

Speech: New Year Message from British Ambassador to Maldives James Dauris

The relationship that the Maldives and the UK enjoy is long-standing. We are connected through history, through shared interests and concerns and, perhaps most importantly, through people.

This year British tourists have again made a very important contribution to Maldives' economy. This year around a hundred thousand British holiday makers have visited your extraordinary country and I'm sure they will have enjoyed it. Of course a few people fall sick or get into difficulties and we are again grateful to the Maldives police and coastguard for the consular support they have given us during the year.

Education has long been an important tie for us. I'm pleased that this year we have again been able to help talented young Maldivians to study at prestigious British universities through our Chevening scholarship scheme, and it's great that we were able to sponsor a local journalist to join journalists from around South Asia for some training.

On a quite different theme, the threat from terrorism is one that countries around the world face today, Maldives and the UK among them. We've done some great work this year with the Maldivian authorities on aviation security issues. And we've provided training for security managers of resorts all around the country. I'm looking forward to more of this sort of cooperation – sharing best practice and working together helps to keep us all safe.

We have continued to support important work that is being done in Maldives on women's issues. Through the year I've really enjoyed meeting lots of people, men and women, in Male and on other islands who share my belief that our societies are better off when women and girls are able and encouraged to participate in all sorts of activities, including in business and politics.

Both as British Ambassador and as someone who has grown fond of your country over the two plus years that I've been in my position, I've seen things that worry me happen too. The freedoms to speak, to write, to meet, to justice, to choose are ones that should really matter, to all of us. We are hoping that we will see these freedoms start to flourish again in the coming year.

Since I was young I've had a strong interest in the environment and in effective conservation. In Maldives, beauty and environmental fragility go hand in hand. Experiences of countries around the world show us that coral reefs destroyed are impossible to replace, areas of mangrove bulldozed almost impossible to re-establish. It's because the Maldives are so unspoiled that many people choose to visit. Going forwards I think that getting the balance between economic interest and conservation is one that will need careful thought and principled decision-taking.

Looking to 2018, everyone will agree that one of the most important events is going to be the presidential election. Almost every Maldivian I meet tells me

of their hope that the election and the whole election process will be fair, and that voters will have a real choice and a free choice. In the UK, we share that hope.

I trust that you will share my wish that, in Maldives, in the UK and around the world, we will see values that make our societies peaceful and prosperous, tolerant and fair, prosper in the year ahead, and our communities grow stronger and happier for it.

May I wish you success and happiness in the coming year.

[Consultation outcome: Rationalising the main river network: de-maining proposals](#)

Updated: Details of final outcome published for South Forty Foot catchment.

The Environment Agency proposes to transfer flood risk management activities on a number of stretches of watercourses to internal drainage boards (IDBs), lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) and district councils. This means that IDBs, LLFAs and district councils can take on more responsibility for their local flood risk where appropriate. The Environment Agency has been working with a number of IDBs, LLFAs and district councils to consider proposals to re-designate sections of watercourses in a number of locations. The watercourses will be re-designated from main river to ordinary watercourse – a change we refer to as de-maining.

The proposal is to re-designate sections of the watercourse in:

- Suffolk, East Anglia
- South Forty Foot Catchment, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire
- Stour Marshes, Kent and South London

All of these sections of watercourse have low levels of flood risk to people and property, and are not associated with major rivers or major population centres. The proposal is that this will strengthen local decision making. This helps IDBs, LLFAs and district councils to manage these stretches of watercourse and carry out works where they see fit for the benefit of local people.

This consultation explains all of the information in our proposals, including information about how the proposed sections of watercourses are currently managed and funded. The consultation also provides details on future management and funding if de-maining goes ahead.

Speech: Christmas and New Year Message from British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka James Dauris

The relationship that Sri Lanka and the UK enjoy is long-standing, broad and enduring. We can see this reflected in what we've been doing in 2017. Take business for example. British Companies have been winning new business, investing in Sri Lanka and creating new jobs for Sri Lankans.

Our long-established links through education have continued to grow. Around 30 British universities now offer degrees in collaboration with local universities, making their internationally recognised qualifications affordable and accessible for more students. Each year I enjoy meeting the winners of our Chevening scholarships before they head off for their post-graduate studies in the UK. The British Council established a new teaching centre in Matara earlier this year and its digital programme now reaches a million people across Sri Lanka. That's a lot of people.

