

[News story: UK hosts international nuclear disarmament verification exercise](#)

Experts from Norway, Sweden and the United States travelled to join UK experts from the Atomic Weapons Establishment at RAF Honington, Suffolk where the exercise, named 'Letterpress', took place.

The first of its kind, the exercise began to address the greatest technical obstruction to nuclear disarmament – the absence of an established or agreed process of checking the dismantlement of a nuclear weapon. Letterpress is part of an ongoing arms control research collaboration. In a concluding event yesterday personnel simulated the very early stages of dismantling a mock-up nuclear weapon and there were a range of talks from international experts the subject.

Exercise Letterpress included a simulation of of the early stages of dismantling a mock-up nuclear weapon.

Speaking on the exercise yesterday, James Franklin, Head of Nuclear Policy for the UK Ministry of Defence said:

International exercises of this scale are hugely important to ensure the possibility of a world without nuclear weapons. This exercise was part of our commitment made at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee 2017 and makes a tangible contribution to the UK's commitment to Article VI of the treaty itself which remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation framework. I'm proud the that UK remains a responsible nuclear weapons state, exercises like this and the reduction of our nuclear forces by over half since the Cold War continue to reinforce this

Disarmament verification constitutes a central part of Norway's non-proliferation and disarmament work. We must focus on effective and concrete steps to achieve a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Exercise Letterpress is a core building block of our common efforts and exemplifies a fact-based approach to disarmament that we strongly believe in. International cooperation of this kind is essential in developing trust and confidence between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states. Norway's long-term cooperation with the UK on disarmament verification -the UKNI – has greatly improved our understanding of the technical and security related challenges associated with nuclear disarmament.

Signing in 1968, the UK has been a long-term member of the Treaty on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which has a key aim of achieving the long term goal of nuclear disarmament. Exercises like Letterpress are key to fulfilling our commitment to the Treaty.

[Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Consul General in New York](#)

Antony Phillipson has been appointed Her Majesty's Consul General in New York and Director-General of International Trade North America. Antony will take up his appointment in mid-November 2017.

Sir Kim Darroch, Her Majesty's Ambassador to the United States said:

I am delighted to announce Antony Phillipson's appointment as Her Majesty's Consul General in New York. Antony served with me in No 10 Downing Street in the mid-2000s, and later as British High Commissioner to Singapore. Moreover, earlier in his career, he spent four years in Washington as our Counsellor on global economic policy. He is, in short, outstandingly well-equipped to serve Her Majesty's Government in one of the United States' most vibrant and dynamic regions and strengthen a vitally important economic and trade partnership with the US. I look forward eagerly to his arrival.

Antonia Romeo, Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Trade said:

Antony has an extensive background in trade promotion and trade policy, and will bring his unique experience and international insight to the role leading DIT in North America. I look forward to working closely with Antony in his role to further trade and investment ties between the UK and the USA and Canada.

As Consul General, Antony will lead the Government's work promoting UK economic, commercial, political and consular interests in New York and the surrounding area. As Head of International Trade in North America, Antony will lead trade and investment promotion and trade policy throughout the North American region.

Antony takes up his position at an important time, with the total UK-US trade in goods and services worth more than \$200 billion annually supporting more than a million jobs on each side of the pond. The US and UK are each other's

largest foreign direct investors and trading partners.

Previously, Antony Phillipson was Director of Trade and Partnerships in the Department for Exiting the European Union. He has held a number of other posts in Her Majesty's Government since joining the Civil Service in 1993, including Counsellor in the Embassy in Washington, the Prime Minister's Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Head of the FCO Iran Coordination Group and High Commissioner to Singapore.

Antony has a degree in Modern History from the University of Oxford. He is married to Julie and they have three sons.

Press release: Sellafield chemical disposal – 25 October

Current status – Wednesday 25 October 2017 (15:45)

Preparations are continuing for the assessment of safe disposal options for chemicals identified during decommissioning work at our analytical services laboratory.

As we announced last night, we have requested the support of the Army's EOD team in doing this.

Update at Tuesday 24 October 2017

As part of work to prepare for the decommissioning and demolition of the historic analytical laboratories at Sellafield, we identified a number of chemicals requiring safe disposal.

Following the safe and successful controlled detonation by the army's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team at the weekend we are now seeking further technical advice from the EOD to assist us with further chemical disposals. This work will take place in due course.

Disposal of historic chemicals is a common procedure. The EOD team deal with redundant chemicals including from schools, universities and hospitals, hundreds of times a year.

Operations in the laboratory complex have been stood down to enable these further technical assessments. Employees should attend work as normal.

Key facts:

- Even in a worst case scenario, a release of radioactivity from the site is not credible.

- Our mission is to clean up and decommission the Sellafield site – the oldest and most complex nuclear site in the UK. We discover things like this because we proactively go looking for them.
- The chemicals we are dealing with at Sellafield are contained within a complex of laboratories.
- The chemicals are in sealed containers and the containers are in good condition.
- Sellafield Ltd has engaged with our regulators throughout this process and will continue to do so. Sellafield Ltd's investigation will be made available to them.
- We stood down the on-coming shift in the laboratory complex, in order to make it easier for the EOD team to come in and assess the situation.
- The rest of the Sellafield site (over 1,000 buildings, which are home to over 10,000 employees) is operating normally tonight, and will be tomorrow.

