

Press release: Secretary of State reaffirms commitment of UK Government to Belfast Agreement

Speaking after her bilateral meeting this afternoon with An Tánaiste, Simon Coveney TD, the Secretary of State reaffirmed the commitment of the United Kingdom Government to the 1998 Agreement.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP said:

The Agreement reached on 10 April 1998 offered the prospect of a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland; between Northern Ireland and Ireland; and throughout these islands.

On this, the 20th anniversary of that historic Belfast Agreement, the United Kingdom Government welcomes the peace and stability that has been achieved in Northern Ireland. The bilateral relationship between the United Kingdom and Ireland has never been stronger.

The 1998 Agreement and its successors have been the bedrock of political progress in Northern Ireland over the past two decades. The UK Government remains committed to working together with the Irish Government, in full accordance with the well-established three-stranded approach to Northern Ireland affairs, to ensure that the Agreement is fully protected and implemented.

This means upholding the core principles that there can be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority of people who live there; inclusive devolved government; North-South co-operation and the strongest bilateral relationship between the UK and Ireland; and the protection of people's rights, culture and identity.

The current political impasse in Northern Ireland and the absence of a fully functioning devolved Executive and Assembly is deeply regrettable. The UK and Irish Governments remain fully committed to the restoration of devolved government at the earliest possible opportunity and will do whatever we can, in accordance with the three-stranded approach, to achieving that.

A huge amount has been achieved in Northern Ireland over the past twenty years: politically, socially, economically, and of course in respect of the security situation. There is, however, still much work to be done. Today, we take inspiration from those who took enormous risks, on all sides, to reach an accommodation twenty years ago.

The UK Government reaffirms its commitment to building a shared society in Northern Ireland that works for everyone. We also remember those who were killed or injured during the Troubles. We also recall the sacrifice of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Armed Forces in upholding democracy and the rule of law. We will never forget the debt that we owe them.

The UK Government continues to believe that the best way we can honour them, as well as discharge our obligations to this and future generations, is through the full implementation of the Belfast Agreement, along with its successors, to achieve a stronger, more prosperous and united Northern Ireland. We want to build a Northern Ireland that is fit for the future.

Press release: Free tyre checks at fire charity car wash

In a national project being trialled in the North West, Highways England is working with fire and rescue services to offer free tyre safety checks and advice alongside a long-running programme of fire station charity car washes. As part of the pilot project, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and The Fire Fighters Charity have allowed Highways England traffic officers and other staff to run the tyre checking service at several car wash events – with the latest at Lancashire’s Fulwood fire station on Saturday (14 April).

Highways England is working to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on England’s motorways and major A roads by 40 percent by 2020 and says focusing on tyre safety will make an important contribution. The tie-up with firefighters and the established charity car wash events is seen as a friendly and informal way of reaching drivers to spread the tyre safety message.

Highways England traffic officer Neil Waring, from Knutsford outstation,

checking car tyres at one of Cheshire's charity car wash events last month

Stuart Lovatt, Highways England's Road Safety Lead, said:

Highways England and fire and rescue services have a mutual interest in reducing the number of incidents caused by poorly-inflated or damaged tyres which could be picked up by simple and regular checks. The Fire Fighters Charity's National Car Wash programme is now huge – involving some 20,000 vehicles across more than 600 events annually. We think it's a great way of reaching out to potentially thousands of drivers to check their tyres for free and give them safety advice while they wait for their cars to be washed.

The feedback from the first 2 events we've run at Frodsham and Ellesmere Port fire stations last month has been really positive and after Saturday's visit to Fulwood we'll be assessing whether we can extend the idea right across the country.

Firefighters are among the emergency service workers called out to tyre-related incidents on the motorway and major A road network while Highways England traffic officers and colleagues have to manage the congestion caused by breakdowns, punctures and road traffic collisions. Statistics show:

- there were 80,000 tyre incidents on England's network of motorways and major A roads between 2013 and 2015
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service was called out to over 4,500 vehicle incidents between 2015 and 2017
- Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service was called out to 2,866 vehicle incidents over the same period
- 27% of vehicles have at least one illegal tyre (Tyresafe 2016)
- 40% of road traffic accidents caused by vehicle defects are tyre related (DfT 2015)

Hi-tech scanners are being used to carry out the free tread and pressure checks

Tony Crook, an Area Manager at Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, said:

We attend over a thousand road traffic collisions each year and some of these could have been prevented if the vehicles involved were fitted with legal tyres.

Our firefighters see first-hand the dangers of driving poorly-maintained vehicles and we hope that this new partnership with Highways England will result in preventing crashes and even saving lives.

Watch Manager Andy Gray, a Road Safety Officer at Cheshire Fire and Rescue

Service, said:

Tyre treads are designed to give good grip on wet roads. As the tread wears down the tyre loses the ability of good grip. It is essential that people regularly check their tyres. Many tyres only get checked at their yearly MOT inspection and then subsequently fail, resulting in a vehicle that could well have been driving with unsafe tyres for some time.

This partnership not only benefits people immediately with the tyre checks but crews will show and educate them on how to check their tyres in the future. The Fire Fighters Charity also benefits from the public's kind donations from the car wash events. These are positive events where you can meet multiple partners who want to engage with you and help keep you safe on the roads.

Drivers attending Saturday's car wash event can get a free hi-tech check of their tyres from 3D tyre tread checking scanners linked to an app on a smart device. The scanners allow a quick and easy way to check tyre tread levels and provide instant feedback and advice to motorists, via a print out.

