

News story: 2019 New Year Message from Secretary of State for Scotland

I'm not going to pretend that 2018 has been an easy year. In Scotland and across the UK, the past 12 months have brought home the difficulties of leaving the EU. Brexit has amplified divisions – between political parties, within political parties and outside politics too.

The people I meet in Scotland simply want Brexit sorted. I understand that. I agree with them that we need to move on to the many other things that matter to us in our daily lives.

For that to happen, 2019 must be a year of compromise and pragmatism. It must be a year when we set aside divisions and work together for the good of the country. Even after a tough 2018, I'm confident that can happen.

We can leave the EU, respecting the result of the 2016 referendum and the votes of 17.4 million people across the UK, and we can do so in a way that protects jobs, supports business and allows us all to get on with our lives.

The Prime Minister has negotiated a deal with the other EU member states that delivers on all of that. We can leave in an orderly way, with a transition period that will allow us to finalise our future arrangements with the EU, wave goodbye to the despised Common Fisheries Policy and begin to strengthen our trading relationships with the rest of the world.

But we will all need to summon the spirit of compromise. As we enter the final three months before we leave the EU, the time has passed for politicians seeking to use Brexit to bring about a General Election or an unwanted second independence referendum.

The last thing we need, the last thing the country needs, is more division. Instead, we should be the crossing the 't' and dotting the 'i' of Brexit, then moving onto focus on other issues.

Scotland's economic performance continues to lag behind that of the UK as a whole. Both Scotland's governments must work together to address the challenges we face. That's why, in 2019, my priorities will be jobs and prosperity in Scotland. We will soon have new growth deals covering Ayrshire, Borderlands and Moray, on top of the more than £1 billion the UK Government has already committed to economic regeneration in and around Scotland's seven cities.

And like everyone else in Scotland, I want to see the Scottish Government getting to grips with our struggling NHS, our under-performing schools and our woeful rail network. What I do not want is to see Nicola Sturgeon expending all her energy trying to use Brexit to campaign for a second independence referendum. That issue was settled decisively in 2014.

So I say, let's work together. In 2019, let's finish the job of leaving the

EU and refocus so we can make real progress on the things that matter to us all. I know we can do it.

Press release: UK aid will be “even quicker and smarter” in 2019

The UK is stepping up preparations for global humanitarian crises in 2019 and harnessing the power of satellite and supercomputer technology to better predict where disasters will strike.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said the UK will take early action to prepare for crises where possible in 2019, not just dealing with the aftermath of dire humanitarian incidents.

The need for humanitarian aid will remain especially high in 2019, driven by conflict in countries like Cameroon and the Central African Republic. Food insecurity will also be a top concern and priority for the humanitarian community, including in Afghanistan, which this year experienced severe drought.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

One in every 70 people worldwide is caught up in a humanitarian crisis, and throughout 2018 UK aid has been at the heart of providing life-saving assistance to those in need: from supporting efforts to prevent and curb Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo to tackling the risk of catastrophic famine in Yemen.

With 132 million people –almost double the population of the UK – expected to need emergency aid next year, we must act even quicker and smarter to better prepare for humanitarian crises before disaster strikes.

Acting early not only helps the UK and developing countries to save money, but also saves more lives. UK aid is leading the way in being better prepared, making use of science, research and innovation to shape a global humanitarian system fit for 2019.

UK aid is harnessing technology, such as space satellites and super computers, to help improve warning systems to better predict the impact of global humanitarian crises, including:

- using some of the most accurate weather forecasts in the world to help families, communities and governments prepare for El Nino which could affect up to 25 countries;
- working smartly with the Met Office, NASA and US scientists to accurately predict where and when cholera will spread in Yemen;
- teaming up with the UK Space Agency to help farmers in Kenya, Ghana and Zambia to understand when pests or disease may strike, allowing preventative action to be taken more quickly.

DFID announced today (Monday 31 December 2018) it will provide £1 million to the World Health Organisation this year to help enhance its Early Warning Alert and Response System (EWARS) to prevent the spread of life-threatening infectious diseases such as diphtheria and measles, as well as diarrheal illnesses, among the 800,000 Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Ms Mordaunt's comments on humanitarian aid in 2019 follow a £34 million uplift in UK aid support to the United Nations Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF), which supports the UN to respond rapidly to crises across the world. The UK is one of CERF's leading supporters, and in 2018 is its largest donor.

