

News story: Astana Expo comes to an end after attracting 4 million visitors

- the UK and 114 other countries participated in the Astana 'Future Energy' Expo which ran July to September in Kazakhstan, the first Expo in Central Asia
- the UK, through the Department for International Trade, delivered a business programme focusing on the country's expertise in oil and gas, mining, sustainable energy, finance and infrastructure
- UK Pavilion, awarded Silver Medal in Exhibition Design, had the theme 'We are Energy' exploring new ways to harness the various sources of energy that surround us and secure a greener future

The International Astana Expo in Kazakhstan closed its doors this week bringing an end to the UK's 3-month participation.

The Expo's overarching theme was 'Future Energy', highlighting sustainable energy solutions and innovative technologies that are vital to the environment and future of the planet.

UK programme at Astana Expo 2017

As well as being a visitor destination attracting over half a million visitors, the UK Pavilion was the platform for a 3-month programme of business, cultural and thought leadership events.

This included receiving delegations from leading British businesses and institutions in the mining, oil and gas and financial-professional services sectors, the latter of which was led by the Lord Mayor of the City of London, Andrew Parmley. Delegation members included:

- Shell
- University of Manchester
- London Stock Exchange Group
- Institute of Chartered Accountants

Ministerial visits to the UK Pavilion

International Trade Minister Greg Hands oversaw the signing of an agreement between one of the world's leading hovercraft manufacturers, Southampton-based Griffon Hoverwork and Kazakh state oil company KazMunayGas' subsidiary KMGSS.

The agreement will see a study being carried out on using hovercraft to clear oil spills and support offshore rigs in the Caspian Sea and has the potential to generate contracts worth over £100 million for new hovercraft, supporting at least 70 jobs in the Southampton area.

International Trade Minister, Greg Hands said:

This summer I saw first-hand the outstanding work from the UK team at the Astana Expo, who demonstrated the very best of British creativity and academic excellence. As an international economic department, the Department for International Trade is committed to promoting UK innovation across the globe.

The UK Pavilion showed why we have a bright future as a global trading nation, and helped introduce UK companies to millions in potential business contracts.

The Rt Hon Charles Hendry, Commissioner, UK Pavilion said:

We have been delighted to participate in Astana Expo 2017 which has re-emphasised the important issue of sustainable energy.

Over the last 3 months the UK, through its award-winning Pavilion, has delivered a successful programme of cultural, economic and business events in Astana. Through our involvement we have been able to showcase our strong contribution to building a more sustainable future as well as our expertise in new technologies across the energy sector that makes the UK a business partner of choice.

The UK Pavilion and associated activity has further underlined our commitment to continuing to strengthen UK-Kazakhstan business and diplomatic relationships.

Sir Alan Duncan, Minister for Europe and the Americas, also visited the UK Pavilion to mark the 25th anniversary of UK – Kazakhstan diplomatic relations and to announce UK funding of £74,000 to help Kazakhstan implement its on-going Anti-Corruption strategy.

Award-winning design

The UK Pavilion, supported by the Department for International Trade, was designed by British architect Asif Khan who led a team that included music legend Brian Eno and renowned Professor of Astrophysics, Catherine Heymans of Edinburgh University.

Its interactive design and unique sensory experience was recognised by the Expo's organising body, The Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), which awarded it silver in the Exhibition Design category.

Key moments

The UK's heritage in, and global contribution to culture was celebrated

throughout the Expo beginning with UK 'National Day' on 26 June which was led by HRH the Duke of Gloucester and showcased British creativity.

British fashion was fused with theatre, music with dance, and literature with spoken word, all culminating a diverse and rich cultural programme.

Events included a:

- live reading of Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone to mark its 20th anniversary
- performance by the London Contemporary Ballet Theatre
- fashion showcase promoting up and coming UK designers

Scotland took centre stage week commencing 7 August with Economy Minister Keith Brown MSP and representatives from Edinburgh-based Heriot Watt University and the Scottish Qualifications Authority attending to promote the UK as a hub for academic excellence. Whilst there, the Minister hosted a business roundtable with attendees including KazMuanyGas and energy services company Wood Group, headquartered in Scotland.

The UK Pavilion hosted 'Engineering Day' on 22 August in association with the British Chamber of Commerce.

The day provided an opportunity to showcase British capabilities and excellence in manufacturing and engineering technologies and a networking opportunity for British and Kazakhstani companies to build contacts, meet potential partners and distributors to sell their goods and services.

