

# [Press release: Growth Deals and future tech top North Wales visit agenda for new UK Government Minister for Wales](#)

UK Government Minister Stuart Andrew will make his first official visit to North Wales today (Thursday 25 January) to underline the UK Government's vision for the region and to throw his weight behind the drive for a North Wales Growth Deal.

Mr Andrew will meet members of the North Wales Growth Deal project team at Glyndwr University to discuss the ongoing progress of the plans for the Deal.

Minister Andrew will also be visiting OpTIC where he will be joined by Minister for Northern Powerhouse, Jake Berry. The OpTIC Technology Centre has been a hub for world-leading science and innovation since Wrexham Glyndwr University acquired the site in 2009. It is owned and run by the university and home to 18 businesses and more than 100 staff. These include Glyndwr Innovations, a leading provider of innovative product development engineering and technology consulting.

## **Speaking ahead of the visit, Minister Andrew said:**

As the new UK Government Minister for Wales, I will be using every opportunity to champion the contribution every corner of Wales is making to the growth we are seeing in our economy.

From the businesses creating jobs, to the University that is competing with some of the world's best institutions, the UK Government understands the vital contribution the region is making to secure the success of our long-term economic plan.

The North Wales Growth Deal is a UK Government budget commitment. It sets out a vision for the region with the aims of creating 5,300 jobs and attracting private sector investment to the value of £1bn in the region over the next 15 years.

Plans have been supported by the region's six council leaders and chief executives, and today's meeting at Glyndwr University is an opportunity for the project team to present their plans to the new Minister.

## **Mr Andrew added:**

The North Wales growth deal will have a transformational effect on the way our towns and villages in North Wales govern themselves – shifting powers from London and Cardiff to local leaders who are better placed to take decisions that affect their communities.

Successful Growth Deals are built on big ideas to unlock growth across cities and their wider economic areas. They work best when everyone in the local area, including civic, business and higher education leaders, come together to tell Government what needs to change and what can be done better.

With the launch of the Industrial Strategy last year there has never been a better time for businesses and local authorities to seize the opportunity to come together. UK Government is here to support and work with companies and groups on the ground as they develop a bespoke deal that works for the whole of North-Wales.

### **Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth Minister Jake Berry said:**

This government has invested £3.4bn across the UK through highly successful Growth Deals which have fostered the right economic conditions for local areas to flourish. I look forward to working with the Minister to drive this exciting opportunity for North Wales forward over the coming months.

The Ministers will also be visiting the Menai Science park.

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## **[Press release: HMRC halts thousands of scam text messages](#)**

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has stopped thousands of taxpayers from receiving scam text messages, with 90 percent of the most convincing texts now halted before they reach their phones.

The milestone comes during Take Five To Stop Fraud Week, with the tax authority working to raise awareness of the tell-tale signs of fraud ahead of the Self Assessment deadline.

Fraudsters alleging to be from HMRC send text messages to unsuspecting members of the public. In these messages they will make false claims, such as suggesting they are due a tax rebate. Messages will usually include links to websites that harvest personal information or spread malware. This can in turn lead to identity fraud and the theft of people's personal savings.

HMRC will never contact customers who are due a tax refund by text message or by email.

Reports of this type of fraud have quickly increased in volume over the last few years. People are 9 times more likely to fall for text message scams than

other forms like email because they can appear more legitimate, with many texts displaying 'HMRC' as the sender, rather than a phone number.

HMRC, working with public and private partners, began a pilot in April 2017 to combat these messages. The new technology identifies fraud texts with 'tags' that suggest they are from HMRC and stops them from being delivered.

Since the pilot began, there has been a 90% reduction in customer reports around the spoofing of these specific HMRC-related tags on SMS and a five-fold reduction in malicious SMS reports. The initiative has helped reduce reports of these scams from over 5,000 in March 2017, before the new programme was introduced, to fewer than 1,000 in December 2017. This progress comes after similar successes in tackling fraudulent emails and websites.

In the last 12 months, HMRC has initiated the removal of 16,000 malicious websites, meaning even if the texts are delivered, the associated phishing website is likely to have been removed.