Throughout 2018, this fund provided time-critical life-saving assistance to millions of people in 45 countries, including Yemen, Syria, South Sudan and Nigeria.

UK aid provided life-saving assistance, including food, water, medical care and shelter to millions of people desperately in need in 2018.

This year, UK aid responded to crises across the globe including:

- sending 47 tonnes of aid and a team of aid workers to Indonesia following a devastating earthquake and tsunami which is believed to have left over 2,000 people dead;
 - deploying a team of 67, including 57 medics, to Bangladesh to tackle an outbreak of diphtheria in Cox's Bazar, after hundreds of thousands of displaced Rohingya had fled there;
 - supporting the development of a life-saving vaccine to tackle Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has helped to prevent it spreading to neighbouring countries;
 - meeting the immediate food needs of 4 million Yemenis, and supporting aid agencies to screen and treat for malnutrition and disease.
- At the High-Level Pledging Conference for the CERF at the United Nations in New York, the UK announced on 7 December it was bringing forward an additional £34 million this year to support UN CERF.
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Press release: Robots to fix underground pipes and help cut roadworks

- £26.6 million investment to build micro robots that can help repair the UK's vast underground pipe network preventing disruptive roadworks and road closures
- robots – including flying and underwater versions – will also inspect and maintain oil and gas pressure vessels and offshore wind turbines
- funding from the government's modern Industrial Strategy to invest in the industries of tomorrow

New micro robots will be built to repair the UK's huge underground pipe network, significantly cutting the disruption caused by the 1.5 million road excavations that take place every year.

Scientists from 4 British universities will use £26.6 million government investment to develop 1 cm-long robotic devices that use sensors and navigation systems to find and mend cracks in pipes. The traffic closures and disruption to businesses of these roadworks is estimated to amount to more than £5 billion. A further 14 projects backed by the government will see robots sent to hazardous work places such as offshore wind-farms and nuclear decommissioning facilities. Researchers will test new technologies, such as the use of artificial intelligence (AI) software on satellites in orbit to detect when repairs are needed, and drones for oil pipeline monitoring.

Science Minister Chris Skidmore said:

While for now we can only dream of a world without roadworks disrupting our lives, these pipe-repairing robots herald the start of technology that could make that dream a reality in the future

From deploying robots in our pipe network so cutting down traffic delays, to using robots in workplaces to keep people safer, this new technology could change the world we live in for the better. Experts in our top UK universities across the country are well-equipped to develop this innovative new technology.

We have put research and development at the heart of our modern Industrial Strategy, with the biggest boost to funding in UK history to create high skill jobs and boost productivity across the country.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Chief Executive, Professor Sir Mark Walport said:

The projects announced today demonstrate how robots and artificial intelligence will revolutionise the way we carry out complex and dangerous tasks, from maintaining offshore wind farms to decommissioning nuclear power facilities.

They also illustrate the leading role that the UK's innovators are playing in developing these new technologies which will improve safety and boost productivity and efficiency.

The £26.6 million government funding boost is part of the modern Industrial Strategy, investing in the technologies of tomorrow and creating high skilled jobs across the country. The UK already develops world-leading robotics technologies, and these projects funded by the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund and delivered by UKRI, will help make this a sector for UK businesses to grow and dominate international markets.

Health and Safety Executive Chair Martin Temple said:

The key purpose of the Health and Safety Executive is to save lives and prevent workplace injury and ill health. To achieve this, we need businesses to work with us and to be innovative in their thinking around managing risk in the workplace. New and emerging technologies are shaping our working environment.

As a regulator we want to encourage industry to think about how technologies such as robotics and AI can be used to manage risk in the workplace, safeguarding workers both now and in the future world of work.

The modern Industrial Strategy

Our modern [Industrial Strategy](#) published last year, set out how the whole of the UK can build on these strengths, extend them into the future, and capitalise on new opportunities. Investing in science and research to keep us at the forefront of new technologies and the benefits they bring. Nurturing the talent of tomorrow – through more outstanding schools, world-leading universities and the technical skills that will drive our economy. And transforming the places where people live and work – the places where ideas and inspiration are born – by backing businesses and building infrastructure across every part of our country.

