

Press release: Scotland's HALO Trust is leading mines clearance and supporting the local economy

International Development Secretary Priti Patel praised Scotland's HALO Trust for taking the lead in bringing British ingenuity and bravery to mine clearance in some of the world's most fragile countries, during a visit to the organisation's headquarters just outside Dumfries today.

Ms Patel announced support to HALO, Manchester-based Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Norwegian People's Aid, which will help to make 15 million square metres of land safe again and enable 15,000 community visits to educate people – especially children – on the dangers of living with landmines.

The UK Government's work with HALO is a key part of the economy in Dumfries and Ms Patel met with many local businesses who contribute to Britain's lifesaving work overseas and help to create jobs in the UK.

This included Penman Engineering who make armoured vehicles; Soltyre, bespoke tyre makers for rough terrain; and ScotJCB who make heavy duty machinery.

Ms Patel was joined by the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell, during her visit.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

Landmines are indiscriminate weapons of war that maim and kill innocent children every day. Scottish organisations like HALO Trust are at the forefront of the UK's efforts, bringing British ingenuity, determination and bravery to save lives and make some of the world's most fragile countries safer and more stable.

I'm pleased to have met with so many of the local companies that provide the specialist equipment HALO needs to carry out its dangerous and difficult work – they represent the best of British expertise.

By involving British businesses in our lifesaving work overseas, we are supporting local economies right across the UK and helping to create and protect jobs.

Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell said:

This is a great example of how the UK's aid commitment to help those most in need around the world also works here at home in our national interest. Scotland is at the heart of the UK's

international aid efforts – with hundreds of staff working in East Kilbride as well as contracts going to many Scottish companies.

The companies working with the HALO Trust are making a real contribution to some of the poorest communities on earth – and in doing so are creating jobs and driving growth in Scotland. This is just one example of why our aid strategy is so important and why we are so proud to be meeting our commitment as a world-leader in international aid.

HALO Trust is one of the leading global NGOs on demining. Since 1988 the HALO Trust has destroyed over 1.6 million landmines and nearly 12 million unexploded ordnance. The HALO Trust currently works in 20 countries or territories. Last year they:

- made 74 million square metres of land safe, directly benefitting 1.8 million people
- destroyed 395,000 mines and unexploded ordnance
- delivered mine risk education session to 330,000 children and adults (including 91,500 children)
- ensured that 61% of cleared land was released for agriculture which is vital for communities

The UK is one of the world's leading contributors to demining. New support announced earlier this year at Kensington Palace will make safe land, equivalent to the size of over 20,000 football pitches, and help 800,000 people live their lives free from the threat of mines.

Notes to Editors

- Today's announcement is an £8.1m funding extension to the current Global Mine Action Programme, which is delivered by HALO, MAG and Norwegian People's Aid.
- This funding allocation is for the financial year 2017/18.
- Local companies in Dumfriesshire have benefitted from over £5 million of business from the HALO Trust over the past 10 years.
- The UK's work removes and destroys landmines, but also focuses on education to ensure the local community is aware of the risk.
- The UK was a founding signatory of the Mine Ban Treaty and a number of UK organisations such as Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and the Halo Trust are at the forefront of global efforts to make the world mine-free.
- With concerted effort we can make a real difference. Through the support of UK aid, Mozambique was declared mine-free in 2015, joining 26 countries that have completed mine clearance in the past 20 years.
- More than 60 million people still live with the daily threat of injury or death and the basic rights of safe access to health services, education, agricultural land and infrastructure continue to be denied to communities around the world.
- The UK government confirmed it would be tripling its support for demining this year at an event at Kensington Palace.