

Press release: Images offer glimpse of A45 Chowns Mill upgrade

As part of the government's £15.2bn road investment strategy, Highways England is developing a scheme to improve the A45/A6 Chowns Mill junction, leading to more reliable and safer journeys for people and businesses by reducing congestion and increasing capacity on the road.

Work will include widening the A45 and A6 approaches to provide additional traffic lanes, creating an additional roundabout section on the south side of the existing roundabout and introducing traffic signals to manage traffic safely and effectively.

The work will:

- improve journey times by providing additional lanes
- improve safety by changing the junction layout and introducing traffic signals – managing the flow of traffic through the junction more effectively and reducing the chance of collisions
- support economic growth by encouraging continued investment in the regional economy and support new business and residential opportunities
- improve access for cyclists and pedestrians thanks to new signalled crossings which will make it safer to cross the junction – all crossing points will be designed for users with disabilities

The A45 is a key link between the A14 and M1, serving the growing Northampton, Wellingborough and Rushden areas.

As part of the scheme the junction will be redesigned as a half hamburger layout with a new link road connecting the A6 North and A5028 with the existing roundabout. This will improve the existing junction to allow better flow of traffic reducing congestion through the junction. All approaches will be widened to provide extra lanes and increase capacity.

Highways England project manager, Rachael Langfield, said:

Chowns Mill roundabout currently suffers from severe congestion at peak travel times, leading to long queues on all approaches. This congestion will increase as traffic levels grow.

The scheme we have developed will improve journey times and safety along the A45 and A6 corridors as well as boost capacity to support planned growth in the local area, which is great news for the local and regional economy.

There will be no need to purchase any additional land with improvements to the junction carried out within the existing roundabout boundary.

Construction is due to begin in late 2019 and is expected to be completed within two years.

Public information exhibitions take place tomorrow and Saturday where people can find out more.

The exhibition times and locations are as follows:

- Friday 6 April 2018 – 2pm to 8pm Park Road Baptist Church, Park Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 0RG
- Saturday 7 April 2018 – 10am to 4pm Park Road Baptist Church, Park Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 0RG

People can also ask questions about the scheme by:

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: UK Government backs iconic Scottish food and drink industry](#)

The roundtable with representatives from the food, drink and retail sector provided an opportunity to discuss Brexit, framework agreements, and sector priorities over the coming months.

The Secretary of State, David Mundell, has hosted representatives from the Scottish Salmon Producer's Organisation, Scottish Retail Consortium and the Scotch Whisky Association and others at a roundtable to discuss the opportunities and challenges that Scotland's world famous food and drink industry faces as the UK leaves the EU.

Discussions focused on frameworks in regards to food labelling, and the need to provide a common UK approach in order to allow seamless trade between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

Protecting and promoting iconic Scottish food and drink businesses

is absolutely vital to the UK Government, and it is important that we do nothing that creates any new barriers to the UK's internal market – which is worth four times that of Scotland's trade with the EU.

Without Scotland's two governments agreeing on common frameworks we could end up with different labelling requirements across the UK. This could mean a jam producer in Dundee would be unable to sell their products to cafes in Doncaster without complying with two separate sets of requirements, increasing production costs, which is clearly detrimental to businesses. That's why common frameworks in areas such as food labelling are the sensible approach.

Scotland's food and drink is famous across the world, as well as enjoyed all over the UK, so I am looking forward to meeting some of the men and women behind prestigious brands like Aberlour whisky and Walkers Shortbread, and hearing about their experiences in international markets.

Earlier this month the UK Government published a [provisional analysis](#) of the returning EU powers. It lays out clearly that the Scottish Parliament, as well as other devolved administrations, will receive extensive new powers. Of the 153 areas in the analysis, there are only 24 that will require more detailed discussions to see whether legislative common frameworks might be needed, in whole or in part.

As well as visiting the Aberlour Distillery and Walkers Shortbread, Mr Mundell is also holding a variety of meetings in Inverness, Elgin, and Aberdeen.

These will include discussions on growth deals with Elgin Council, updates on the Northcoast 500 route, an event to discuss exporting with Inverness businesses, as well as meeting with individuals from the oil and gas industry.

[News story: Soft Drinks Industry Levy comes into effect](#)

From Friday (6 April 2018), millions of children across the UK will benefit from the government's key milestone in tackling childhood obesity, as the Soft Drinks Industry Levy comes into effect.

The tax on soft drinks, commonly referred to as the 'Sugar Tax', has already resulted in over 50% of manufacturers reducing the sugar content of drinks since it was announced in March 2016 – the equivalent of 45 million kg of

sugar every year.