It has been taken forward at pace over the last year:

- innovative ideas that bring together world-class UK science, research and innovation to develop cutting edge products and services of the future have received an extra £1.7 billion making it the largest increase for 40 years (to £7 billion). That includes £210 million to develop new medical diagnostic tools and treatments, £90 million for the food and farming industry to embrace agri-tech and £184 million for 41 UK universities to train the next generation of world-class scientists

and engineers

- 6 sector deals between government and industry have been published – from construction and automotive to nuclear and the creative industries, including £1.9 billion of investment in life sciences and £1 billion for artificial intelligence. They are not only about attracting investment and growth, but also ensuring we have the skilled, diverse workforce we need for the future
- plans for new technical qualifications (T-levels) and to transform the quality and quantity of apprenticeships
- furthered the connectivity of Britain's towns, cities and rural areas, including the first allocations of the £190 million full-fibre challenge fund and £25 million for 6 5G test-beds across the UK
- opened the Transforming Cities Fund with billions of pounds ready to go to projects that drive productivity by improving connections within city regions
- opened the Faraday Institution in Oxford to keep the UK at the forefront of global battery manufacture
- announced plans for a new spaceport in Sutherland
- we now have the fastest growing infrastructure investment across the G7, providing £31 billion of additional capital spending to areas critical to improving productivity
- we have launched the £9 million Centre of Data Ethics and Innovation to act as an advisory body to government and regulators on ethics of data and its use, including for AI
- we recently launched the Patient Capital Fund, which will invest £2.5 billion in our most innovative companies
- we will shortly publish the Business Productivity Review setting out ways to support improving productivity in many of our smaller businesses.

Projects

The Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) robotics challenge is a £93 million, 4-year programme that will develop robots to take people out of dangerous work environments and go into areas beyond human limits. The challenge will:

- develop robotic solutions to make a safer working environment in industries such as offshore energy, nuclear energy, space and deep mining
- increase productivity
- open up new cross-disciplinary opportunities

Innovate UK, part of UKRI, funded some of the projects through a new scheme called the Innovation Lab: a one-week residential workshop where some of the UK's best robotics researchers and businesses joined forces to create innovative project proposals.

The successful projects are:

Inspect, Maintain and Repair in Extreme Environments Collaborative R&D

- autonomous aquatic inspection and intervention led by ROVCO Ltd
- Chimera – robotic inspection of pressure vessels led by Forth Engineering Ltd
- Connect-R led by Barrnon Ltd – an industrial-scale self-building modular robotic solution to provide robotic access to work-sites in hazardous environments
- Prometheus – a reconfigurable robotic platform(s) with advanced sensing for confined spaces led by Headlight AI Ltd
- MIMREE – Multi-Platform Inspection Maintenance & Repair In Extreme Environment (MIMRee) led by Plant Integrity Ltd

Demonstrator phase 2 projects

- advancing underwater vision for 3D Phase 2 (AUV3D-P2) led by ROVCO Ltd
- LEO satellite based AI demonstrator led by Myrtle Software Ltd
- unmanned surface vessels for rapid environmental assessment in challenging inland waterways and tidal environments led by Safeguard Nautica Ltd
- autonomous robotic intervention system for extreme maritime environments (ARISE) Stage 2 led by Autonomous Surface Vehicles Ltd
- demonstrator for robotic inspection and maintenance of offshore wind turbine blades led by Bladebug Ltd
- in-service X-ray radiography of offshore wind blades (RADBLAD) led by INNVOTEK LTD
- autonomous, robotic and AI enabled bio-fouling monitoring, cleaning and management system for offshore wind turbine monopile foundations (RobFMS) led by Innovative Technology and Science Ltd
- WatchChainR led by Archangel Imaging Ltd
- offshore infrastructure robotic inspection system (OSIRIS) demonstrator led by Autonomous Devices Ltd

[Press release: Pankhurst statue given Grade II* listing to mark centenary of votes for women](#)

- Announcement marks the end of the centenary of female emancipation

A statue of Emmeline Pankhurst that overlooks Parliament has been upgraded to Grade II* today to commemorate the centenary of women's suffrage in the UK and the election of the first female MP.

The additional protections reflect the statute's architectural and historical significance and the roles that Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel played

in campaigning for votes for women through the Women's Social and Politics Union (WSPU).

The Representation of the People Act in 1918 gave women aged 30 and over the age of 30 the right to vote. The following year, 1919, Lady Astor became the first woman to take a seat in Parliament.

It comes after proposed plans to relocate the statue were withdrawn earlier this year. Pankhurst is one of a small number of women whose statues have been given this status and she now joins the likes of Queen Victoria, Lady Godiva and the Virgin Mary, all of whom have Grade II* listed statues.

