

[Press release: Statement by Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Karen Bradley](#)

It is a great honour to be asked to serve as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, particularly at such a decisive moment for Northern Ireland and the whole United Kingdom. I would like to pay the warmest tribute to my predecessor and friend, James Brokenshire, who did such an outstanding job. I wish him all the very best for his medical treatment and for a speedy recovery.

Northern Ireland is a very special part of our United Kingdom and has huge potential. A key part of my role will be to help build a Northern Ireland that is fit for the future and works for everyone. In seeking to achieve that I want to work closely with all parties, the Irish government as appropriate, and with all sections of the community. Be assured the UK Government remains fully committed to the Belfast Agreement, its principles and institutions.

Clearly, there are immediate challenges. It is now a year since Northern Ireland has had an effective, functioning power-sharing administration, and forming a Northern Ireland Executive, to deliver for the benefit of all, is my top priority. I believe a devolved government in Belfast is best placed to address these issues and take the key decisions which affect people's day to day lives – whether these relate to the economy, public services or issues of policing and justice.

We must also continue the work to deliver a Brexit that recognises Northern Ireland's unique circumstances and avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland while maintaining the economic and constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom.

Alongside these issues, I am conscious of the need to establish a stronger economy and a shared society, to address the legacy of the past and to keep people safe and secure.

In the coming days, I look forward to meeting many different people, parties and other groups as I take on this hugely important and exciting role in the Prime Minister's Government.

[News story: Government renews focus on](#)

[housing with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)

Following the appointment of Rt Hon. Sajid Javid MP as the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the department will be renamed as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Building the homes our country needs is an absolute priority for this government and so I'm delighted the Prime Minister has asked me to serve in this role. The name change for the department reflects this government's renewed focus to deliver more homes and build strong communities across England.

Further ministerial appointments will be confirmed in due course by the Prime Minister.

Office address and general enquiries

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Contact form <http://forms.communiti...>

General enquiries: please use this number if you are a member of the public
030 3444 0000

[News story: The Third United Kingdom-Thailand Strategic Dialogue](#)

1. The third session of the United Kingdom-Thailand Strategic Dialogue was held at the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bangkok, on 3 January 2018. The session was co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and The Rt. Hon. Mark Field MP, Minister for Asia and the Pacific at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

2. The Strategic Dialogue was established in 2012 and designed to be a high-level forum for regular consultations between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Thailand on areas of bilateral collaboration as well as regional and global issues of mutual interest, in view of the ever-growing strategic partnership between the two countries. The inaugural session of the Strategic Dialogue took place on 20 May 2013 in Bangkok.
3. The two sides welcomed this continued high level engagement and again recognised the strength and strategic importance of the UK/Thailand bilateral relationship, especially in international trade, finance and investment; education; science and innovation; security and defence relations; political engagement; and consular cooperation. They welcomed the bilateral cooperation across the board, and discussed ways to deepen and strengthen this work especially as high level contacts have resumed following the EU FAC's Conclusions on 11 December 2017. Both sides noted the intention to exchange visits at the highest level.
4. The trading partnership between Thailand and the United Kingdom is strong. Thailand continues to be one of the UK's largest trading partners in ASEAN. Thailand and the UK committed to working together to ensure trade between our countries faces as few barriers as possible taking into account the Thai-UK Business Leadership Council's recommendations on market access barriers.
5. Both sides recognised the need to forge even closer relations to improve upon the existing bilateral trade relationship to maintain dynamism of economic cooperation and prepare our future trade relations in the Post-Brexit environment. Thailand hoped that the current poultry quota would not be affected after Brexit.
6. The UK is a leading investor in Thailand. Likewise, Thailand is an emerging investor in the UK. Both delegations looked forward to working together to support the implementation of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) and Thailand 4.0. The UK side welcomed the opportunities that this presents and will work closely with British companies to highlight the area for investment.
7. The UK and Thailand welcomed the initiative to focus bilateral cooperation in three sectors where both countries share potential and mutual interests, namely, Aerospace, FinTech, and Science, Technology and Innovation (STI).
8. Recognising the importance of people-to-people contacts, the two sides welcomed the continuation of the UK-Thailand Consular Dialogue, which will be held on 19 February 2018. This is an important and productive set of discussions that brings real benefits to the safeguarding of British visitors in Thailand and Thai nationals in the UK.

9. This year, the discussion will focus on Immigration and Documentary Services and their streamlining so as to provide an effective and efficient service to our respective nationals. The two sides will also discuss ever closer cooperation on tourist safety issues and on prison matters for those of our nationals which are detained, and also explore the possibility of foreign embassies conducting same-sex marriages in Thailand. Finally, both sides look forward to talks on how to improve and support to victims and how child and adult safe-guarding.
10. The delegations continued discussions on visa procedures with a view to facilitating mobility and travel for tourists, students, skilled labour and residents in both directions while recognising the need to prevent abuses. Thailand reiterated the proposal for a bilateral agreement on visa exemption for holders of diplomatic passports.
11. The two delegations noted the importance of education and the English language in supporting economic growth and the emerging ASEAN Community. Both sides commended the notable progress made under the Thai-UK MoU on Education Partnership, signed in April 2016, under which more than 6,000 Thai teachers were trained and another 13,500 teachers are targeted. Both sides agreed to further coordinate to elevate our partnership to the national scale as this would contribute to Thailand 4.0. In this connection, the Thai side invited the UK to explore the opportunity of investment in education offered in the EEC.
12. Thailand and the UK were pleased with the continued success of the Newton UK-Thailand Research and Innovation Partnership. This programme supports excellent scientific collaboration between research organisations from both countries, including joint research on health and agriculture. Both sides recognised the mutual importance and significance of this. Both sides agreed to continue to look for opportunities to enhance science collaboration further in both directions, including to stimulate business potential and start-ups. The UK noted Thailand's wish to continue cooperation under the Newton Fund.
13. The two sides welcomed the range of areas of cooperation on law enforcement and expressed hope that the MoU on Combating Transnational Crime and Police Cooperation would soon be signed to provide an overarching framework to strengthen internal law enforcement cooperation in combating organised transnational crime.
14. Recognising the warmth and depth of the defence relationship, both sides welcomed the increasing military activity levels and looked forward to even greater interaction. The meeting between Defence Ministers in the UK was a notable success and Exercise PANTHER GOLD 17, held in Thailand, delivered a major step forward in interoperability training. It was noted that this was likely to become a regular event in future years. Along with exchange visits, the education and training of officers in each other's military academies