Soft drinks manufacturers who don't reformulate will pay the levy, which is expected to raise £240 million each year. This money will go towards doubling the Primary Sports Premium, the creation of a Healthy Pupils Capital Fund to help schools upgrade their sports facilities, and give children access to top quality PE equipment.

The levy will also give a funding boost for healthy school breakfast clubs.

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Robert Jenrick MP visited the Lucozade Ribena Suntory factory today (5 April 2018), which has led the way in reformulating its drinks alongside the likes of Tesco and Irn Bru.

He commented:

The Soft Drinks Levy is one part of our plan to tackle childhood obesity. From Friday, soft drinks which contain too much added sugar will need to pay a fee.

All revenues raised through the levy will directly fund new sports facilities in schools as well as healthy breakfast clubs, ensuring children lead healthier lives.

We want to persuade manufacturers to reformulate their drinks and lower the sugar content. In the time between announcing this policy and it taking effect today, more than half of all soft drinks have been reformulated to lower the sugar content, including many of the best known soft drinks. We hope that will continue in the months and years to come.

In England alone, a third of children are obese or overweight when they leave primary school, and evidence shows that 80% of kids who are obese in their early teens will go on to be obese adults.

Public Health Minister, Steve Brine MP remarked:

Our teenagers consume nearly a bathtub of sugary drinks each year on average, fuelling a worrying obesity trend in this country. The Soft Drinks Industry Levy is ground-breaking policy that will help to reduce sugar intake, whilst funding sports programmes and nutritious breakfast clubs for children.

The progress made so far on our obesity plan is promising—but with one in three children still leaving primary school overweight or obese, we have not ruled out doing more in future.

Notes to Editor

- The aim of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy is to encourage companies to reformulate their soft drinks. Since the levy was announced two years ago, the expected amount of revenue has gone down from £520m in Year 1 to £240m. Even before coming into effect, the levy is already working – over 50% of manufacturers have reformulated their drinks
 - Even if revenue from the levy declines, funding for schools and children will stay the same
 - The rates companies will need to pay are as follows:
 - 24p per litre of drink if it contains 8 grams of sugar per 100 millilitres
 - 18p per litre of drink if it contains between 5 – 8 grams of sugar per 100 millilitres
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Speech: Importance of International Mine Awareness Day: Article by Tom Burn

It's over 20 years since Princess Diana walked through a heavily mined field in Angola, and changed the way the international community thought about this appalling and indiscriminate weapon of war. Shortly after that historic visit, the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction was signed, creating an established framework through which the world could work towards eradicating these barbaric weapons.

Mines and unexploded ordnance leave a terrible legacy of war, long after the guns have fallen silent. Hidden from sight, they continue to kill and maim innocent civilians going about their daily lives. Their very presence hinders development and prevents families and communities from being able to return to their land and rebuild.

Sri Lanka is no stranger to the long-lasting suffering that mines cause. In fact, by the end of the conflict, over 500km² of land was contaminated by landmines. Today marks the International Day for Mine Awareness, the first one since Sri Lanka acceded to the Ottawa Convention in December 2017. Signing up to the Ottawa Protocol demonstrated the government's commitment to meeting its ambitious target of becoming Mine Impact Free by 2020.

The UK supports Sri Lanka in its efforts to clear every single mine on this beautiful island. That's why the British High Commission in Colombo has been funding demining work in Sri Lanka since 2010. Between 2010 and 2019, we will have spent over £6.2 million (LKR 1.2 billion) on demining all across the North and East of Sri Lanka. Working mostly through our partners, The HALO

Trust, our goal is to clear more than 600,000m² of land between 2016 and 2019, making it safe for people to move home and start cultivating their land again. Together with a range of Sri Lankan and international partners, we are making progress. Last year, we joined celebrations to mark the milestone of Batticaloa becoming the first District in Sri Lanka to be classified as mine “residual risk” free. Many organisations helped to ensure this significant result. We are proud that another British Demining charity, the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), working alongside the Humanitarian Demining Unit of the Sri Lankan Army and others, made a major contribution to achieving this great feat.

In the last year, UK support helped clear 142,549m² of land of mines, unexploded ordnance and stray and small ammunition; our clearance activity has benefited 5,215 people; a further 11,139 individuals, including women and children, have received UK supported mine risk education.

