

Press release: Government hits target of 2,500 new prison officers 7 months ahead of schedule

The government has passed its target to recruit an additional 2,500 prison officers by the end of 2018 7 months ahead of schedule, the Justice Secretary revealed today (22 April 2018).

As figures showed a net increase of 3,111 prison officers between October 2016 and March 2018, David Gauke said there would be no let up in the relentless recruitment drive despite the milestone being reached. Nearly 90 per cent of the 3,000 new recruits will be on the landings by the summer.

Continuing to boost staffing numbers is crucial as it will allow prisons to introduce a new model where prison officers spend more time both one-to-one and with small groups of prisoners. This approach is key to creating more constructive relationships between offenders and prison officers, reducing violence, improving stability and intensifying the focus on rehabilitation.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Going beyond this important milestone so early is a real achievement. It means the vast majority of these prison officers will be working on the landings by the summer, and all of them will be in place by the end of the year. This will make a real difference to the safety and security of our prisons, ensuring they can fulfil their purpose – protecting the public, reducing reoffending and crucially, rehabilitating offenders.

But let me be clear – the recruitment drive continues and will continue until we reach required levels across the prison estate, with the same urgency that has secured this remarkable influx of new staff.

[Figures released today](#) show an additional 2,699 prison officers on landings or in Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) since October 2016, while a further 255 are performing operational support roles pending the start of their training.

Dean Gardiner, acting Governor at HMP Pentonville, said:

Hitting this target is an important milestone for the prison service. The new staff here at HMP Pentonville have made a real difference to how the prison runs by building positive relationships with prisoners.

The boost in officer numbers has allowed us to deliver more and improve the rehabilitation offered to the offenders, which prepares them to turn away from crime upon release and prevents future victims of reoffending.

HMP Cardiff's Governor Danny Khan said:

Working in prisons is obviously challenging, but our prison officers are clear their job is about rehabilitating offenders, helping them secure employment upon release and making society safer.

It's essential we recruit positive prison officers who aren't afraid to push this agenda.

Officer Shrubsole, a neuroscience graduate, has just completed his training and started work at HMP Pentonville. The 25-year-old said:

I joined because I wanted a job where I could work with people and try to help rehabilitate them. I was also attracted to the idea that I could progress in this role in the future. I am really proud to work in the prison service – you're working with such an important part of society.

Officer Zefi, aged 27, has completed 6 months as a prison officer at HMP Featherstone. He said:

I joined the service so that I could help rehabilitate people.

In the past 6 months, I feel that I have already made a difference which is really rewarding.

The work is varied – one day I could be escorting people to courts and the next supporting someone who is distressed or needs support.

We are clear about the purposes prison serves: protection, punishment and rehabilitation. Our staffing drive is vital to ensuring prisons will not only be safer, more secure and more decent, but will support prisoners in turning their backs on crime for good.

Increasing staffing levels is part of the wider prison reform programme, with its relentless focus on getting the basics right – ensuring prisons are safe and decent, with a secure perimeter that prevents drugs and other contraband getting in.

And we are also cracking down on the serious and organised criminals operating their networks from behind bars, investing £14 million in tackling

this threat including in new intelligence and serious and organised crime teams.

Press release: PM meeting with Prime Minister Turnbull: 21 April 2018

The Prime Minister met Australian PM Malcolm Turnbull today for bilateral talks at Chequers following the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London and Windsor this week.

They reflected on the week's events and how they could both offer real support to see the commitments made at CHOGM delivered over the period of the UK's chair-in-office – particularly in the area of cyber security. They agreed to close collaboration between their two countries on this matter.

Acknowledging that the two countries already enjoy a close defence relationship, the Prime Minister welcomed increased cooperation on defence and security, including on equipment programmes and noted the merits of the Type 26 frigate and its anti-submarine warfare capability.

Both Prime Ministers said that their countries' should seek to share research and science, agreeing that their universities had much to offer each other.

The leaders noted the importance of free and fair trade, before discussing their trading relationship post EU-exit.

They confirmed their shared ambition to form a new bilateral UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement after leaving the EU. They welcomed the approach agreed at the March European Council to provide continuity during the implementation period for international agreements, which could be swiftly transitioned into new bilateral agreements once the implementation period ends.

