

[Press release: UK pledges protection for corals](#)

The UK has joined a global battle to safeguard the world's coral reefs from climate change and rising sea temperatures, Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey announced today.

International work to protect these vital marine habitats is gathering momentum as coral reefs come under increasing pressure from climate change and human activity – and today the UK officially joined the Coral Reef Life Declaration, committing to safeguard coral reefs and bolster scientific research into the threats they face.

The announcement comes just one week ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, where member states will gather in London to agree further global measures to protect our oceans.

From Australia's iconic Great Barrier Reef, to 8,000 year-old cold-waters corals off the coast of the UK, the countries of the Commonwealth account for nearly half the world's coral reefs – and over 250 million people across the Commonwealth depend directly on coral reefs for food and income.

Speaking from the National Oceanography Centre in Southampton, where High Commissioners and members of the UK's science community gathered today to celebrate marine science across the Commonwealth, the Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Few people know the waters around the UK contain riches to rival the tropics – with our waters home to a vast array of cold water coral reefs that protect important marine life.

Through tapping into the UK's world-leading marine science and working with our partners across the Commonwealth, we will help to safeguard this vital habitat and protect our oceans for future generations.

The [Coral Reef Life Declaration was launched by Prince Albert II of Monaco](#) at the Our Ocean conference in Malta in October last year to encourage countries to come together to protect coral reefs. So far 12 countries have signed the declaration, including Australia, Fiji and the Seychelles.

The UK's waters are home to cold-water corals over 8,000 years old, with the only known coral reef in English waters protected as a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ).

The [Canyons MCZ](#), located off the Cornish coast, covers an area of more than 650 km² and was designated in 2013 to protect the cold-water corals found there. There are also extensive reefs off the west coast of Scotland where

there are seven Marine Protected Areas safeguarding this fragile habitat from damage.

The UK's Overseas Territories also hold a huge array of tropical and cold water coral reefs. Through our [Blue Belt](#) programme we are currently on track to protect over four million square kilometres of ocean across the Overseas Territories by 2020, working with local communities to protect the coral species within.

This year has also been made the International Year of the Reef by the International Coral Reef Initiative – the leading organisation dedicated to protecting these habitats.

[News story: Don't forget to take ID to vote in five pilot areas on 3 May](#)

The government is working with five local authorities to pilot the use of identification at polling stations in the local elections on 3 May 2018.

In Swindon and Watford, you will need to take your poll card to the polling station. These are being delivered to every eligible voter with a reminder to keep it safe for use on polling day.

In Bromley and Gosport, you will need one piece of photo identification, like a passport or driving licence, or two pieces of non photo ID, such as a recent bank or credit card statement and utility bill of which one must contain your address.

In Woking, you will need photo identification, like a passport, driving licence or senior bus pass.

To find a full list of accepted ID in each pilot area visit the local authority website

If you are concerned you don't have the required identification documents, you should visit your local authority website and follow their advice for applying for an alternative identification document.

Why are these local authorities piloting voter ID?

A report from the Electoral Commission showed that allegations of people pretending to be other people to steal their votes doubled nationally between 2014 and 2016.

The Electoral Commission welcomes the voter ID pilots as a positive first step towards implementing its 2014 recommendation that an accessible,

proportionate voter identification scheme should be introduced in Great Britain.

The impact of electoral fraud on voters can be significant and takes away their right to vote as they want, whether through intimidation, bribery or by impersonating someone and casting their vote. There is undeniable potential for people to cast other people's votes unless their identity is checked at the polling station.

We already ask that people prove who they are in order to collect a parcel from the post office, claim benefits, rent a car or travel abroad, and it is reasonable to take the same approach to protect voting rights.

How are local authorities making people aware they need to bring identification?

The five pilot local authorities are working to ensure everyone is aware that they need to bring identification to the polling station, and what to do if they don't have the required identification.

The local authorities launched their public awareness campaigns at the start of the year. Since then, they have been contacting local community, charity and faith groups to make sure everyone knows about the changes.

The public awareness campaigns are tailored to each area and involve a combination of

- digital advertising and social media
- outdoor advertising
- local, regional and national press
- stakeholder engagement
- face to face meetings
- pop up stalls (e.g. outside the supermarket)
- delivering information to every eligible voter

[Press release: Liam Fox promotes UK industry in US and Canada](#)

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox will promote overseas investment into growing UK industries at meetings with some of the most successful businesses in Canada and the USA this week (Monday, 9 April to Friday, 13 April).