That’s what makes demining such an important part of the UK’s wider commitment to reconciliation and peace-building in Sri Lanka. Not only does it offer immediate humanitarian benefits, but it also accelerates recovery from conflict. Families can live and farm. Children can play without fear. In the short term, it also offers employment opportunities to some of the most vulnerable, including female heads of household. The HALO Trust for instance has a workforce that is over 50 percent female, helping young women affected by the conflict to make a real difference in the future of their communities.

Last year our Minister for Asia, the Rt Hon Mark Field MP, visited the North to hear from those working on the frontlines of the demining effort. I too visited last November, seeing for myself the scale of the challenge. With anti-personnel mines still covering the ground in great numbers, the risk is still very real, though significant progress has been made. The Halo Trust’s thorough and professional clearance operations mean that land can be handed back to those displaced many years ago. I met one family who had already begun rebuilding their lives in their old home. With new crops planted and a sense of optimism about the future, meeting them was a great reminder of exactly why this sort of work is so important.

Since 2010, much has been accomplished, and together we have dug many thousands of mines and unexploded ordnances from the ground. Thousands of mines that can no longer threaten the lives of ordinary Sri Lankans. Whilst we should take pride in this shared achievement, there is still much more work to be done. On International Mine Awareness Day, let’s redouble our efforts to realise the dream of a mine-free Sri Lanka by 2020.

[News story: Army officer helps Zambia](#)

set up health care education programme

Ten years ago, senior nurse Chris Carter took a risk which would prove to be life changing. Leaving a job that he loved in the NHS for a leap in the dark – a career with the British Army. It was a choice that not only changed his life, but arguably it also changed the lives of many Zambians critically in need of nursing care.

Because his decision not only led to a new job, it also indirectly opened the door to a new and unexpected adventure when, rich in operational experience, he later answered a call for volunteers to go to Zambia to teach critical care.

A rewarding experience in the making. But he wasn't expecting to end up heading a team which would be collaborating internationally and leading a program which would have a national impact on the future health care set up in a sub Saharan Commonwealth country.

Major Chris Carter gets ready for a lesson in a Zambian hospital

A new job a new life

It all started with that choice he made at the crossroads of his caring career. He said :

At the time it was at the height of the Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns, and I was looking for a new opportunity,

I'd always wanted to work internationally, and I'd always had the aspiration to work in a combat zone. Another aspiration was to test myself in a developing country and I knew the Army could offer me all that. I felt, if I don't do this now, I never will.

A decade after taking that decision, Chris, 39, is now a Major in the Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps, and all of those aspirations have been answered, and more.

Today he is a critical care nurse and a nurse lecturer working in the Defence School of health-care education, a military unit embedded in Birmingham City University. There he heads up a team responsible for training the Armed Forces future student nurses. He has a tour of duty of Afghanistan tucked under his Sam Browne belt, as well as other deployments to the Middle East.

For many that would be more than enough to keep them occupied. But the urge to serve is strong in Major Chris Carter. Which is why in 2015 he answered an ad in a medical journal for volunteers to set up a critical nursing care program in sub Saharan Africa. And so, his intense relationship with the Commonwealth country of Zambia began.

Looking at the list of skills and life experience that the job called for, it was clear that Chris had just what the doctor ordered. And as far as he is concerned it's his career in the Army that he has to thank for that. He said:

In the Army, it's not that they give you opportunities as such, they are available, and if you seek them out, and work hard for them, then you can get there.

Nursing in Zambia

Zambia is a stable land locked, low income country with 60 per cent of the population living in rural communities. Yet whilst it is poor, Zambia is training its doctors and anaesthetists, helped by international investment in terms of money and resources.

But it soon became clear that more was needed. Hence the advert. Major Carter said :

The Drs there realised that their project to develop health care was not going to reach its full potential unless investment was also being made in nursing staff,

The doctors were being trained in current practice, applied in the context of a developing country, dealing with diseases totally different to what we see in the UK, but which are common there. But without the nurses who do the majority of the care, the project wouldn't work.

Initially the task facing Chris was to visit Zambia's main hospital and help them to identify what they needed and to develop their framework for developing their nursing staff.

No funding? No project? No problem!

But before he could do that, another little problem lay before him. He said:

What transpired was that, despite what the advert said, in fact there was no project, no funding – nothing.

Undeterred, Chris and a small core of volunteers from the UK kept calm and carried on. He said:

Given my background, my contacts and my operational experience linked with my role in nursing education I convinced The Tropical Health and Education trust, a UK NGO, to fund me for a two week needs assessment.