The Prime Minister thanked Prime Minister Turnbull for Australia's support over the action against the Assad regime. They agreed it was important to continue stressing the Commonwealth communique's commitment to implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention.

News story: UK Government raises a

dram to Scotch whisky industry

Scotch whisky is a global success story. An iconic product which is enjoyed from Perth to [Paraguay](#) and everywhere in between, and has been for centuries.

Not only is it a valuable addition to a Burns supper, it is also one of the UK's most successful export products, worth more than £4 billion in 2017, with 39 bottles shipped overseas per second.

With more than 120 distilleries in Scotland, the industry supports more than 10,000 jobs in Scotland and indirectly supports up to 40,000 jobs across the UK.

The UK Government recognises the industry's importance, not just to the economies of Scotland and the rest of UK, but also as a globally recognised cultural symbol.

That's why in the 2017 Autumn Budget the Chancellor announced a freeze on spirits duty. The freeze will give our world-leading distillers the confidence needed to invest and grow their businesses, and encourage new firms to enter the market. A bottle of Scotch is now £1.15 cheaper than it would otherwise have been since the end of the duty rise in 2014.

The UK Government is also determined to help Scotch reach new markets, through targeted support from the Department for International Trade, and the UK Government's Great British Food Unit. Launched in 2016, it is helping turbo-charge exports, boost inward investment and support emerging British companies export worldwide.

The Scottish Secretary recently met with the people behind Aberlour Distillery to [reaffirm the UK Government's commitment to the sector](#), as well as listen to their priorities as the UK leaves the European Union.

Scotland Office minister Lord Duncan also visited Strathearn Distillery, Scotland's smallest distillery, which has branched out into new products, and developed a range of rums and gins. While there, he discussed issues around Brexit, exporting and the huge opportunities around whisky tourism – which is becoming increasingly popular, with visitor numbers across Scotland increasing.

News story: 'Best of British' enterprise celebrated on Her Majesty

the Queen's birthday

- established in 1965, [the Queen's Awards for Enterprise](#) is the most prestigious business award in the UK
- record 152 businesses receive awards for international trade including Harrison Spinks, an innovative bed manufacturer in Leeds
- entries for 2019 awards open on 8 May

A fifth generation family bed manufacturing business and a small software developer whose technology helps pilots fly safely around Europe are among a record 152 winners of a Queen's Award for international trade it was confirmed today (21 April) as Her Majesty celebrates her 92nd birthday.

Now in its 52nd year, the Queen's Awards for Enterprise is the most prestigious business award in the country, with winners recognised as being among the best in the country and able to use the esteemed Queen's Awards emblem for the next 5 years.

This year, a total of 230 businesses from across the UK were recognised for their contribution in 4 categories:

- international trade
- innovation
- sustainable development
- promoting opportunity

Winners include businesses leading the way in a broad range of industries – from agricultural technology and sustainable goods production, to innovative software and healthcare.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

The UK has some of the most entrepreneurial and innovative minds in the world delivering jobs, growth and greater choice for consumers and I am proud to see a wealth of these businesses being recognised today.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy – 99% of UK firms are small and over 1,000 new businesses start every day. Through our Industrial Strategy we are building a Britain in which they will continue to thrive.

One such winner is Harrison Spinks, a bed manufacturer, which has received 2 awards for international trade and innovation. The British brand sells to 50 countries and exports now make up 25% of the company's sales. The family business has developed a number of industry firsts including the creation of its own patented spring making machines and development of a unique grade of wire rod with British Steel, allowing fine wire to be drawn at high speeds.

Simon Spinks, Managing Director of Harrison Spinks, said:

To be granted 2 more Queen's Awards is a huge honour. Since the company was established in 1840, we have always strived to innovate and go about our business in a different way, from creating new ways to manufacture springs to cultivating our farm to grow our own natural fillings.

We're delighted to be recognised for our successes here and overseas by the most prestigious enterprise awards in the UK.

SkyDemon, a software developer, was awarded 2 Queen's Awards – 1 for international trade and 1 for innovation. The small business in Somerset develops software used by pilots to plan and navigate their flights throughout Europe. It has seen overseas sales soar since its launch in 2009.