He will highlight the importance of building relationships with companies and businesses— not just governments and representatives – in a 5 day visit to North America.

During the visit, he is expected to meet the globe's largest online retailer, Amazon, and banking software enterprise firm, Zafin, where he will promote modernising global trade rules around e-commerce.

The digital sector accounted for more than £32 billion of UK exports in services in 2015, a growth of almost 40% since 2010 and yet many of the relevant WTO rules around the digital economy have not been updated for 2 decades.

He will also meet entertainment company Warner Bros and visit Double Negative Studios which created the visual effects for box office hit, Blade Runner 2049.

The International Trade Secretary will highlight how inward investment in film and television production from US studios like Warner Bros, Disney and Universal was worth £2 billion to the UK economy in 2017. Britain's creative industries are worth £92 billion in total, employ 2 million people, and are growing twice as fast as the rest of the economy.

In the USA, he will visit Starbucks and will meet representatives from Scottish whisky distillers, Balvenie as both companies continue to export across the globe. The USA remains the largest market outside of the EU – worth £2.3 billion last year and rising 3% from the previous year.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox said:

In the USA and Canada this week, I'll be showcasing the UK's strong creative, tech and food sectors, making the case for greater investment and demand in UK products and expertise in both of these countries.

I will tell our global partners that more than one year on since the EU referendum, there are strong reasons for the UK to be optimistic – exports of goods and services have increased significantly over the year, with particular demand in the USA and Canada for machinery and vehicles.

It's clear evidence that UK companies are succeeding on the world stage, and as an international economic department we are banging the drum for our world-class goods and services.

Latest trade figures released from the Office for National Statistics show UK exports of goods and services rose by 12.1 per cent to £622.1 billion as the trade deficit narrowed by £12.1 billion.

Non-EU countries continue to be the main destination for services exports making up 61.3% of all services exports and worth £171.4 billion to the UK economy.

Statistics from the Department for International Trade (DIT) also show that last year the UK attracted more [foreign direct investment projects](#) than ever

before (year 2016 to 2017), with more than 2,200 projects recorded.

This investment meant that more than 75,000 new jobs were created, and 32,600 safeguarded, amounting to over 2,000 jobs per week across the country.

Working to promote the UK to great trading nation, DIT has set up 14 working groups across 21 countries to strike trade deals and strengthen commercial ties with key trading partners.

Press release: Home Secretary to launch Serious Violence Strategy

Commissioned by the Home Secretary and backed with £40m of Home Office funding, it marks a major shift in the government's response to knife crime and gun crime.

It strikes a balance between prevention and robust law enforcement with a new £11m Early Intervention Youth Fund for community projects to help young people live lives free from violence.

The strategy identifies the changing drugs market – in particular the devastating impact of crack cocaine – as a key driver of the violence harming our communities and announces a range of powerful actions to tackle the issue of “county lines” and its implications for drugs, violence and exploitation of vulnerable people.

That includes £3.6m to establish a new National County Lines Coordination Centre.

The Home Secretary will launch the Serious Violence Strategy at an event in London today to an audience of community groups, public sector partners and industry representatives, including organisations and charities she has met in recent weeks.

She will also announce that she will lead a new Serious Violence Taskforce which will bring together the voluntary sector, local Government, police and other key sectors to ensure the strategy is delivered effectively.

In her speech she is expected to say:

This strategy represents a real step-change in the way we think about and respond to these personal tragedies, these gruesome violent crimes which dominate the front pages of our newspapers with seemingly depressing regularity.

A crucial part of our approach will be focusing on and investing more in prevention and early intervention.

We need to engage with our young people early and to provide the incentives and credible alternatives that will prevent them from being drawn into crime in the first place. This in my view is the best long-term solution.

Because what better way to stop knife crime than by stopping young people from picking up knives in the first place?

The strategy stresses the importance of early intervention to tackle the root causes of serious violence and steer young people away from crime in the first place, whilst ensuring the police continue to have the tools and support they need to tackle violent crime.

It states that about half the rise in robbery, knife and gun crime is due to improvements in police recording. For the remainder, drug-related cases seem to be an important driver. Between 2014-15 and 2016-17, homicides where either the victim or suspect were known to be involved in using or dealing illicit drugs increased from 50% to 57%. Crack cocaine markets have strong links to serious violence and evidence suggests crack use is rising in England and Wales due to a mix of supply and demand factors.

