

John Whittingdale's speech to the RTS Cambridge Convention 2021

Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be speaking to the RTS at Cambridge once again. The last time I addressed you I was introduced by a VT by Status Quo, which is still one of my treasured possessions.

I hadn't quite expected to be back either in this capacity or quite in these circumstances, but it is a pleasure.

I should make clear, as you will have gathered, but the speech I'm about to deliver is the speech that was written, and certainly it was the intention of Oliver Dowden to give, but it is very much the speech of the Secretary of State, and I'm looking forward to working with Nadine who as you have heard has just been appointed this afternoon.

Despite everything we've been through with COVID, the British screen industry is in fact booming.

The people behind the biggest and most exciting productions – Bond, the new Lord of the Rings – have their pick of any country in the world to make their films and TV shows. And they are choosing to make them here.

Studios up and down the country are running at full capacity.

New ones are opening up all the time – from Broxbourne to Birmingham; and from Edinburgh to Elstree.

The nation united as a global production power house.

And this hasn't happened by accident.

The government has worked intensively with you to create this record-breaking environment for our screen industries...

...from quarantine exemptions to tax breaks...

...to our Global Screen Fund...

...and to our UK-wide, £500 million, Film and TV Restart Scheme, which has kept cameras rolling on productions across the country throughout the pandemic.

That scheme has kept up momentum during COVID, and helped secure hundreds of thousands of high-quality jobs in film, TV and the wider broadcasting system.

Politicians always talk about job numbers. But these aren't just jobs.

The screen industry is generating meaningful, creatively fulfilling jobs – jobs that I'd want to do, and that I'd want my children and grandchildren to do.

And the productions these people work on have an impact all over the world.

His Dark Materials. Dracula. Unforgotten. Last year's biggest TV exports have been viewed in hundreds of territories, from China to Brazil to Australia to South Korea.

Or to take another example. Sex Education: Filmed in Newport, and the most popular show in Saudi Arabia.

Of course, we celebrate this.

But it doesn't address the central theme of this conference, which is "Britishness".

Britishness is, of course, a nebulous concept. It means different things to each and every one of us in this room. And yet we all know it when we see it on our screens.

The sort of things we've all grown up with.

Only Fools and Horses, Dad's Army, Carry On.

More recently, The Great British Bake Off and Line of Duty.

And of course Coronation Street and Eastenders.

In fact, who we are has been defined by television.

At the same time, film, television and radio are by far the most powerful tools we have to project the best of modern Britain to the rest of the world.

Not just to show off our creativity – and there's no doubt that this country is home to some of the most gifted creative talent in the world – but to broadcast our values and our unique identity across the planet.

So, as the government looks at the future of broadcasting in this country, we intend to use our upcoming White Paper to preserve what is special about British broadcasting.

First, we want to make sure that British-made content is, in fact, distinctively "British".

I'm not talking about waving union flags and a picture of the Queen in every scene.

I'm talking about continuing to make the programmes that are ours, and only ours; that could only have been made in the United Kingdom.

Take Derry Girls. A show that addresses the Troubles; and the rise and fall of Take That with equal passion. It could only have been made here.

Likewise, what other country in the world would have come up with a concept as bonkers but brilliant as Gogglebox?

Fleabag isn't Fleabag without its British sarcasm and self-deprecation.

And the last episode of Blackadder Goes Forth, when the squadron goes over the top, would never have been as poignant without that classically British dash of restraint.

Contrast that with some of the programmes you can get on demand today.

They can be brilliantly entertaining – but many of them have no real identity, no genuine sense of place. Some of them look like they've been cleverly generated by a streaming algorithm to maximise their target audience globally.

Keeping the British spirit and identity alive is a challenge in today's global broadcasting world, when investment is increasingly driven by global streaming services.

Our public service broadcasters now get more money for drama from foreign investors than they spend themselves.

That investment is extremely welcome – in fact, it's absolutely crucial to their survival.

But we want to make sure it doesn't water down British creativity or the British brand.

Our public service broadcasters have a unique role to play in that context.

And the government wants to empower them to keep making things that are just as unique and distinctively "ours", no matter where the money is coming from...

...To continue producing shows that aren't just authentic and relevant to British audiences. Ones that allow people in every corner of the UK to see themselves – and their own way of life – reflected on their screens.

But also to showcase the things we are most proud of to the rest of the world.

To make things that are iconic, not generic.

So in our upcoming White Paper, we intend to include proposals that will expand the remit of public service broadcasters, so that it includes a requirement for them to produce "distinctively British" content.