Since then Chris has been to Zambia seven times, staying for periods of two to four weeks. He said:

In 2016 we worked with the Zambian Ministry of Health. We went to 16 public hospitals which meant a round trip of 4,980 kms in a Land Cruiser. There isn't a bit of the country, off road or on tarmac that I haven't seen.

On this epic trip he asked at each hospital, 'What critical care can you realistically provide in your hospital? What are the challenges you face, and how are your nurses being employed? And that was the first time that they had had that snapshot of what was going on.

Gathering all that information, Chris and the team then wrote a report for the Ministry of Health. In it they recommended what they could do as a project team to help build the country's capacity in nursing capability.

From this, what the Zambians identified as essential was a graduate nursing programme.

Zambian nurses in training

Major Carter said:

What tends to happen is that a lot of money is spent on educating Drs, and while nurses might get the odd short course, which is valuable, what is needed is a structured framework which can contribute to the long-term career development of an individual.

Get that right and it means you have a reliable capability, you prevent people from getting demotivated because they don't feel valued, and for places like Zambia, it stops the haemorrhaging of talented nurses who go to work in neighbouring countries who can pay more.

Armed with this information Chris went into battle attracting funding from DFID, the EU and from Birmingham university, who also provide him with all the professional back office functions and governance needed to keep such a project running.

Zambian priorities

From nothing, Chris has built up the team which has grown from just four enthusiasts into a truly international collaboration. Working closely with the Lusaka College of Nursing, the Zambian union of nursing organisations, the Ministry of Health and the General nursing council, Chris makes sure that whatever his team delivers, it is in accordance with the Zambian's own priorities, but with his guidance, in the context of the UN's sustainable development goals such as providing universal access to health care and

building a framework for quality, lifelong learning. He said:

We are helping them to build up a critical mass of trained nurses, helping to develop a graduate cadre and in turn future leaders, future researchers, future educators. We're building a framework for life.

And this must all be done in an atmosphere of cultural sensitivity, another skill which Chris picked up from his time in Afghanistan. He said:

We have to be aware that our way of doing something may not be the best way for them. It is all about helping them to find their own solutions.

Take the basic practicalities as an example of what he means by that. In a country which has 73 regional dialects, how are you going to provide a universal training package?

When the majority of the population live in remote villages, how would someone get health care if they had a ruptured appendix, or if they had broken their leg, or had an obstructed child birth, at night – how would you get them to a hospital which is two hours away, at night along a road which has no lighting.

It's easy to see that sensible solutions to health care provision must be seen in this harsh context.

Such has been the success of the project, 900 health care workers have been trained since 2015, that the Army is keen to explore the benefits for the UK Armed Forces. Last year Chris took six students from the Defence School of Health, one from the navy, the rest Army, to Zambia as part of their training.

Benefits for training UK Armed Forces nurses

Not only do they get to see the treatment of diseases such as TB and malaria, which while rare in the UK, in their careers they will have to know about, but perhaps more importantly the pressures of practicing in a resource limited environment. Major Carter said:

We watched a Dr performing a procedure and I talk the students through it. I tell them to watch how he and the nurses were working – only opening equipment when they needed it, so they don't waste anything – because it's too precious.

I challenge them... imagine you are on board a ship, or in the field. You're not going to have an infinite supply of gloves, oxygen, swabs... when you've got 10 patients on a ward, and there's only

three of you, there's no agency you can call, no extra staff, it's just you.

Thinking differently

Chris uses the experience to get the students thinking in a different way. A way which might just make a difference when on the battlefield. He said:

I get them to think about what they would do in that situation. Which is your sickest patient at the moment? Why do you think that?

I get them to think through some of the clinical decisions they would never face in the NHS. 'You've only got 10 ventilators, but you've got 11 patients who need it – what are you going to do?'

Keeping calm and carrying on

It's hard to imagine how someone as busy as Chris has managed to cope with it all. He says that lots of coffee helps, and he also points out the importance of protecting whatever little spare time you have, and using it wisely. He said:

I'm a swimmer, I like to get in the pool and just go up and down and get things into perspective.

It's important to look at your successes. I've said this to people in Zambia when they get dispirited, and say 'It never changes here' I say, 'look how far you've come in such a short time.'

This is another strength that he attributes to his time in the Army. He said:

What the Army gives you is the ability to be realistic in what you can do. Focus on the basics and do them well. That gives you a reality check. In our project it's been about knowing what the Zambians want, how they want it delivered and on their timescales. My Army career has given me that grounding.

So, the decision he took a decade ago, to change the nature of his uniform from scrubs to camouflage pattern turned out to be the right one. Not just for Major Chris Carter, but for the people of Zambia too.