British engineering expertise was on display in the form of the BLOODHOUND, a supersonic car that once finished will reach speeds of over 1,000mph, setting a new world land speed record.

Dubai 2020

Building on the success of the UK's participation at Astana Expo 2017 the government has committed to the next World Expo in Dubai 2020. The Expo's core theme is 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future', a testament to human ingenuity that will see the site divided into three districts: opportunity, sustainability and mobility.

Background

Astana Expo 2017 is a 'Specialised Expo'. Such Expos were established by the Bureau International des Expositions in 1988. They are global events dedicated to finding solutions to precise challenges of humanity, such as ocean protection (Expo Yeosu 2012) or the future of energy (Expo Astana 2017).

The UK conceived and convened the first of all 'World Expos', the Great Exhibition of 1851 which led to the creation of the cultural quarter in west London which includes the V&A, Natural History Museum and the Royal College of Music.

News story: Armed Forces Muslim Personnel Complete Hajj

Led by Islamic Religious Advisor to the Chief of Defence Staff Imam Asim Hafiz, the Hajj was a chance for British Muslim Armed Forces personnel to reflect on the role of their religion as part of their service. Hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Armed Forces (KSA AF), the Hajj took place over the first weekend of September, around Eid celebrations.

Hajj, meaning 'to intend to journey', is the fifth pillar of Islam and requires all Muslims who are able to make a pilgrimage to Mecca and locations of historical significance related to the Prophet Abraham. The group, which consisted of personnel from the Army and Royal Air Force, visited the Holy Mosque in Mecca, Arafat, Muzdalifah, and Mina. In addition they visited the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.

Captain Tim Rudkin, from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) said:

We have learnt a lot about ourselves and confirmed that Islam is not only compatible with military life, but supports the Armed Forces' values we strive to embody.

This journey has no rival to anything I have done before, with representatives of almost every country it is the largest gathering of people in the world, sharing common goals and values, coexisting peacefully.

During the group's visit to Medina, the pilgrims visited the Prophet's Mosque and toured the site of the Battle of Uhud. Afterwards they travelled to Mina where they stayed in a tent city and performed the daily stoning of the jamarat against three pillars where the devil appeared to the Prophet Abraham. The UK personnel also met with the KSA AF's Head of Religious Affairs Major Muhammed Al Sadan, who spoke of the importance of Hajj and Islam's compatibility of serving in the Armed Forces.

Sergeant Ahmed Dhalai, from MOD, said:

The military gives me the strength to become a better Muslim. My chain of command not only understand the significance of this journey, they actively encourage it as an opportunity to reflect

and aim to be a better person, both in and out of the military.

The group also met with the Malaysian Chief of Defence Force General Tan Sri Raja Mohamed Affandi Bin Raja Mohamed Noor, Sudanese Major General (Pilot) Hussein Muhammed Othman, and Senior Bangladeshi officers who offered words of encouragement on religious tolerance and explained the importance of Hajj, not only as a religious obligation for Muslims but as an experience to reflect on as ambassadors to develop greater understanding of faith in our militaries.

Corporal Ceesay Ali, from 1 Medical Regiment, said:

Without doubt this journey I have made is going to make me a better Muslim, a better person, and a better soldier. It has provided me with personal and professional development, as well as allowing me to meet my religious obligation

The Armed Forces personnel entered a raffle across the three services to join the 25,000 pilgrims from the UK travelling to Mecca this year.

A diverse and inclusive force is a stronger force, and the MOD encourages and celebrates diversity, promoting an inclusive working environment. To achieve this a wide range of initiatives under a Defence-wide Diversity and Inclusion Programme have been established. While recruitment is an important element, the wider Defence Diversity and Inclusion Programme (DDIP) takes a much broader view of diversity and inclusion and is driving real change by embedding D&I within the leadership and culture and taking steps to increase the retention and progression of people from underrepresented groups.

[News story: NHS improvements to help fight sepsis](#)

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has announced new measures to help combat sepsis.

Thousands of nurses, care home staff and pharmacists will be told how to check for signs and symptoms of sepsis, as part of a new NHS plan to improve treatment of the condition.

Known as a 'silent killer' because it is difficult to spot, sepsis kills around 37,000 people in England every year. Triggered by an infection, sepsis causes the body's immune system to go into overdrive, setting off a series of reactions that can lead to organ failure and, in some cases, death.

In 2015 the NHS launched the first national action plan to tackle sepsis across England. It focused on hospitals and GP surgeries.