By introducing technical controls, HMRC has also stopped customers receiving over 300 million emails purporting to come from the tax authority.

HMRC's Director of Customer Services, Angela MacDonald, said:

HMRC is focused on becoming the most digitally advanced tax authority in the world, and a big part of that relates to keeping our customers safe from online scammers.

As email and website scams become less effective, fraudsters are increasingly turning to text messages to con taxpayers. But as these numbers show, we won't rest until these criminals are out of avenues to exploit.

We have made significant progress in cutting down these types of crime, but one of the most effective ways to tackle it is still to help the public spot the tell-tale signs of fraud.

HMRC is working with the National Cyber Security Centre to further this work and extend the benefits beyond HMRC customers.

1. Read more about the [Take Five to Stop Fraud campaign](#)
2. Follow HMRC's press office on Twitter [@HMRCpressoffice](#).
3. See [HMRC's Flickr channel](#).

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## Speech: Call for consequences for those who obstruct the negotiation process, including violations of the Cessation of Hostilities in South Sudan

Thank you Mr President,

And thank you also to our briefers Undersecretary La Croix, ASG Mueller and Chairperson Mogae for updating us today.

As we are all aware, the long term stability of South Sudan is dependent on securing a political agreement.

To that end, we welcome IGAD and the Joint Monitoring Evaluation Commission (JMEC)'s work on the High Level Revitalisation Forum, and in particular the agreement of a Cessation of Hostilities. I would like to thank and pay tribute to IGAD and Ambassador Ismail Wais, who have led efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table.

The Revitalisation Forum is the best opportunity to secure a political agreement. It must be truly inclusive to deliver an agreement that is accepted and supported by the people of South Sudan. Women, youth, and broader South Sudanese civil society must all be allowed to participate meaningfully.

Mr President,

We made this Council's expectations clear in last month's PRST. An end to hostilities. "Cost and consequences" for those who obstruct the Revitalisation Forum process. And unimpeded humanitarian access.

Let us now take stock of the progress that has been made.

First, hostilities have not ended. The Cessation of Hostilities was violated almost immediately after it was signed and fighting continues across the country today.

We are particularly concerned by the fighting in Koch. The significant military build-ups by the government and opposition groups in the Malakal-Tonga corridor are also extremely worrying. As are potential offensives in

Yei and Akobo.

We are also concerned by First Vice President Taban Deng and his 500 troops' movements in Jonglei state, which is both a violation of the Cessation of Hostilities and an inflammatory action in the build-up to peace talks.

We therefore welcome the Chairperson of the IGAD Council of Ministers statement on the 29 December, which strongly condemned the violations and called for those responsible to be held to account.

Which brings me to our second expectation: Consequences for those who obstruct the negotiations process, which includes violations of the Cessation of Hostilities.

And we would call on IGAD to use their Council of Ministers meeting on 27 January to set out defined consequences for violators. IGAD can identify these individuals and collectively we take action against them. This Council must be ready to support IGAD using all the measures at our disposal.

We welcome the joint statement by the UN and the AU on the 12 January and fully support South Sudanese Civil Society who are calling for accountability for violating the ceasefire.

We are concerned by recent threats against civil society as they comment on the Cessation of Hostilities, which, as signatories to the Agreement, they have every right to do.

We also welcome the efforts of the new Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) Chairman to increase the timeliness of reporting. There have been marked improvements in the short time he has been in position. We hope he will build on these, including reporting on gender-based violence.

An effective Cessation of Hostilities monitoring body is crucial if we are to prevent further violence. CTSAMM has a difficult job to do and we call on the Government and opposition groups to stop impeding and criticising them. We welcome JMEC's recent statement on this.

Mr President,

The consequences of the conflict are known all too well by the people of South Sudan who are victims of the dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation. Two thirds of the population are in need of humanitarian assistance in what is a manmade disaster. We condemn unreservedly sexual violence in South Sudan.

In November, despite the President's decree calling for unimpeded access, nine aid workers were killed and aid was obstructed over 100 times. All parties to the conflict bare responsibility for this, but the Government alone is responsible for the bureaucratic impediments, such as \$4,000 work permit fees, which continue to hinder the relief agencies' efforts to save lives.