If it's set in Britain and made in Britain by our public service broadcasters, then it should be distinctively British.

At the same time, we want to ensure British broadcasters get the exposure they deserve – no matter how their content is consumed.

Public service broadcasters have been part of our national life for almost a century, and are uniquely placed to reflect our values.

In a world of fake news and disinformation, they're a trusted source of

content and information.

And they play a crucial role in bringing the nation together in times of crisis and celebration – whether it's a national COVID press conference or a royal wedding.

So it's incredibly important that they keep their place at the heart of television.

That's why we plan to legislate as soon as possible, and make it a legal requirement that major online platforms must carry PSB content, and that they must ensure that it's easy to find.

To support the future sustainability of public service broadcasting, Ofcom will also be given new powers to support effective commercial negotiations with platforms.

That is one way of making sure our British broadcasters thrive.

Another is putting them in the right financial position to compete and succeed for decades to come – no matter what the future of broadcasting holds.

As you'll all no doubt be aware, indeed I've just been listening to Alex before me, this summer we launched a consultation to consider the ownership of Channel 4.

That consultation closed yesterday, and the government's position is that a change of ownership could be beneficial for Channel 4; and beneficial for the country.

Let me be clear: Channel 4 is one of this country's great assets.

It was created by a Conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, to open up the market; to boost the independent production sector; and give viewers more choice when they turned on their sets.

It has succeeded in that mission in the four decades since, and it has managed to withstand an incredible amount of turbulence in the last few years – from streaming to COVID.

Right now, Channel 4 is in a stable position.

But too many people are fixated on Channel 4's current situation.

The government is much more concerned with its long-term future.

And we believe that if Channel 4 wants to grow. And, as Alex has set out, it both wants and needs to grow. Then at some point soon it will need cash.

Without it, Channel 4 won't have the money to invest in technology and programming, and it won't be able to compete with the streaming giants.

So the next obvious question is where does that cash come from?

It can either be on the back of the taxpayer, or it can come from private investment.

And it's our strong position – as a point of principle – that the borrowing of a commercial TV channel should not be underwritten by a granny in Stockport or in Southend.

Instead, we can help it unlock that much-needed investment.

And we can do so while protecting the parts of Channel 4 that none of us want to lose.

So if we do choose to proceed with a sale, we will make sure that Channel 4 remains subject to proper public service obligations.

And I'd imagine that those are bound to include:

...a continued commitment to independent news and current affairs...

...to commissioning programming from the independent production sector...

...and that Channel 4 should continue to be representative of the entire nation.

Let me be clear: the government does not subscribe to the false binary choice between public service content and privatisation. We can have both.

Channel 4 can continue to do what it does best: to fund original, risk-taking content – the kind you don't find anywhere else. And to showcase the very best of this country on free-to-view television.

It did a fantastic job at broadcasting the Paralympics. And we want it to keep doing that fantastic job in another three years' time, and the years after that.

And I was delighted that Channel 4 was able to bring the entire country together on Saturday night to cheer on Emma Raducanu in the US Open Final.

We've needed these national moments this last year, and we need more of them on free-to-view.

A Channel 4 with a protected remit and deeper pockets could bring us many, many more in the future.

And we're acutely conscious of avoiding a repeat of Project Kangaroo, when Channel 4, ITV and BBC Worldwide were blocked by the Competition Commission from launching an online platform that could have led the market and set them all up for years of growth.

By presuming that we didn't have to change, and by sticking with what we knew, rather than thinking creatively, we stymied the opportunity to create a home-grown alternative to Netflix.

A decade later, this government is determined we don't miss the opportunity

to equip British broadcasting for the next decade.

And if people disagree, then the challenge to them is: please tell us how they'd intend to protect Channel 4 and the wider creative industries in a fairer, more sustainable way.

Because standing still is not an option.

In fact, it would be an act of self-harm.

I want to make one final point, and it's an important one.

Whatever happens, whatever decision we take with Channel 4, there is no way this government will ever compromise our independent production industry.

As I said at the beginning, UK film and TV is booming.

Hundreds of thousands of people, thousands of families, rely on that industry for their living; for their creative fulfilment; for their sense of self.

Our economy relies on our creative industries.

No less than our national identity relies upon it.

We will do everything we can to protect it in the years ahead.

That's the job of government: to think not just about today, but about tomorrow, too.

Thank you.