Today's announcement directs help at the wider health system. It aims to reduce the number of people affected by the condition while also improving how sepsis is tracked and recorded.

The new measures include:

- a clear definition of adult sepsis for clinicians, so sepsis is identified and recorded more quickly
- educational materials to ensure awareness among all primary care, pharmacists and health care professionals
- targeting care homes, pharmacists and other areas of the NHS which deal with frail and older people to prevent sepsis

Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health said:

We want the NHS to be the safest healthcare system in the world, and our ability to diagnose and treat sepsis effectively is a key litmus test of progress. While the NHS has taken major steps in recent years to improve how it responds to sepsis – actions that have saved nearly 1,000 lives – there is still more work to do to protect the many thousands who develop this dangerous condition each year.

We need every part of our health system on the highest possible alert for sepsis, and this new plan will ensure more health professionals get the training, advice and targeted support to tackle this silent killer.

Sir Bruce Keogh, National Medical Director for NHS England said:

Since the publication of our first plan in 2015 a lot has been done and this additional set of proposed actions reflects the desire of health professionals to tackle this dangerous condition.

Press release: Dragonfire: Laser Directed Energy Weapons

In January of this year, 2017, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), awarded a contract to the Dragonfire consortium, worth £30million to UK industry, to demonstrate the potential of Laser Directed Energy Weapons

(LDEW).

Dstl supplies high-impact science and technology for the defence and security of the UK. Scientists from Dstl, working with industry partners under contract to Dstl, have been working on laser technology since the 1970s, with the intent of realising the benefit of an affordable and precise weapon for the UK military.

Testing of the demonstrator will begin on UK ranges in 2018, culminating in a major demonstration in 2019. The Dragonfire solution is based on unique technical approaches developed in the UK under MOD and industry funding centred on high energy lasers and will address the challenges associated with engaging aerial targets safely. It represents the major element of the Dstl led LDEW project, which draws on expertise across Dstl and contributes to internal collaborative programmes.

UK Dragonfire, led by MBDA in the UK under contract to Dstl, has brought together the best of relevant UK industry expertise to deliver the highly challenging and complex programme. The team capitalises on the strengths of the individual companies involved, which include QinetiQ, Leonardo, GKN, Arke, BAE Systems and Marshall Land Systems.

The LDEW technology provides operational advantage to the UK military and the potential to export such systems in support of the Prosperity agenda, as advocated in the UK's 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, by developing on-shore industrial capability.

Peter Cooper, Dstl's Project Technical Authority for Dragonfire, said:

Dragonfire is the culmination of many years of work in the area of laser directed energy weapons. We are looking forward to the 2019 demonstration and, working with our industry colleagues, we aim provide the UK Armed Forces with innovative, effective and affordable solutions to the emerging threats they face.

[Press release: Rod licensing blitz identifies 23 offenders](#)

Environment Agency Officers led a series of rod licence enforcement patrols around various sites in Essex and Norfolk, on the back of intelligence received. They were joined by colleagues from Essex and Norfolk Police forces, the Broads Authority and volunteer bailiffs from the Angling Trust.

Over a total of three days (6, 9 and 10 September 2017), eight Essex

fisheries were checked, and one river stretch patrolled in Norfolk (the River Bure).

Officers checked dozens of anglers, stressing the importance of buying a rod licence and explaining how the income is reinvested in fisheries. A total of 224 rod licences were checked and 23 offenders identified (a 10.26% evasion rate).

Lesley Robertson, Enforcement Team Leader at the Environment Agency, said:

These checks were badged under the name Operation Springfield II. The Operation focused on rod licence evasion and raising awareness of the need for anglers to purchase and renew their rod licences.

Our Officers patrol the watercourses all year round, including holidays and weekends. Those who avoid buying a rod licence and are found fishing illegally may face prosecution and a hefty fine. Anglers should ensure they are properly licensed before going out to enjoy this worthwhile hobby.

Essex Police Rural and Heritage Crime Officer, PC Andrew Long, said:

Like other forces across the UK, Essex Police have joined with the Environment Agency and Angling Trust to work together and tackle criminality surrounding theft of fish and unlawful fishing.

This has an impact on one of the country's most popular pastimes, with more than 1.5 million people buying rod licences every year.

Taking part in unlawful fishing can have a detrimental effect on the environment so it's important for us to work in partnership with the Environment Agency and ensure everyone has the correct licence to do this.