusion zone, I'm going to get seen no matter what.

The pilot also found that the impact of enforcing GPS tagging on police was low and that it can potentially save police investigation time by providing vital evidence ruling suspects in and out of crimes.

The new location monitoring capabilities will be in addition to the existing

curfew tagging provision already in place, which monitors offenders on licence, community sentences and those on court bail. Around 60,000 individuals are subject to these tags each year.

These measures build on a package of reforms aimed at reducing reoffending and better protecting victims, with GPS tags strengthening the supervision of offenders, so the courts will have confidence that monitoring will be strict and community sentences will be robust and effective.

Notes to editors

- Location monitoring is currently live in 3 National Probation Service regions: North West, Midlands and North East. Location monitoring will go live in the South West, South East and Wales by April 2019.
- Location monitoring will be available for: court-imposed bail, community orders, suspended sentence orders, home detention curfew cases and Parole Board cases for life sentences, IPP (imprisonment for public protection) offences and extended determinate sentences.
- For tags used for 'court imposed bail' individual Police forces can choose to roll out the service as soon as it is available in their region. Some forces are keen to proceed with GPS tagging and we will continue to work closely with those who want further information before rolling this service out.

[Press release: Business booms for Leeds-based company thanks to HS2 contracts](#)

The company has expanded its workforce and is providing more jobs for local people, as well as continuing to take on more apprentices and graduates. Now employing 177 people, staffing levels are at their highest since the financial crisis, demonstrating the growth and confidence that HS2 is creating, years before the first trains arrive into Leeds station.

Soil Engineering Geoservices Ltd is one of 2000 companies across the UK that are already working on HS2, and providing some of the 7,000 job roles that are already being supported by the project.

The company has spent 4 years investigating ground conditions for construction of the Birmingham to London route, and is one of 90 Yorkshire companies already benefiting from contracts working on HS2, securing jobs, skills and opportunities for local people in the region.

Mark visited Soil Engineering, guided by Tristan, to see the work they undertake on HS2.

Visiting Soil Engineering Geoservices this week, HS2 Ltd CEO, Mark Thurston, said:

The HS2 project is a once in a lifetime opportunity for firms from all parts of the UK to get involved and help deliver Britain's new high speed railway. Soil Engineering Geoscience is a great example of a business that has already got on board with HS2. It's clear to see that they're benefiting from the investment happening now, which is enabling them to sustain jobs for local people, apprentices and graduates, increase their capacity and grow their business.

As we move ahead with the project, there will be thousands of opportunities on offer, and now is the time for businesses in Yorkshire to get involved. We're looking for everything from engineering to catering services, designers to ecologists, and concrete to electronic components. It is not just about track and trains. I encourage any business interested in working on HS2 to look out for the opportunities on offer.

Managing Director of Soil Engineering Geoservices Ltd, Tristan Llewellyn, said:

Since joining the HS2 supply chain we have completed multiple packages of works, enabling long term expansion of our business, and investment in our people and equipment. We're very proud to have recruited several graduates from Leeds University as part of this expansion.

As work develops on HS2 from Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds we expect there to be even greater opportunities for businesses like ours, supporting growth and sustaining investment in upskilling our workforce, and cascading investment into our supply chain.

Postgraduate placement engineer, Emma, demonstrates sampling methods to Mark.

Chair of the West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce's Transport Group, Sara Gilmore, said:

The Leeds Chamber of Commerce has been a supporter of HS2 since it was first announced because it will provide much needed additional capacity on the rail network, as well as improving connectivity between many of the key economic centres in the country. In addition the Chamber has encouraged local businesses to get involved in the exciting opportunities that HS2 brings and it's great to see a Leeds based business taking advantage of this.

The size of the HS2 project means that there will be thousands of opportunities within the HS2 supply chain, across many business sectors, requiring a wide range of capabilities, over a number of years that will be suitable for suppliers of all types and sizes. It is expected that every 10 direct tier one major works contracts will result in over 10,000 indirect supply chain opportunities.

Last year, HS2 Ltd launched its Skills, Education and Employment Strategy, setting out interventions that will ensure that the UK not only has the skills to deliver the HS2 project, but to become a world leader in high speed rail. At peak construction, 30,000 jobs will be supported by the project, and 2,000 apprentices will be on offer.

[Press release: Thousands of fish released into North East rivers](#)

Thousands of young fish have been released into North East rivers to give stocks a boost and encourage people to go fishing.

This week more than 1,600 barbel were released into the River Tees at Broken Scar, Darlington, and more than 2,300 roach into the River Skerne at South Park, also in Darlington.

The team also put almost 2,000 bream and 1,300 rudd into Lockwood Beck, which is just south of Guisborough. Add to that the almost 11,000 fish released into stillwaters across County Durham and Northumberland last week and it means more than 18,000 young fish have been released across the North East.

All the fish were reared at the Environment Agency's national fish farm near Calverton, Nottinghamshire, using funding from rod licence sales.

The work is part of the Environment Agency's ongoing plan to develop and restore rivers and fisheries in the region, to encourage people to get outdoors and enjoy angling.

Natural recovery and development

Paul Frear, Fisheries Officers for the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

Restocking is one of many things we do together with our partners to develop fisheries, including reducing the impact of pollution, improving habitats and removing barriers to fish migration.

This past two weeks has seen more than 18,000 young coarse fish

released into rivers and stillwaters to help the process of natural recovery and development. We hope it will encourage more people to get out and enjoy fishing on the North East's beautiful rivers.

We target our work to rivers which may have suffered from previous pollution incidents or where there are barriers for fish passage. Restoration and the creation of new fisheries for all people to enjoy is a very important aspect of our work.

More than 11,000 fish – roach, bream, tench, crucian carp and rudd – were released into six stillwaters in the region across County Durham, and Northumberland last week.

Those that received a boost in County Durham were Greencoat Pond near Annfield Plain, and Wellfield Lake near Wingate, while in Northumberland fish were released into Hebron Lakes near Morpeth, Dissington Pond near Ponteland, the Environment Agency's Wydon Water at Hexham and Northumbrian Water's Whittle Dene reservoir at Harlow Hill.

The Environment Agency releases fish into our waterways annually. Fisheries officers target fish stocking activity using data from national fish surveys to identify where there are problems with poor breeding and survival, as well as supporting angling clubs to boost local fishing spots.

Many of our industrialised rivers have improved dramatically in water quality in the last 30 years and targeted and appropriate restocking has helped the restoration of natural fish stocks and viable fisheries.

Angling is a great way to keep healthy and enjoy the natural environment. All rod licence income is used to fund work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries.

Fishing is free for children under 16, although those aged between 12 and 16 still need a junior licence. For anyone over 16, a full annual licence costs from just £30, with some short term and concessionary licences also available. [You can buy your rod licence online](#)

Getting out on the region's rivers is a great way to support the 2019 Year of Green Action (YoGA) aimed at connecting people with nature and taking positive action to improve the environment.