UK Statement for the WTO Trade Policy Review of Argentina

I'd like to join others in welcoming the delegation of Argentina, led by his Excellency Ambassador Jorge Neme, Secretary for International Economic Relations in Buenos Aires and the Argentine colleagues in Geneva. Let me also express our gratitude to the WTO Secretariat for the reports and to Ambassador Peralta for her invaluable insights, and to you Chair for facilitating the meeting today.

We very much welcome the opportunity to record Argentina's achievements, as well as considering the opportunities for further development in Argentina's trade policy so that we can collaborate even more effectively in the future.

And looking back over the period since Argentina's last review, firstly like to acknowledge Argentina's laudable hosting of MC11, typical of Argentina's

commitment to the GATT and now to the WTO. We also welcome the ratification and acceptance by Argentina of the Protocol concerning the WTO Trade Facilitation the (TFA), the Protocol amending the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), and the Fourth Protocol on Telecommunications annexed to the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

Looking more to the present, I'd like to very much welcome Argentina's active participation at the WTO in the joint initiatives on e-commerce, the integration of MSMEs in international trade – for all the reasons stated by the Ambassador about the nature and the character of the Argentine economy – investment facilitation and services domestic regulation: all vital initiatives which cover topics of great interest for all our businesses, and which we think bring much-needed new dynamism to our discussions here at the WTO, as we try to ensure that the WTO is not only back in business but also backing business.

The Ambassador rightly referred to the challenges facing Argentina like many other countries in confronting the pandemic, and we would like to commend Argentina for their work in ensuring that essential supply chains remained open over the last 18 months. And as a fellow G20 member, we welcome Argentina's commitment in the March 2020 G20 Trade Ministers Statement to ensure any emergency measures designed to tackle the pandemic be targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary. We look forward to continuing to work with Argentina and other WTO members to strengthen the resilience of global medical supply chains, including through the Trade and Health Initiative.

The pandemic has of course as we have discussed elsewhere highlighted the importance of cross-border healthcare cooperation between partner countries. In particular, we would like to welcome and recognise Argentina's collaboration with AstraZeneca to produce and supply vaccines across the world. We believe this example of Anglo-Argentine collaboration could be extended to other areas going forward. However, we believe that this collaboration could be strengthened yet further if Argentina resolved to continue economic reforms in some key areas.

First, in regard to excessive regulatory requirements for businesses, I think this is highlighted by some of the changes made to Argentina's rules on capital controls that in our review do result in an unnecessary administrative burden for companies. We understand that businesses now must seek authorisation from the Central Bank of Argentina to access foreign currencies to pay for imported goods or services. So like many of our partners at the WTO, we are always looking to expand the opportunities for our businesses to operate effectively and successfully in Argentina and restricting access to foreign exchanges inhibits British businesses' ability to do that. We are hopeful that these measures can be phased out in the near future as the economic situation improves.

Secondly, we are hopeful that this Trade Policy Review can drive change with regard to Argentina's rules on import licensing. The Secretariat highlights in the report the growing impact of non-automatic import licences since Argentina's last Review. The report notes that in 2020, non-automatic

licences were required for about 14% of all tariff lines. This was a big increase on the numbers for 2012, when only 6% of tariff lines were subject to such licensing. In addition, these processes can be unclear to foreign businesses and often exceed the 60-day limit set out in the WTO Agreement on Import Licensing. This has remained an issue for British exporters to Argentina for several years, affecting a range of industries including automotive, footwear and manufacturing. We remain concerned that this measure will continue affecting these sectors and we would encourage our Argentine friends to consider the consequences that the growing use of non-automatic import licencing has on the international flow of goods, as well as the impact these measures have on their own economy.

Madam Chair, we submitted written questions to Argentina on a range of topics, and I'd like to thank our Argentine colleagues for their responses to those questions. We will review these carefully with a view to having constructive discussions aimed at enhancing the flourishing bilateral trading relationship between our two great countries.

E3 Statement at the IAEA Board of Governors on verification and monitoring in Iran (JCPoA), September 2021

Thank you Madame Chair,

France, Germany and the United Kingdom would like to thank DG Grossi for his latest report contained in GOV/2021/39 and DDG Aparo for the Technical Briefing. We commend the Agency for its timely, independent and objective reporting.

As E3 we remain fully supportive and are committed to the negotiation process undertaken by all JCPoA participants and the United States in Vienna, focussed on facilitating a return of the US to the deal, bringing Iran back into full compliance with its commitments and restoring the benefits of the JCPoA for all. We strongly encourage Iran to urgently seize this diplomatic opportunity.

