

Falklands finally landmine free thanks to UK-funded team

The Falkland Islands are now finally free of lethal minefields almost 40 years after the end of the conflict during which thousands of exploding devices were laid.

A UK-funded programme which started in 2009 has completed its dangerous mission to de-mine the islands in the South Atlantic three years ahead of schedule.

The removal of the mines laid during the 1982 conflict with Argentina means the UK has now met its obligations set by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

As a result the warning signs and fences that have been a feature on the islands since the end of the conflict will be removed during a local event. The removal of the last mine means there are no anti-personnel mines on British soil anywhere in the world.

Islanders will mark the moment with the detonation of the final mine and the cutting down of fences which will finally re-open their access to beaches. Games of cricket and football will be played on the beach itself, to enjoy unrestricted access.

Minister Wendy Morton, UK Minister with responsibility for the Falklands, said:

This is a huge achievement for the Islands and we must pay tribute to the brilliant team of deminers who put their lives at risk day to day removing and destroying landmines to make the Falklands safe.

Our commitment to ridding the world of fatal land mines does not end with our territories being mine free. A further £36 million of UK funding will allow demining projects across the world to continue, protecting innocent civilian lives.

The demining team from Zimbabwe, with supervising staff from British companies SafeLane Global and Fenix Insight had to struggle with the islands' challenging physical conditions, often working in remote locations and through the unpredictable and sometimes extreme Falklands weather, to achieve the goal to rid the Falklands of mines.

The UK is one of the world's leading forces in ridding the world of mines. An additional £36 million of funding has therefore been given to the UK-funded Global Mine Action Programme 2, bringing the total to £124m, to continue demining projects in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. This recognises that

landmines continue to cause harm and damage lives, many years after conflicts are over.

Further detail:

- The Falklands will be officially declared landmine free on the 14 November in a local celebration. There will also be an official celebration hosted by the UK at Government House on the 17 November, where the deminers will be presented with certificates signed by Minister Morton.
- Countries benefitting from the additional £36 million of funding under the Global Mine Action Programme 2 are Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Iraq, Laos, Lebanon, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.
- GMAP2, which started in 2018, addresses the threat posed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. By June 2020 it had cleared and confirmed safe the equivalent of 28,800 football pitches of mines and delivered mine risk education to over 2 million people.