Heritage Minister, Michael Ellis said:

Emmeline Pankhurst was a pioneer of her time and was instrumental in securing votes for women. It is a fitting tribute that at the end of this centenary year we recognise the important role she played in securing the equality we rightly enjoy today.

Deborah Mays, Head of Listing Advice at Historic England, said:

The statue is a tribute to Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst who were instrumental in bringing about women's suffrage in Britain. It is a finely crafted memorial in a significant location which bears witness to the struggle and success of the movement Pankhurst led. It is fitting to give it a higher grade listing at the end of this centenary year.

Born in Manchester in 1858, Pankhurst founded the Women's Franchise League in 1889 which fought to allow married women to vote in local elections before going on to found the more militant WSPU in 1903. It was this organisation that gained notoriety and its members were the first to be termed Suffragettes.

Along with many other Suffragettes, Pankhurst was arrested multiple times and also engaged in hunger strikes. The Suffragettes period of militancy stopped after the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 when Pankhurst turned her energies to the war effort in the hope it would benefit the Suffragette cause.

The statue was unveiled by the then Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin on 30 March 1930. In 1956 it was moved to its current position and expanded to commemorate Christabel Pankhurst, Emmeline's daughter and active Suffragette, and members of the Women's Social and Political Union in 1959. In 1970 the statue was granted a Grade II listed status.

Press release: Gove appoints Food Waste Champion

- Champion to set ambitious direction to help drive down unnecessary food waste in England.
- Appointment is key commitment in the government's recently-published Resources and Waste Strategy.

A new Food Surplus and Waste Champion to help drive forward the government's plans to cut food waste has been appointed today (Monday, 31 December) by Environment Secretary Michael Gove.

Philanthropist Ben Elliot, the co-founder of lifestyle group Quintessentially and chair of the Quintessentially Foundation, the business's philanthropic arm, has been tasked with setting an ambitious direction to cut food waste from all sources, to help drive down unnecessary food waste in the UK which totals 10.2 million tonnes per year.

The appointment is a key commitment of government's [Resources and Waste Strategy](#) launched earlier this month, and will support the commitment set out in the Strategy and 25 Year Environment Plan to work towards eliminating food waste to landfill by 2030.

Mr Elliot will work with businesses and other stakeholders from across retail, food manufacture, hospitality and food services, motivating businesses to tackle food waste from farm to fork.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Food waste is an economic, environmental and moral scandal. We must end it.

That's why I am delighted Ben Elliot is taking up this position and know he will bring the enthusiasm and skills this important role needs. His first task will be to help ensure our £15m food waste fund redistributes surplus food that would otherwise be wasted to those most in need.

Ben and the Quintessentially Foundation's most recent partnership has been with The Felix Project, the charity combatting the issue of food waste and food poverty in London. Together they have pioneered a government-backed initiative to divert up to £1 billion of surplus food to those in need.

Ben Elliot said:

Whilst families all over the country struggle to put food on the table and children still go to school each day with empty stomachs,

there continues to be an unforgivable amount of food waste which is both morally deplorable and largely avoidable.

As a nation, we need to stop this excessive waste and ensure that surplus food finds its way to people in our society who need it most, and not let it get thrown away and go to landfill. The progress that we have made at the Felix Project has had a positive impact on thousands of people's lives in London and I am extremely grateful to all of those involved in the food sector that have been so supportive.

My new appointment will allow me to work with DEFRA and food retailers all over the country to help build out a nationwide strategy that will ensure surplus food is not wasted at the expense of those in our society that truly need it.

The announcement builds on government's recently published [Resources and Waste Strategy](#) which sets out government plans to consult on introducing annual reporting of food surplus and waste by food businesses, and our intention to consult on seeking powers for setting mandatory targets for food waste prevention should progress be insufficient.

It also follows [a £15 million pilot scheme](#) to substantially reduce food waste from retailers and food manufacturers announced in October this year, and the £500,000 [Food Waste Reduction Fund](#) announced last year. In July this year it was announced that funds have been awarded to [eight charities](#) across the country. The grants will help provide the essential resources needed to expand their important work tackling food waste.