would continue to be a significant pillar of defence engagement.

15. Both sides agreed to coordinate with authorities concerned to expedite the signing of pending MoUs including the defence related MoU on Logistic and Material Cooperation and MoU on Combating Transnational Crime and Police Cooperation; and Cooperation in the field of Science, Technology and Innovation.
16. The two delegations exchanged views on political developments in Thailand and UK. The meeting discussed the opportunities that the UK's departure from the EU represented and welcomed the progress towards general election in Thailand scheduled for the end of this year following the necessary legal enactment.
17. Both sides recognised that the upholding of the rule of law; the protection and enhancement of human rights and democratic values; and an active and strong civil society are key to stable, inclusive, open, and prosperous society. The two sides agreed on the importance of adhering to international legal obligations.
18. Recognising both sides strong positions on the international scene, Thailand and the UK expressed their resolve to take a lead on global issues in order to promote peace, security, and stability.
19. The UK and Thailand discussed international collaboration in combating the illegal wildlife trade. The UK invited Thailand to send a high level representative to the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade in October 2018.
20. The meeting noted the importance of maintaining regional stability and order and agreed to further exchange views on global and regional issues including climate change, North Korea, Rakhine State, reform of the UN, Modern Day Slavery, Business and human rights, and developments in ASEAN.
21. It was agreed that the United Kingdom would host the fourth session of the Strategic Dialogue.

Open consultation: UK National Standard for Marine Oil Spill Response

Providers

Consultation description

The Merchant Shipping (Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation Convention) Regulations 1998 (SI 1988 No.1056) (as amended) state that UK ports, harbours and oil-handling facilities must submit oil spill contingency plans (OSCP) to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), or, for responsible persons for offshore installations, Oil Pollution Emergency Plans (OPEPs) to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), for approval.

As part of the approvals process for category A&B ports, harbours and oil handling facilities (as detailed in the [OPRC Guidelines for Ports](#)), the MCA require contingency plans to detail the contract they hold with accredited third-party Tier 2 Marine Pollution Response Service Providers (hereafter referred to as “provider”).

BEIS similarly require responsible persons to detail in OPEPs any arrangements in place with a specialist oil spill response provider (as detailed in the [Guidance Notes for Preparing Oil Pollution Emergency Plans](#)).

As it stands, other than the requirement for the response provider to be accredited, there are no mandated standards for this service provision.

Through the implementation of a UK National Standard for Marine Oil Spill Response Providers, the MCA and BEIS seek to develop their oversight of an industry with strategic importance to the UK and to ensure that minimum standards are adhered to which are commensurate to the threat from marine oil pollution. The UK Standard will be applied by any accrediting body which submits a proposed scheme of accreditation to the MCA and BEIS for approval.

The UK Standard, as published on this website, is a draft version. The MCA and BEIS seek comments from all stakeholders on this document. Anyone can comment, but the MCA and BEIS would envision the main stakeholders to be accrediting bodies which may apply the Standard, the marine pollution response industry and those who do or may in the future contract a response provider. Comments and questions should be submitted to: ukresponderstandard@mcga.gov.uk.

The consultation will run for two months from 08/01/2018 to 09/03/2018. During the consultation, any questions on the Standard will be answered; questions and answers may be published on the consultation page to ensure all stakeholders remain informed.

Upon conclusion of the consultation comments will be considered and reasonable amendments made to the Standard. The current timetable will see the implementation of the Standard in late spring to early summer 2018. Following implementation, response providers wishing to continue to hold Tier 2 contracts will have a one-year grace period during which to be re-

accredited under a scheme which applies the UK Standard.

[News story: Ploughshare to commercialise technologies from the Centre for Applied Science and Technology](#)

Ploughshare is the UK's leading defence and security technology transfer company with responsibility for the technology transfer of early stage research and intellectual property from the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

This new agreement gives Ploughshare access to inventions from CAST which will allow industry to secure licences and benefit from world leading technology developed by the Home Office. The initial phase has already begun with three technologies under evaluation for commercialisation.

James Kirby, Ploughshare CEO, commented:

This work extends our reach into wider government and builds upon an agreement signed earlier this year to provide commercialisation services to the MOD Intellectual Property Rights Group, as well as our existing relationship with the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl). We look forward to supporting CAST in helping it to exploit their intellectual property to benefit both the UK government and industry.

Andy Bell, Head of CAST, added:

This agreement brings advantages to both CAST and its scientists by making our world-leading technologies more widely available and gives us the opportunity to further contribute to UK prosperity. It is also another demonstration of how we are already successfully working with Dstl ahead of CAST's integration next year.

Ploughshare will incorporate the new technologies into its established approach to industry to develop commercial licensing arrangements and the creation of spin-out companies.