

Speech: British High Commissioner's speech marking International Women's Day 2017

Honorable Minister for Aviation Mrs. Cecilia Dapaah, Chairman of the Electoral Commission Charlotte Osei, distinguished guests, Colleagues from the diplomatic community, the media, ladies and gentlemen, all protocols observed.

Last year, organizations and individuals around the world, including myself supported the #PledgeForParity campaign, pledging to help women and girls achieve their ambitions, through commitments which included, but are not limited to; challenging conscious and unconscious bias; calling for gender-balanced leadership; valuing women and men's contributions equally; and creating inclusive flexible cultures. From awareness raising to demonstrations of concrete action, organizations rallied their people to pledge support to help forge gender parity on International Women's Day (IWD) 2016.

But the World Economic Forum predicts the gender gap won't close entirely until 2186. This is too long to wait. Around the world, IWD can be an important catalyst and vehicle for driving greater change for women and moving closer to gender parity.

In this light, this year's theme "Be bold for change- Women in the changing world of work," calls us all here today to help forge a better working world – a more gender inclusive world. A world where female voices and leaderships are heard and seen in sectors traditionally dominated by men.

The British High Commission is delighted to be partnering with the Canadian and the Australian High Commission today bringing together successful industry professionals to mentor female students selected from senior high schools. Indeed, we know that women and girls typically make up just over half of most national populations, including here on the African continent.

The UK's Gender Equality Act 2014 puts existing commitment to gender equality on a statutory footing and ensures that gender equality remains at the heart of our development assistance. Through our Department for International Development -DFID, we work closely with the Government of Ghana and other stakeholders to address key barriers to the attainment of gender parity.

In 2016, the UK's DFID launched a new initiative: 'Leave No Girl Behind,' an initiative committed to delivering quality education to disadvantaged girls. We believe that access to a good education, in a safe environment, significantly improves the life chances of girls. In Ghana, DFID programming provides over £100m every year, much of which is focussed on women and girls, helping those who are at significant risk of dropping out of school complete their secondary education. Our Complementary Basic Education programme

targets out of school children, including girls, and provides them with a second chance at education.

In health, the UK remains a key partner in promoting, protecting and supporting sexual and reproductive health and rights. Our Adolescent Reproductive Health programme worth £17 million works with vulnerable girls in the Brong Ahafo region to improve their knowledge and behaviour around reproductive health.

I hope students alongside mentors here today will continue to be inspired to take up professions in various industries, but more importantly to be bold; successfully taking up the study and or training and thereafter excelling in professions that have typically in the past, been associated with male dominance.

I wish you all a successful and insightful evening.

Thank you

Transparency data: HMNB Devonport maintenance dredging variation

On 6 March 2017 the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) announced a new disposal site was open for marine licence applications for the disposal of dredged material. The MMO has now varied the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's (DIO) licence, which licences the navigational maintenance dredging in and adjacent to Her Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Devonport, Plymouth.

The variation has changed the disposal site from Rame Head South (PL031) to Plymouth Deep (PL035). Due to increased regulatory burden surrounding the Rame Head South disposal site and in light of the continued requirement for dredging and disposal operations, the MMO has been working with the main users of the site in leading a disposal site characterisation study to identify an optimal, sustainable alternative site for long-term dredged material disposal operations within the River Tamar and Plymouth Sound area. Further information on the [South West Disposal Site Characterisation Project](#).

The marine licence for the maintenance dredge at HMNB Devonport allows DIO to complete one maintenance dredge campaign of the dockyard's critical areas between now and March 2017. The dredge is required in order to maintain the operational capacity of the Naval Base.

The MMO has now determined the application and a copy of the licence and the supporting assessments have been attached for reference.

Further Information

All marine licence applications are available from the [marine licensing public register](#).

Contact information

Marine Licensing Team

Telephone: 0300 123 1032

Email: marine.consents@marinemanagement.org.uk

[News story: Licence variation for South West disposal](#)

This follows the announcement that the new disposal site is open for marine licence applications for the disposal of dredged material.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation's (DIO) licence has now been [varied to change disposal activities to Plymouth Deep](#). The variation changed the disposal site from Rame Head and conditions referencing Rame Head South have been amended.

No changes to the dredging methodology have been made. The marine licence for the maintenance dredge at HMNB Devonport allows DIO to complete one maintenance dredge campaign of the dockyard's critical areas between now and the end of March 2017.

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[News story: UK's research and innovation bodies welcome budget](#)

The spring budget announced an initial investment of £270 million in 2017 to 2018. This is to kick-start the development of disruptive technologies that have the potential to transform the UK economy.

First challenges announced

Following engagement with experts in academia and industry, the budget announced the first wave of challenges funded through the ISCF, part of the [Industrial Strategy](#). These include:

- leading the world in the development, design and manufacture of batteries that will power the next generation of electric vehicles, helping to tackle air pollution
- developing cutting-edge artificial intelligence and robotics systems that will operate in extreme and hazardous environments, including off-shore energy, nuclear energy, space and deep mining
- accelerating patient access to new drugs and treatments through developing brand new medicine manufacturing technologies, helping to improve public health

Investing in skills

The budget also announced plans to build the pipeline of high-skilled research talent necessary for a growing and innovative economy. There will be an investment of £250 million over the next 4 years including:

- £90 million to provide an additional 1,000 PhD places in areas aligned with the Industrial Strategy. Around 85% will be in STEM disciplines, and 40% will directly help strengthen collaboration between business and academia through industrial partnerships
- £160 million to support new fellowships for early and mid-career researchers in areas aligned to the Industrial Strategy

Research and innovation leaders respond

Dr Ruth McKernan, Chief Executive of Innovate UK, said:

The Chancellor's announcement today is a great example of how the Industrial Strategy challenge fund will deliver the science that business needs.

The first 3 challenge areas are developing revolutionising battery technology, getting innovative medicines to patients more quickly and developing robots for use in hazardous environments. The UK has scientific expertise in these areas. We have excellent companies ready and willing to translate the technology into business growth across the UK.

The challenge fund is like nothing we have seen before, and it has enormous potential to deliver. These challenges announced today are just the start. Innovate UK and the research councils are already working together, building on the evidence we've gathered from organisations across the country to look at how we can get the UK's researchers and businesses working together and firing on all cylinders.

Professor Philip Nelson, Chair of Research Councils UK, said:

The Chancellor's announcements are most welcome. Long-term funding for research and developing high-skilled research talent is vital to the UK's future as a science power, continuing to feed the pipeline that transforms research into products and services. The UK is at the fore in many aspects of these fields, but countries across the globe are putting effort and resource in too, so these investments are strategically significant.