Ben Elliot will be appointed in the unpaid, voluntary role for one year, and his responsibilities will include:

- Supporting and championing the implementation of the food waste prevention policies outlined in the Resources and Waste Strategy.
- Encouraging actors in the food sector to work together to generate ideas and workable solutions on food surplus and waste issues.
- Advising Defra on proposals for the distribution of the £15 million food waste fund
- Motivating business leaders to tackle food waste from farm to fork, including through support for the delivery of the Courtauld Commitment 2025

Notes to editors

Terms of Reference

- The appointment of a Food Surplus and Waste Champion is a commitment in the Resources and Waste Strategy. The stated objective is to work with business leaders to ensure that food waste remains at the top of their agendas. He/she will vigorously support the commitments set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan and the policies laid out in the Resources and

Waste Strategy.

Objectives

- The Food Surplus and Waste Champion will support and champion the implementation of the food waste prevention policies outlined in the Resources and Waste Strategy and encourage actors in the food sector to work together to generate ideas and workable solutions on food surplus and waste issues.
- The Food Surplus and Waste Champion will liaise with WRAP, food redistribution organisations and food businesses and advise Defra officials and Ministers on proposals for the £15 million food waste fund. The champion will support the roll-out of resulting projects encouraging wide ranging engagement from the food sector.
- The Food Surplus and Waste Champion will motivate business leaders to tackle food waste from farm to fork, including through support for the delivery of the Courtauld Commitment 2025, including the WRAP / IGD Food Waste Reduction Roadmap, and through maximising their influence across supply chains to reduce food waste. This will include meetings with individual business leaders, participation in key WRAP led stakeholder meetings and speaking at conferences on behalf of Defra.
- The Food Surplus and Waste Champion will support forthcoming Government consultations on mandatory surplus and food waste reporting, and seeking powers for mandatory food waste reduction targets and surplus food redistribution obligations.
- The Food Surplus and Waste Champion will support the WRAP strategy to address citizen food waste by working with businesses to ensure participation in trialling new behavioural change interventions, adoption of best practice and to amplify campaign messages.
- The Food Surplus and Waste Champion will need to work with businesses and other stakeholders from across retail, food manufacture, hospitality and food service and producers and therefore will remain impartial and will not focus on the specific interests of any one sector.
- This role will report to Defra Ministers responsible for food surplus waste policies.

Outcomes

- The Food Surplus and Waste Champion will provide regular updates to Defra officials, WRAP and Ministers on progress being made by businesses to address food surplus and reduce food waste and on the implementation of the Resources and Waste Strategy.
- The Food Surplus and Waste Champion will work closely with Defra officials to oversee delivery of the £15m food waste fund to increase the redistribution of surplus food, in accordance with Government accounting rules.
- A further anticipated outcome of the Food Surplus and Waste Champion's work will be strengthened cooperation and partnership working between the Food Surplus and Waste Champion, Defra, the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and key food industry stakeholders.
- The Food Surplus and Waste Champion will work closely Defra Food Waste Policy officials who will meet as required. This team will help the Food

Surplus and Waste Champion to develop any outputs or other reports for Ministers.

- The Food Surplus and Waste Champion will need to draw on expertise as required. To be effective the Food Surplus and Waste Champion they will need a clear mandate from Defra Ministers and to secure time and resource from across the Defra Group to contribute meaningfully and to engage constructively with this role.

Ben Elliot biography

Ben Elliot is the co-founder of lifestyle group and global concierge service Quintessentially. Founded in December 2000, Quintessentially now has 60 offices around the world with over 3,000 employees.

Ben is also the Chair of the Quintessentially Foundation, the business's philanthropic arm. It has partnered with more than 45 organisations, with the aim of improving education, health and welfare within disadvantaged communities, and has raised £13 million to date. Ben and the Foundation's most recent partnership has been with The Felix Project, the charity combatting the issue of food waste and food poverty in the capital. Together they have pioneered a government-backed initiative to divert up to £1 billion of surplus food to those in need. Quintessentially has organised several fundraising events this year to support The Felix Project, including a bike ride from Austria to Slovenia that raised £430,000.

Ben's charity partnerships include: RAPT (Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust), Room to Read, Greenhouse, Hope and Homes, Dimbleby Cancer Care, Duchenne Children's Trust, Rays of Sunshine, WellChild, Good Chance, Centre for Social Justice, Sentebale, the Miles Frost Fund and Elephant Family (for which Ben is a Patron, co-founded and chaired by his uncle Mark Shand until his death).

Alongside this work, Ben is also a trustee of the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Chairman of the Philanthropy Board of the Royal Albert Hall, the Honorary Treasurer of the Centre for Policy Studies, a Non-Executive Director of YouGov and a Partner at Hawthorn Advisors.