

News story: Ministry of Defence expands counter-poaching training into two new parks in Malawi

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson announced today that deployments to Nkhotakota and Majete Wildlife Reserves will begin in May, following a successful pilot scheme in Liwonde National Park alongside the conservation non-profit African Parks, doubling the number of rangers mentored by British soldiers to 120.

A conservation crisis occurring around the globe is causing the loss of countless species, and one of the main factors behind this is the illegal wildlife trade, which drives the decline of many of Africa's animals, including elephants, rhinos and lions.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Poaching is a horrific and cruel trade that is putting the very existence of this planet's most majestic wildlife in jeopardy.

Our brave Armed Forces are the best in the world and are playing their part in putting an end to this sickening and illegal industry, to protect these magnificent mammals.

By providing training and mentoring to the park rangers, they will form a skilled network to ensure that the world's precious species are here for generations to come.

Under the guidance of British Army troops, African Parks rangers will learn tracking, infantry skills, bushcraft and information analysis to improve the interception of poachers.

The long-term goals of training park rangers in Malawi are for them to effectively police their parks and respond appropriately to the threat of poaching, which is worth approximately £7bn to £17bn year.

Training in the two new parks has been funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund.

Liwonde Park Manager, Craig Reid, said:

The MOD deployment to Liwonde in 2017 was very beneficial to the African Parks effort in securing the integrity of this park which was once overrun with poaching.

The soldiers helped mentor the Rangers as part of the long-term project aimed at ensuring a sustainable law enforcement effort. We are very appreciative of the ongoing support rendered to our team on the ground.

All three parks, Nkhotakota, Majete and Liwonde, are managed by African Parks in partnership with Malawi's Department of National Parks and Wildlife.

Brighton Kumchedwa, Director of National Parks and Wildlife, said:

We are really pleased that the British Army will be returning to Malawi to work in partnership with the Malawian authorities and African Parks on counter-poaching activities. This will build on the success of their previous deployment and ensure that life becomes increasingly difficult for those intent on wildlife crime in Malawi.

Press release: Holmwood drilling site consultation extended and new date for drop-in event

Updated: New date for drop-in event in Holmwood.

The Environment Agency invites residents living near the Holmwood oil and gas exploratory site in Dorking, Surrey, to a re-scheduled 'drop-in' event as part of its consultation on a permit application.

The public information event (cancelled last week due to safety concerns caused by the bad weather) will take place between 2.00pm and 7.30pm, Thursday 15 March 2018 at:

Dorking Halls (Martineau Hall)

Reigate Road

Dorking

RH4 1SG

Visitors will be able to discuss the application and the process being

followed to determine it, and talk to Environment Agency representatives about how they regulate oil and gas activities.

The consultation period has also been extended by 2 weeks with a new closing date of 29 March 2018 (formerly 15 March). Consultation is on the application by Europa Oil & Gas Limited for a bespoke environmental permit, which is currently being considered by the Environment Agency.

Further information on the applications, a copy of our draft decision document and details of how to comment can be found [online](#).

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

We were disappointed to have to postpone the event last week, due to bad weather. Our aim is to give everyone a chance to understand the proposed activity and to be able to attend, but without putting themselves at risk through travelling in hazardous conditions. This is an opportunity for local people to find out more about the operations at Holmwood and how we regulate these activities.

An environmental permit sets out stringent conditions that a site must adhere to. We will not issue an environmental permit for a site if we consider that activities taking place will cause significant pollution to the environment or harm to human health.

Although we are minded to approve the applications for the bespoke and standard rules permit, we are still in the determination process and a final decision has not yet been made. We want to hear from the public and understand people's views on the application. Everybody has the chance to see what the permits may look like and to raise any additional concerns before we make any final decision.

[A hat-trick of Liberal Democrat by-election gains!](#)

Last night, in a bumper crop of by-elections the Liberal Democrats made a hat-trick of gains and huge increases in the vote in a brace of others:

Dawlish Central & North East (Teignbridge) result:

LDEM: 70.6% (+52.4)

CON: 29.4% (+5.6)

Liberal Democrat GAIN from Conservative.

– Britain Elects (@britainelects) [February 16, 2018](#)

Chudleigh (Teignbridge) result:

LDEM: 41.0% (+31.1)

CON: 40.3% (+14.6)

LAB: 18.7% (+7.0)

No Ind(s) as prev.

– Britain Elects (@britainelects) [February 15, 2018](#)

Worstead (North Norfolk) result:

LDEM: 72.7% (+39.4)

CON: 16.9% (-25.0)

LAB: 10.4% (-1.8)

Liberal Democrat GAIN from Conservative.

– Britain Elects (@britainelects) [February 15, 2018](#)

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Author:

[Getting things done – street drains on Perth Road #dundeewestend](#)



I have received complaints about blocked street drains on Perth Road west of Harris Academy.

As one constituent recently said :

“... the drain grating at bus stop on Perth Road (north side) just east of Arnhall Drive is completely blocked so water backs up in the roadway when it

rains heavily. Last time I checked most of the gratings between there and West Park Road were also part/all blocked by gunge."

I raised this with the council's Roads Maintenance Partnership and have been advised :

"The Road Maintenance Partnership inspector has asked the gully machine to inspect and clear as required."

The benefits of Brexit

Next Tuesday I have been invited to give a lecture in the Speaker's House at Westminster on the opportunities Brexit affords the UK. I have plenty of ideas of what can be better, and believe the UK can both be freer and more prosperous once we are out of the EU. That was why I campaigned and voted for just such an outcome. I will share more of the details with you on this site next week.

My vision will include discussing how to spend all the money we save from our contributions, which will boost both our growth rate and our balance of payments. It will look at opportunities to remove taxes we do not agree with but have to impose as part of our membership. It will examine the scope for a fishing and farming policy which is better for our farmers and fishermen, and will cut our dependence on imports. It will consider what a new migration and borders policy ought to look like, and set out how we can pursue a free trade agenda that will be good for jobs in the UK. There is a longer list than this, but these are some of the highlights.

I would be interested to hear from readers what they think we can do after Brexit that will improve our lives and government, given the freedoms we will gain to vary our laws and spend our own money. We have had months and months of being told by a small group of contributors here – and another small group of contributors to the national media – what they think the downsides will be. Most of these will prove as incorrect as the forecast of a recession immediately after the referendum vote.