Tim Dawson, SkyDemon founder and Managing Director, said:

Using my software skills to make flying easier and safer was a challenge I set myself when I earned my pilot's license 12 years ago. We are now the market leaders in this industry in Europe. Today's announcement of our double Queen's Award, for innovation and for international trade, is a huge boost for us as a company and goes to show that even the smallest businesses can have the biggest impact.

The breakdown of today's 230 awards include:

- 152 winners of the international trade award – a record number
- 72 winners of the innovation award
- 8 winners of the sustainable development award
- 6 winners for the promoting opportunity award

Eight businesses have won 2 awards this year, receiving awards for both international trade and innovation:

- DNAFit Ltd, a business in London using genetics to personalise exercise and eating plans
- Harrison Spinks, a Leeds-based family business with a novel process for manufacturing luxury mattresses and pocket spring components for furniture, footwear and automotive industries
- Lumishore, a manufacturer in Swansea of underwater LED lighting for leisure marine vessels
- Omnitek, a manufacturer in Hampshire of equipment for all areas of audio and video broadcasting
- Resilience Communications Limited, a Cornish electronics company that has created a solution to radio incompatibility
- SkyDemon, a developer in Somerset of software used by pilots to plan and navigate flights throughout Europe

- Solentim Ltd, a Dorset developer of a high-resolution imaging tool for use in the life sciences industry
- Telensa, a Cambridge manufacturer of wireless streetlight controls that accurately meter and reduce electricity usage

According to research by the University of Strathclyde, 73% of international trade award winners between 2012 and 2015 directly attributed increased international sales to winning a Queen's Award for Enterprise. The winners will attend a royal reception at Buckingham Palace in the summer to celebrate the Awards. Entry to the 2019 Awards opens on 8 May 2018 and closes on 12 September 2018.

[Speech: PM speaks at Commonwealth Press Conference: 20 April 2018](#)

This week we have demonstrated that the Commonwealth is united not only by a common history – but by a common future: a future in which we work together for the benefit of all our citizens and for the wider world.

For when many of the greatest challenges we face are global in nature, the breadth of the Commonwealth – spanning six continents and a third of the world's population – offers a unique perspective in helping to forge the global solutions we need.

No other organisation has our geographical and cultural diversity, while giving all nations an equal role, an equal voice and an equal standing.

And this week we have come together to reach a series of shared commitments that will help to build a more secure, more sustainable, more prosperous and fairer future for all.

This is the first time that security has been a central theme of our leaders' meeting. And we have shown our resolve to stand together in defence of the rules based international system, and in defiance of those who threaten us all by seeking to undermine it.

Earlier this month the Assad regime violated international rules in the most egregious way by using chemical weapons in an indiscriminate and barbaric attack on its own people.

And while of a much lower order of magnitude, the use of a nerve agent on the streets of Salisbury here in the United Kingdom last month, is part of a pattern of disregard for those same global norms that prohibit the use of chemical weapons.

At this Summit, the Commonwealth has shown that it will play its part in a

renewed international effort to uphold the global norms that say these abhorrent weapons should never, ever be used.

The Communique we have agreed today expresses our unanimous opposition to the use of these weapons – and our commitment to strengthen the effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We must also update our shared international norms so they can protect us from new and emerging threats online.

So we have secured the world's largest and most geographically diverse intergovernmental commitment on cyber-security co-operation.

The Commonwealth Cyber Declaration will help protect our people and businesses from ever-more sophisticated digital threats – and counter those who would abuse the freedom of the internet to undermine our values, our security and even our democracies.

When it comes to building a more sustainable future, there are few more authentic voices than the Commonwealth, with many island states severely affected by extreme weather events and the scourge of plastics polluting our oceans.

Indeed, we are in London today because of the devastation wrought on Vanuatu by Cyclone Pam in 2015.

So as a global leader in the fight against Climate Change, we are proud that every nation of the Commonwealth has now ratified the Paris Agreement.

And every one of our nations is united behind its highest ambition of pursuing efforts to limit the increase in global average temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

At this Summit we have taken specific action to protect our oceans with the first ever Commonwealth Blue Charter.

The UK and Vanuatu are working together to launch the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance to tackle the scourge of plastic pollution.