More information about the Fire Fighters Charity can be found on their [website](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Changes to the assessment economic link conditions](#)

All UK fishing licences contain a condition that requires vessels to demonstrate a genuine economic link with the UK. The economic link condition applies to landings of quota species and is assessed on a yearly basis.

From 1 May 2018 we will be changing the current assessment period of 1 April to 31 March to 01 January to 31 December (the 'calendar year'). This is to bring the assessment period in line with the yearly monitoring of quota

uptake and to help those vessel owners who are required to comply with this condition to manage their quota for the year.

This change will also ensure that the English inshore fleet will benefit earlier in the year from quota donations made in fulfillment of the economic link condition. This gives the English fleet a greater opportunity to use the quota in what can be seasonal fisheries.

The way in which vessel owners must demonstrate an economic link with the UK will not be changed and are listed below by:

- landing over 50% by weight of their catch (which are subject to EU quotas) into UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man ports.
- demonstrating that at least 50% of the total crew man days at sea were accounted for by crew normally resident in UK coastal areas.
- providing proof that routine expenditure in the UK on goods and services for the vessel was equal to either: i) 50% of the value of quota stocks landed net of crew wages, or ii) 50% of the vessel's total operating expenditure for the year, net of crew wages.
- donating quota to the English under-10m fleet equivalent to a value representing 10% of the value of catch landed overseas.
- any combination of the above methods agreed by the MMO.

The change to the assessment period is not expected to affect the ability of vessel owners to comply with the economic link condition.

[Press release: Call for Project Proposals – Rwanda](#)

The British High Commission (BHC) in Kigali is now accepting project proposals for the 2018/2019 financial year (April 2018-March 2019).

This year the BHC is seeking to support projects in Rwanda that focus on the following themes: • Human Rights – Implementation of the accepted 2015 UPR recommendations and strengthening human rights in Rwanda • Justice – Strengthening the capacity of the criminal justice system, enabling improved access to justice and protection of rights for all citizens

We are particularly interested in project proposals aiming towards the following outcomes: 1. Measurable progress towards full implementation of the UPRs in Rwanda 2. Strengthening human rights in Rwanda via innovative activities to improve relationships and cooperation between all stakeholders (civil society organisations, the general public, relevant institutions and the Government of Rwanda) 3. Measurable increase awareness of, and access to judicial services, particularly for citizens in rural areas

Bid Guidance: • Projects are funded for a single financial year running from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019, with no expectation of continued funding beyond this period. • Minimum budget limit: £15,000 • Maximum budget limit: £55,000

Assessment: Bids will be assessed against the following criteria: • Alignment with the above mentioned thematic priorities and outcomes • Outcomes are achievable within the funding period • Project design includes clear monitoring and evaluation procedures • Sustainability demonstrating the project benefits continue after the funding ends • Risk and financial accountability procedures • The organisation's safeguarding policies that ensure protection of beneficiaries • Overall value for money

Process: 1. Project proposals must be received by midnight on Friday 27th April. Late proposals will not be considered. 2. Proposals must be submitted using the attached form only. 3. Proposals must be submitted to BHC.Kigali@fco.gov.uk
4. Successful project proposals will be notified on Wednesday 9th May. Only those selected for further consideration will be notified. 5. The BHC aim to sign grant agreements with successful project implementers by 16th May

[Proposal Form for £10k to £80k:1]

[Project Form Guidance:2]

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[News story: Promoting the UK as an investment destination](#)

The Chief Secretary is this week visiting Brasília, São Paulo and Santiago for bilateral meetings with ministers and will follow-up on the [second UK-Brazil Economic and Financial Dialogue \(EFD\)](#), particularly on infrastructure.

Brazil is the eighth largest economy in the world and Chile is the most open economy in South America, a leading advocate of free trade in the region, and a founding member of the Pacific Alliance group which champions free trade.

Latest figures show that bilateral trade between UK and Brazil is worth £5.4

billion a year while trade between the UK and Chile is £1.6 billion.

Therefore it is vitally important that the UK government engages with our partners in these regions and builds on our existing relationships.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Elizabeth Truss said:

This year we have seen record investment in the UK and rising exports to destinations around the globe.

Latin America is a massive growth market. Countries like Brazil and Chile are reforming their economies and want to grow and trade.

I am visiting this week to strengthen our links, meet businesses and investors and promote the free enterprise message.

And as we leave the European Union and establish an independent trade policy we will be able to negotiate new trade agreements with major trading partners, like Brazil and Chile.

In Brazil, the Chief Secretary will visit the GSK-Butantan Centre of Excellence. One of the largest biomedical research centres in the world, responsible for 51% of Brazil's vaccine production. UK-based pharmaceutical giant GSK and the São Paulo State Research Foundation (FAPESP) partnered to fund the Centre of Excellence together in 2013.

She will also visit the University of Sao Paulo to visit the Shell Lab where the UK has collaborated with the University on a number of projects.

Additionally, she will meet with the Instituto Millenium, one of Brazil's biggest think-tanks, to discuss the importance of free enterprise.

The Chief Secretary will discuss the next steps of the EFD, including British support for Brazil joining the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which is a fundamental part of the EFD, and working towards agreeing a UK-Brazil Double Taxation Agreement, a top ask from British businesses.

As well as meeting Chilean government counterparts – in particular to compare approaches to fiscal policy – the Chief Secretary will host a roundtable with leading Chilean businesses.