The strategy sets out how drug-market violence may also be facilitated and spread by social media, with a small minority of people using social media to glamorise gang or drug-selling life, taunt rivals and normalise weapons-carrying.

The Home Secretary will go on to say:

We will take the comprehensive approach necessary to make sure that our sons and daughters are protected and our streets are safe.

As a government we will never stand by while acid is thrown or knives wielded.

I am clear that we must do whatever it takes to tackle this so that no parent has to bury their child.

In addition to the £40m of Home Office funding to deliver the strategy in the next two years, it references:

- The Home Office's £13m Trusted Relationships Fund, through which the Home Office is providing £13 million over the next four years to pilot approaches which provide support to young people at risk of sexual exploitation, gang exploitation and peer abuse in England. The Fund will support work to help young people to build positive and trusted relationships with adults who are there to support them, which may help prevent not only their risk of abuse but also involvement in violent offences, for example through child criminal exploitation.
 - The £40m Youth Investment Fund, launched in September 2017 by DCMS, DfE and the Big Lottery Fund to boost local 'open access' youth provision in six targeted disadvantaged areas in England. Over 300,000 young people are expected to benefit from increased access to a range of activities that help them develop their skills and build positive relationships. This will include young people affected by violence.
 - £90m of "dormant accounts" money, which will support disadvantaged and disengaged young people with their transition to work;
 - The Troubled Families Programme, which has £920m for local authorities to work with 400,000 families between 2015 and 2020.
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[Speech: Only Russia could have committed this crime: article by Boris Johnson](#)

Sometimes it seems as if running a good cover-up is the main job of the Kremlin. No other government devotes as much time and effort to the business of trying to sabotage or discredit international inquiries.

It says much about the Russian state's appetite for high crime and misdemeanour that it has found this ability so indispensable. And Moscow's well-honed techniques have been on full display since Sergei and Yulia Skripal were poisoned in Salisbury on 4 March.

The essence of a Kremlin cover-up is a cynical attempt to bury awkward facts beneath an avalanche of lies and disinformation.

So far, the Russian Government and state-owned media have invented 29 separate theories about the Salisbury poisonings, including the novel suggestion that the Skripals' ordeal was revenge for Britain's alleged poisoning of Ivan the Terrible in 1584 (before Britain as a state actually

existed).

This time, the torrent of absurdity has availed the Kremlin little: 28 countries and NATO delivered their emphatic answer by siding with Britain and evicting more than 150 Russian diplomats, the largest collective expulsion in history.

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So let me repeat the facts. Our experts at Porton Down have identified the substance used against the Skripals as a “military grade” Novichok, a class of nerve agents developed by Russia.

In addition, the British Government has information that within the last decade Russia has investigated ways of delivering nerve agents likely for assassination and as part of this programme has produced and stockpiled small quantities of Novichoks.

Moreover, Russia has an obvious motive for targeting Sergei Skripal. In the year that Skripal moved to Britain, President Putin made a televised threat that “traitors” would “kick the bucket” and “choke”.

The fate of Alexander Litvinenko, murdered in London in 2006, demonstrates the Kremlin’s willingness to kill someone in this country. The Russian Duma has actually passed a law that allows the assassination of “extremists” overseas.

Put the facts together and there is one conclusion: only the Russian state has the means, the motive and the record to carry out this crime. As the Prime Minister told the Commons on 14th March, there is “no alternative conclusion other than that the Russian state was culpable for the attempted murder”.

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The next moment will come when the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) releases its analysis of the nerve agent used in Salisbury. In accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, Porton Down provided samples to the OPCW so that its experts could independently verify the analysis.

Like the Porton Down scientists the OPCW’s job is to identify what substance was used, not who attempted the assassination.

Yet the Russian state has already begun a pre-emptive campaign to discredit the OPCW’s verdict. Last week, Russia asked to join the OPCW investigation, which is rather like a suspected drunk driver demanding the right to use his own breathalyser. The OPCW executive council resoundingly defeated this ploy, with only six out of 41 countries siding with Russia.

This raises an obvious question: will the Kremlin accept the finding of the OPCW when it comes? Sergei Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, gave an answer which I will paraphrase as a flat no— unless, of course, the Kremlin

was allowed to breathalyse itself. Russia “cannot support in advance the results of an investigation it is not a part of”, he declared, rather as a drunk driver might insist on the right to join the police investigation into himself.

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