And we are already seeing a series of commitments that can mark a breakthrough in the battle to save our oceans.

For instance, Papua New Guinea has banned plastic bags...

...Belize will ban plastic bags, forks and other single use items by 2019...

...New Zealand has announced a ban on microbeads which will come into effect in June...

...The Bahamas is planning to ban plastic bags this year...

...and the UK has pledged to ban plastic straws, stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds.

This is only the beginning of what will be a defining agenda for the United Kingdom's two-year Chair in Office – and I am pleased that Prime Minister Trudeau has indicated he will also make this a priority for the G7 in Canada this Summer.

A more sustainable future also means stepping up the fight for better global health.

With over 90 per cent of Commonwealth citizens living in malaria-affected countries, the Commonwealth has a particular duty to lead international efforts to tackle this deadly disease.

So earlier this week I called on Commonwealth leaders to pledge to halve Malaria across the Commonwealth by 2023. And I am pleased that this has been agreed today.

In building a more prosperous future, this is the first Commonwealth summit to make a unanimous statement on the need to fight protectionism.

Our Declaration on the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment will help to expand investment and boost intra-Commonwealth trade to a value of \$2 trillion by 2030.

And we will play a leading role in shaping the future of global trade policy, using our unique perspective to help ensure that free and fair trade truly works for everyone.

This includes stepping up efforts to share the technical expertise to enable small and developing states to benefit from the growth of free and fair trade.

It means addressing systemic barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economy – including increasing opportunities for women to trade internationally and supporting the growth of more women-owned business.

And it means investing in supporting our young people to gain new skills.

And at this Summit we have pledged to ensure that all girls and boys across the Commonwealth will be able to access at least 12 years of quality education and learning by 2030.

Finally, we have reaffirmed our commitment to a fairer future in which everyone is free to live their life and fulfil their potential.

We agreed the critical importance of the full social, economic and political participation of all our citizens for democracy and sustainable development to thrive.

I have been clear that nobody should face persecution or discrimination because of who they are or who they love. And the UK stands ready to support any Commonwealth member wanting to reform outdated legislation that permits discrimination, including against same-sex relations.

We will continue to protect and advance our core values of democracy, good governance and human rights at the heart of fairer societies.

And we welcomed the return of The Gambia to our family of nations.

This week has also given me the opportunity to hold a series of important meetings with Commonwealth leaders.

On Tuesday I met with the Caribbean leaders where I gave an absolute commitment that the UK government will do whatever it takes, including where appropriate payment of compensation, to resolve the anxieties and problems which some of the Windrush generation have suffered.

These people are British. They are part of us. They helped to build Britain. And we are all the stronger for their contributions.

This week began with the most inspiring gathering of young leaders from across our 53 nations.

And it is with those young leaders where the future of our Commonwealth lies.

So we were delighted to welcome the appointment of His Royal Highness Prince Harry as the Commonwealth Youth Ambassador.

Looking to that future, we have also reached an important longer-term agreement about the role of Head of the Commonwealth.

When Her Majesty the Queen assumed the throne the Commonwealth had just eight members.

Today it has 53.

We meet here today in no small measure because of the vision, duty and steadfast service of Her Majesty in nurturing the growth of this remarkable family of nations.

And on behalf of all our citizens I want to express the depth of our gratitude for everything that Her Majesty has done – and will continue to do.

Today we have agreed that the next Head of the Commonwealth shall be His Royal Highness Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales.

His Royal Highness has been a proud supporter of the Commonwealth for more than four decades and has spoken passionately about the organisation's unique diversity.

And it is fitting that, one day, he will continue the work of his mother, Her Majesty The Queen.

As we begin the UK's two-year Chair in Office, I look forward to working with all our Commonwealth partners in fulfilling the commitments we have made and preparing for the next meeting which we have today agreed will be held in Rwanda in 2020.

I began this week by saying that for the Commonwealth to endure, we must demonstrate our relevance and purpose anew.

Today I believe we have done that.

Our Blue Charter, our Cyber Declaration, our commitments to uphold the rules based international order, to fight protectionism, to defeat malaria, and to invest in education for all our young people...

...in all these ways and more, the Commonwealth has found its voice.

And we can look forward to a bright future with confidence.