[Press release: David Mundell announces membership of Scottish Business Taskforce](#)

Scottish Secretary David Mundell confirmed today (25th October) in the House of Commons that the group will meet for the first time on Friday, chaired by former UK Government Minister Andrew Dunlop.

The Scottish Business Taskforce's aim is to exert a positive influence on the development of UK Government policy, and in so doing help to advance Scotland's interests. In the first meeting the group will discuss the Scottish economy, Industrial Strategy as well as progress made in City Region Deals.

Chaired by former UK Government Minister Andrew Dunlop, the panel comprises:

- Marc Crothall CEO – Scottish Tourism Alliance
- Prof Susan Deacon – Assistant Principal External Relations, University of Edinburgh and Chair, IoD Scotland
- Jayne-Anne Gadhia – Chief Executive, Virgin Money
- Jo Macsween – Vistage Group Chair and ex MD Macsween of Edinburgh
- Prof. Graeme Roy – Director, Fraser of Allander, University of Strathclyde
- Louise Smith – HMT Fintech envoy Scotland and Head of Design, Personal and Business Banking RBS
- Douglas Smith – Chairman – Scotland, CBRE
- Neil Sims – VP, Expro – North Sea
- Chris Van der Kuyl – Chairman, 4J Studios
- Ellis Watson – Executive Chairman DC Thomson Media

- Will Whitehorn – Chair, Scottish Exhibition Centre and Clyde Space
- Brian Wilson – Chair, Harris Tweed Hebrides

The Taskforce's core membership are all business and economic leaders who have been invited to join in their personal capacity and on the basis of their knowledge and experience, rather than representing a particular trade body or organisation.

David Mundell said:

The Scottish Business Taskforce boasts an unrivalled wealth of expert analysis and knowledge. The members represent the diversity and talent of Scottish business and will ensure that the UK Government is seeking the best advice from leaders in their fields.

Chaired by my former colleague Andrew Dunlop who is a business expert in his own right, this taskforce will provide the insight to ensure we are delivering for Scottish businesses.

The first meeting of the group will take place in Edinburgh on the 27th October, and will discuss the state of the Scottish economy, the UK Government's Industrial Strategy, innovation and the economic powers at the disposal of both governments.

Ahead of the meeting, Scottish Business Taskforce chairman and former UK Government Minister Andrew Dunlop commented:

As a UK Government Minister, I made it my priority to understand the needs of Scottish businesses and to take action to strengthen the Scottish economy. And as someone who has also run my own company I can appreciate the importance of creating the right climate in which business can thrive. That's why I am delighted to be chairing this group, building on both experiences to bang the drum for Scottish businesses.

The group's membership engages some of Scotland's best business and economic brains and draws on experience of diverse sectors from fintech and new media to the iconic Harris Tweed and Macsween's world famous produce.

The UK Government Scottish Business Taskforce will focus on how the UK Government can use its policy levers to improve our productivity, performance and promote strong economic growth in Scotland. Our work will feed directly into the UK Government and provide a constructive contribution to its joint work with the Scottish Government.

[News story: Brathay apprentice challenge winners GSK in Westminster visit](#)

Apprentices from GSK Ulverston were crowned the winners of the Brathay Apprentice Challenge in June following a testing 6-month challenge that saw them compete against teams from the country's leading apprentice employers and training providers.

John Woodcock MP, Brathay Trust and Sue Husband, Director of the National Apprenticeship Service, met with the apprentices to congratulate them on their efforts.

The Brathay Apprentice Challenge is the search for the apprentice team of the year and supported by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. In 2017, teams of apprentices reached over 70,000 young people to raise awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships and recruited over 500 new employers interested in offering apprenticeships, in addition to delivering 44 community projects to benefit young people.

GSK narrowly beat Nottingham City Homes into second place and JCB who finished third. Teams from Derwent Training Association, IBM, Redrow Homes, Severn Trent Water and WSP also competed in the national finals.

GSK team leader and engineering apprentice, Joseph Hambley, said:

It has been a privilege to be invited to meet with John Woodcock, MP and come to Westminster today. We were ecstatic to have won the top title of the apprentice team of the year out of 650 apprentices that entered the challenge.

The experience and opportunities from the Brathay Apprentice Challenge will stay with us all forever; from producing a film to raise awareness about the dangers of asthma in children and teens to recruiting employers and educating young people about apprenticeships.

We hope that winning the title will support our efforts to inspire young people and promote apprenticeships. Hard work, determination and self-confidence are key for success.

Sue Husband, Director, National Apprenticeship Service concluded:

The Brathay Apprentice Challenge requires commitment, determination

and teamwork to succeed and the team from GSK showed all these skills in abundance to be crowned winners. I am so pleased to see them all again today, to celebrate their success and for them to get the opportunity to receive deserved recognition from their local MP at Westminster.

The attributes of this team of apprentices includes optimism, self-control and creativity and I am delighted to be in the company of such successful apprentices today.