Mr President,

This Council visited Addis Ababa last September for our annual meeting with the AUPSC. At that meeting, we talked about supporting the African Union and its sub-regional organisations. Today, Chairperson Mogae citing IGAD statements, has asked to make clear the consequences for those who violate, spoil, or derail the peace agreement. Undersecretary General La Croix urged us to show that there were real consequences for violators.

We therefore reiterate our call for an arms embargo. It would apply equally to all parties, not singling anyone out for blame. It would send a strong message to those who undermine the Revitalisation Forum and strengthen those in the region trying to bring South Sudanese parties to peace. It is in line with what the region has called for: clear consequences for violators.

Mr President,

The parties in South Sudan must start putting the people of South Sudan first. They must fully engage with the Revitalisation Forum and refrain from violence. They must allow humanitarian access to all who need it. And we, as the Security Council, must also do our part to make the consequence of inaction clear, including those of us around this table, because make no mistake: inaction is a decision, too. It is a decision to let people be attacked and to die. We must hold those responsible to account, and we must do this now. The people of South Sudan can wait no longer. Let us not protect the warmongers and abusers. Let this not be a stain on this Council's conscience.

Thank you Mr President.

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## **Press release: Sara Khan to lead Commission for Countering Extremism**

Ms Khan, who is expected take up her post in the next month, was selected following an open, rigorous and transparent recruitment process. The role is for a period of 3 years.

Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, said:

The Commission for Countering Extremism will form a crucial part of this government's work to stop the scourge of extremism in all its forms and Sara Khan is expertly qualified to lead its important work.

She will bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the

Commission which will prove vital as it works to identify and challenge extremism and provide independent advice to the government.

Last century we challenged racism by uniting civil society and the state. We have the same ambition to confront extremism. This government will not stand by and allow the menace of extremism to undermine the fundamental, pluralistic values which underpin our society.

The Commission has a clear remit to support the government, the public sector, civil and wider society to identify and challenge all forms of extremism. It will:

- provide the government with impartial, external advice on the tools, policies and approaches needed to tackle extremism
- support the public sector, communities and civil society to confront extremism wherever it exists
- promote fundamental, pluralistic British values

Initially, the Commission will widely and openly enter a discussion about extremism and Britain's values with individuals from all areas of society, independently selecting who it will engage with.

It will also produce a strategic assessment of the threat extremism presents as well as the current response and in this initial phase will also advise on the Commission's future structures and work programmes.

Sara Khan said:

I am honoured and humbled to have been announced as the Lead Commissioner.

I recognise the scale of the challenge we face in confronting extremism and I am deeply committed to this role. I will create a Commission that is forthright in challenging extremism in the name of our shared values, fundamental freedoms and human rights.

To those in our country who recognise the harm and threat extremism continues to pose in our society, I am eager to collaborate and engage; I extend my hand out to you to work with me in supporting the Commission's work in building a Britain that defends our diverse country while demonstrating zero tolerance to those who promote hate and who seek to divide us.

The government is already taking robust action to tackle extremism. In recent years it has:

- grown a network of over 160 civil society groups that are standing up to extremism in their communities through our £63 million 'Building a

Stronger Britain Together' programme

- published a new Hate Crime Action Plan (in July 2016). We have committed £3.4 million funding for protective security measures for places of worship and innovative community-led projects to tackle hate crime. We have also taken steps to increase reporting of hate crime, and ensured the police are now recording hate crimes by the religion of the victim
  - continued to act to prevent extremism from gaining a foothold in our schools, including through strengthening regulations to safeguard children missing from education (introduced in September 2016)
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## **Press release: PM meeting with Swiss President: 24 January 2018**

The Prime Minister met President Alain Berset of the Swiss Confederation in Davos this evening.

They discussed how they want to continue the excellent relations which exist between the two countries once Britain leaves the European Union.

The Prime Minister confirmed the UK's intention to agree an implementation period with the European Union, which will give certainty to businesses and ensure they only have to adapt to a single set of changes.

She also welcomed the leadership which Switzerland is showing on tackling the scourge of modern slavery.

They went on to discuss the importance of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and countering the destabilising activity which Iran is carrying out in the region.