I'm proud of the work my team has been doing in so many different areas with the Sri Lankan government and authorities. We have been contributing in lots of ways to the work that is going on around the country to promote reconciliation. To give you two examples, we've been funding work in the east to bring leaders of different faiths together, and we have been continuing to fund important humanitarian demining work in the north. We've been continuing our work with the Sri Lanka Police force on community policing and police reform. Our armed forces have been working together – earlier this month I met Sri Lanka Navy participants in a Royal Navy run course on marine resource management.

We share the welcome given by people in every community in Sri Lanka to all the steps taken over the year to help achieve and advance reconciliation between communities. It's to the government's credit that the Right to Information Act came into force in February, that Sri Lanka again committed itself to advancing reconciliation and accountability at the United Nations in Geneva in March, that President Sirisena approved the Act establishing the Office of Missing Persons in July, that it deposited its accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture at the UN in New York earlier this month, and that it has signed up to the Ottawa Convention that prohibits the use of anti-personnel mines.

I'm mentioning these things because I believe, and my government believes, that reconciliation really matters. With it will come the confidence and trust that will help to bring sustained and enduring peace and prosperity to all Sri Lanka and to Sri Lankans of every faith and identity.

Looking towards the coming year, I'm encouraged that there will be local

elections in February. Lots more women than before are going to be standing – something for us all to welcome. It's going to be important for the government to push forward with steps that will move on its Geneva commitments quickly. I'm also looking forward to seeing the government take more of the sorts of steps that we saw in last month's budget that will make Sri Lanka an easier place for everyone to do business and help to attract investors and win their confidence.

Meanwhile, in the UK we are looking forward to hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit in London in the spring. Sri Lanka hosted the summit in 2013, and the London meeting will allow us to commit with the Commonwealth's other fifty members to a shared ambition for a vibrant grouping that serves the needs of future generations. Whatever our faith, whether we are Christian or Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim, each year Christmas brings us a message based on values that most of us share: a message of peace, joy and new beginnings, of tolerance, community and forgiveness. I'm sure you will share my hope that we will see these values prosper in the year ahead, and our communities grow stronger and happier for it.

I wish you a joyful Christmas, and success in the coming year.

[Consultation outcome: Marine licensing application fees: proposed changes 2017](#)

Updated: Summary of responses (including government response) added.

We want to know what you think about our proposals to revise the marine licensing application fees. These fees apply to England, Wales and Northern Ireland offshore marine areas. The changes are needed to make sure that the application fee remains in-line with the costs incurred by the Marine Management Organisation when managing applications.

We're also seeking views on plans to introduce an online self-service portal.

[News story: We're half way there](#)

When operating, Wylfa's 2 reactors together contained nearly 100,000 fuel elements. Since the end of generation, on 30 December 2015, the site's main

focus has been to empty both reactors and send all the remaining used fuel to Sellafield for reprocessing. When Wylfa completes defueling, this will mark the end of one of the UK's largest programmes of nuclear and hazard reduction work.

Britain's pioneering fleet of 11 Magnox reactors were the world's first commercial nuclear power stations. The earliest, Calder Hall, came online in 1956 and Wylfa was the last to finish generating low-carbon electricity. In almost 60 years, around 5 million Magnox fuel elements were manufactured for UK nuclear power stations.

Once the reactors are empty, and all the fuel elements have been dispatched to Sellafield, over 99 per cent of the site's radiological hazard will have been removed.

This marks a significant achievement for Magnox Ltd's and for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) mission of safely cleaning up the legacy from the earliest days of the UK's nuclear industry.



Defueling at Wylfa

Stuart Law, Wylfa Site Director, said:

This is a landmark achievement for the site, which has involved a lot of hard work and dedication from the highly skilled team at Wylfa.

It's a meticulous process and it takes time but we have the skills, the knowledge and the people to safely and securely deliver the

Magnox work programme.

Tim Dunham, Magnox Head of Nuclear Operations, commented:

This is a proud moment for the site in its vital contribution to closing out the Magnox fuel cycle. My congratulations go to the team for safely reaching this point. We envisage that the defuelling programme will complete in mid to late 2019 with everyone working hard to achieve this target.

Geoff Suitor, Head of the Magnox Programme for the NDA, said:

Removing all the used nuclear fuel from a station, when it finishes generating electricity, is the first major step in removing the all the hazards and decommissioning the site. Passing the half-way stage is a great sign of the progress being made by our colleagues at Magnox.