At the same time, we are deeply concerned by Iran's continued violations of its nuclear-related commitments, and recent escalations. Since the last Board of Governors in June, Iran has continued to conduct unauthorised activities with uranium metal and has, for the first time, produced uranium metal enriched to 20%.

Iran has no plausible civilian reason for such activity, which provides

weapons-applicable knowledge gain. Iran should halt the production of uranium metal immediately.

Iran has also started the process of doubling its production rate of High Enriched Uranium since the Board last convened. The production of HEU is unprecedented in a non-nuclear weapons state. This is profoundly concerning, as it represents a critical step for nuclear weapons production and provides irreversible nuclear weapons-related knowledge gains. We hope this Board can stand united in calling on Iran to immediately stop the production of HEU.

Iran has also continued to stockpile uranium enriched to 20%. Iran has made significant efforts to convert its stockpile of Low Enriched Uranium enriched up to 5% to 20%. This in addition to 60% production also significantly reduces the time it would take for Iran to obtain fissile material for a nuclear weapon.

Iran's continued development of powerful, advanced centrifuges is permanently improving the country's enrichment capabilities. Iran has installed and is operating advanced centrifuges on a mass scale. Iran continues to enhance its enrichment capacity by installing greater numbers of advanced centrifuges, including at the underground Fordow facility. We strongly urge Iran to cease these activities.

Collectively, these steps present a pressing nuclear proliferation risk, have irreversible consequences for Iran's nuclear capabilities, and undermine the non-proliferation benefits of the JCPOA. It is particularly regrettable that Iran has deepened its systematic violations of the JCPOA at a time when all JCPOA participants and the United States are engaged in substantive discussions, with the objective of finding a diplomatic solution to restore the JCPOA. We urge Iran to cease further escalation, and to constructively reengage in negotiations without further delay.

In this context, we are concerned by the continued limits placed on the IAEA's monitoring and surveillance activities in Iran. Iran needs to restore all accesses by resuming its provisional application of the Additional Protocol and reinstating all JCPOA-related transparency provisions in full, thereby allowing the IAEA unimpeded access to all sites and activities the Agency requires according to its reporting mandate. By limiting accesses whilst simultaneously escalating its nuclear programme, Iran is making it harder for the international community to be assured about the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. We know that our very serious concerns about Iran's actions are widely shared among members of this Board.

We appreciate the intense efforts of the IAEA Director General to engage with Iran. We welcome the joint statement between the Director General of the IAEA and the Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran issued on 12 September, which confirms the IAEA's inspectors will be permitted to service the identified equipment and replace their storage media which will be kept under the joint IAEA and AEIOI seals in Iran. It is important that Iran implements this agreement without delay.

We once again thank the IAEA for its accurate reporting, despite the

limitations placed on its activities, and welcome the most rigorous and impartial implementation of the mandate conferred on it by the United Nations Security Council.

We encourage the DG to keep the Board informed regarding progress on monitoring and verification in Iran in all its aspects. It is important that the Board continues to monitor the situation closely. We would welcome the Agency's latest quarterly report on monitoring and verification in Iran being made public.

Thank you.

[London International Shipping Week: green maritime](#)

Introduction

Good morning everyone. And a very warm welcome to HMS Albion, one of the Royal Navy's most versatile vessels, known as the 'Swiss Army knife' of the British fleet.

And today, continuing that tradition of adaptability, HMS Albion has become a magnificent backdrop for this important event to promote and celebrate innovators who are helping the shipping industry move towards a zero carbon future.

So let me thank Captain Simon Kelly and his crew – together with the Department for International Trade and Ministry of Defence – for hosting us, as part of the Net Zero Hub.

It's a privilege to be on board.

Context: shipping and CO2

Within a transport industry that currently produces around one-fifth of total worldwide CO2 emissions, maritime has had a pretty easy ride.

Whilst road transport and aviation, 2 very visible forms of travel that have become emblematic of our reliance on fossil fuels, are most often targeted by international climate change protestors, global shipping has tended to be largely ignored, despite the fact that it emits more greenhouse gases than aviation. And, like air travel, it is actually increasing its contribution to climate change.

In fact, the CO2 that shipping produces annually equates to 3% of all carbon dioxide emitted by human activity worldwide. And in the UK, domestic shipping

alone produces more greenhouse gases than rail and buses combined.

The fuel used for shipping continues to be some of the most polluting fuels across all transport modes and, this, despite regulatory intervention limiting its sulphur content.

And when you consider that maritime trade is expected to double over the next decade, you start to understand the scale of the environmental challenge this industry faces.

Action is needed now – vessels' lifespan means that zero emission ships should start being deployed by 2025 if we stand a chance to achieve our 2050 target.

2050 target

But frankly, too little progress has been made in recent years.

Only last month, the [Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change](#) became the latest expert organisation to stress that significant and immediate cuts in greenhouse gas emissions are needed to avoid the dire impacts that global warming would inflict on our environment.

Clearly, urgent and radical action is needed to put global maritime on a sustainable footing.

And that means it's up to forward-thinking nations, working through international organisations, to focus minds and place the industry on an irreversible course towards decarbonisation.

That is why we've announced at the greenest ever London International Shipping Week and just 2 months before we welcome the world to the COP26 conference in Glasgow that the UK will lead the clarion call to encourage other countries in supporting a target of absolute zero for international shipping emissions by 2050.

There is no doubt that this target, which would need to be agreed through the International Maritime Organization, requires a massive commitment by shipping worldwide to raise its ambitions.

And yet, as visitors to London have seen this week, this industry is bursting with innovation.

Pioneering people and enterprises who are already creating the green maritime technologies and businesses of the future. Not just to play their part in tackling the climate emergency, but to compete and grow our green economy too. To create thousands of jobs in emerging maritime technologies and to grasp the huge opportunities that will open up in the market for cleaner, more modern shipping.

Technological revolution

We're already getting a taste of how vessel designs will change. They will be the most fuel-efficient that this industry has built since the transition from sail to steam power.

Redesigned from the keel up, they'll feature optimised hull forms, new rudder and propeller arrangements, new foiling systems to reduce drag and improved wind assistance through sails and rotors.

For some slower ships carrying bulk products, things may go full circle – with steam giving way to sail.

Innovation will spread quickly through the market. Even in the short term, we expect most ships will be between 35% and 45% more efficient by the 2030s, and perhaps at least 50% more efficient by the end of that decade.

Whilst by the 2040s, we expect to see the widespread introduction of ships featuring carbon-free propulsion, for example, using hydrogen, ammonia or high-density batteries.

Clean maritime competition

Not only will zero carbon shipping technologies be ready well in advance of 2050, they're already being tested in many countries, including here in the UK.

That's why I've just challenged the industry to have zero emission vessels entering commercial service in the UK by 2025 – such as on cross-channel routes.

It's the role of government to spark the creativity of our brilliant maritime industry, to support and incentivise the most pioneering minds and companies around the UK, from the smallest start-ups to the largest corporations, to develop a new industrial legacy for the future and generate many thousands of skilled jobs within the sector.

This was the thinking behind our [Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition](#). The biggest such competition in the department's history.

And launched as part of the Prime Minister's [Ten point plan for a green industrial revolution](#).

We didn't expect it to be quite as successful as it proved, attracting applications from well over 300 organisations.

But this week we've been able to [announce 55 winners](#), feasibility studies and technology trials all over the country, who will share a total investment – with match funding – of over £33 million, which really illustrates the diverse strength of the maritime sector across the country.

Every one of the schemes will, in future, progress to real-world

demonstrations helping the government accelerate the transition to net zero in partnership with UK industry.

They include:

- a green, hydrogen-powered submarine programme to build vessels that will collect toxic microplastics from the ocean while transporting cargo between Glasgow and Belfast
- an electric chargepoint connected directly to an offshore wind turbine allowing boats to charge using 100% renewable energy from the turbine
- a project involving the University of Kent in the south east exploring the electrification of propulsion vessels in the Short Straits ferry fleet
- in the Midlands, an initiative involving Westfield Sports Cars, testing a new high-performance energy storage system, which could be applied to both road vehicles and vessels
- and in Aberdeen, a project testing the design of hydrogen powered vessels and ways to create green hydrogen directly from offshore wind turbines

There's no doubt, the competition to create the breakthrough technologies of tomorrow is hotting up. And we're confident the successful delivery of these fantastic technologies will play a major part in helping the UK achieve its net zero goals.

Other UK measures

And this is just the start. As we announced in the recent launch of the [UK Transport decarbonisation plan](#), we're going to consult on a potential phase out date for the sale of new, polluting domestic vessels and fuels, and ultimately set out a course to fully decarbonise UK maritime, step by step, from 2030.

We're also exploring the set-up of a UK Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions – a dedicated unit within the Department for Transport focused on decarbonising the maritime sector.

And earlier today, also on board the HMS Albion, the government launched a green shipbuilding campaign. As a maritime nation with a rich history, we are proud to be at the forefront of the greener era for maritime, charting an international course for the future of clean shipping.

In all these markets, the UK is well placed to spearhead innovation. We have

so much experience in naval architecture, shipbuilding and marine equipment, skills that have been passed down from generation to generation and that are now being adapted for a new era of maritime growth.

Taking action now will help us lead the charge on decarbonisation, reducing emissions and shaping the landscape for what clean shipping and trade will look like for future generations.

Conclusion

It's fitting that I can deliver such a hopeful message about the future of shipping here in Greenwich, a place with such a rich maritime history, in a city which has looked outward for growth ever since the Port of London was created by the Romans 2,000 years ago.

We're proud of our past, but we have our sights firmly set on the future. A future that will be driven by globalisation, by competition and profit, just as it always has been.

But that now must be joined by a new imperative, inspired by our shared determination to protect the planet we live on. Yes, shipping must grow, to meet the needs of the global economy. But it must grow responsibly. Within a framework of carbon-cutting until there's no more carbon to cut.

The challenge could not be greater. But with the help of our Clean Maritime Competition winners, we will work with a laser focus at home and globally, with our friends and partners through the International Maritime Organization, so that together we can make our vision for zero emission shipping a reality.

Thank you.

Prince of Wales' award for ESUAS

The award recognises Exercise MONGOLIAN ENDURANCE 2019 that saw 11 students and 3 mountain bike instructors deployed to the remote Mongolian countryside from 22 August to 7 September 2019. The team cycled 680 kilometres across deserts, steppe and mountains.

The award ceremony took place at ESUAS's Holmes Building at Leuchars Station, Fife. The Lord-Lieutenant of Fife Robert Balfour presented the award to Squadron Leader Campbell Blake, Officer Commanding ESUAS. Attending the ceremony on behalf of The Ulysses Trust, was Lieutenant Colonel Cath Davies MBE TD VR SCOTS, who is a volunteer member of the Trusts' Grants Application Committee and National Adventurous Training Adviser at the Army Cadet Force.

Lt Col Davies noted the impact of the expedition on both the unit and the

officer cadets who took part in the adventure:

It was great to hear how this exercise has helped support ESUAS's recruitment and retention, particularly after the last 18 months we have just been through. Officer cadets spoke passionately about how their time in Mongolia has affected their lives. This included an officer cadet who has decided to become a Reservist because of this experience and plans to join the Army Mountaineering Association. Exercise MONGOLIAN ENDURANCE 2019 was a worthy winner of the award and a great example of how expeditions can make a real difference to individuals and units.

Expedition organiser Chris Toward with the award and Lord Lieutenant of Fife Robert Balfour. Crown copyright.

The annual awards are selected from over one hundred Cadet and Reservist expeditions supported by the Trust. Prior to the presentation, APO Olly Tidswell and Officer Cadet Chris Toward hosted an informative slide and video presentation on the expedition route. Off Cdt Toward is an ESUAS alumni member and was the main expedition organiser.

The aim of the expedition was to utilise the harsh Mongolian landscape to enhance the attributes of leadership, self-sufficiency, physical and mental endurance, teamwork and risk management. The Ulysses Trust granted £6,000 towards the cost of the expedition, with additional funding coming from Highland RFCA.

The expedition comprised three stages, starting with a three-day ride across the Gobi Desert; Stage 2 was a 70km ride through the Arts Bogd mountains; and the final stage was spent in the Khangai Mountains. The ambitious and physically demanding expedition has had a significant impact on the unit, boosting morale and improving recruitment and retention. Participants said the highlights included being part of a great group, the scenery, and the chance to meet locals. Challenges included it being physically and mentally demanding, but they said it also presented an opportunity to learn and appreciate everyone's limits and to work flexibly to accommodate these.

Expedition participant APO Fraser Britton said: "Exercise MONGOLIAN ENDURANCE was a genuinely surreal experience, with a tremendous sense of accomplishment upon completion. It was inspiring to see our team work so efficiently together, with empathy on show, and so I am thankful for the opportunity."

Others present at the 7 September 2021 presentation (that was delayed due to the impact of COVID-19) included Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Macnaughton, representing Highland RFCA.

The full expedition report can be found on the [Ulysses Trust website](#).