

Government response: Minister for Asia welcomes Maldives elections

FCO Minister Mark Field said:

I welcome the announcement of the preliminary results of the Presidential election in Maldives on 23 September, and offer my congratulations to the winner, Mr Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. I wish him and his coalition partners well as they prepare for a smooth and peaceful transition of government.

I hope to visit Maldives in the near future, and I look forward to working with the new government on issues of shared concern to Maldives and the UK.

Further information

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Press release: UK and US further collaboration in science and innovation by deepening ties in medical technology

- Science Minister Sam Gyimah has visited Boston, Houston and Washington DC marking one year on from the signing of the landmark science and

technology accord

- following his return, he confirmed a new fact-finding mission to Texas for UK businesses and academics to open up opportunities to the UK Life Sciences sector
- during the visit, the minister met with leading academic institutions, innovative businesses and tech disruptors to learn first-hand how the US supports innovation

Marking one year on from the UK signing a landmark Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement with the US, Science Minister Sam Gyimah has visited Boston, Houston and Washington DC to meet disruptive businesses, hear from innovators and announce a further research partnership in medical technology.

The minister confirmed a winter fact-finding mission with UK experts from the life sciences sector set to visit Texas to seek out opportunities for global innovation. Both the UK and Texas have a stellar reputation in the life sciences and the US state is home to America's leading cancer hospital. During the November visit, businesses and academics will explore new access to US markets for more UK innovators.

A total of 17% of UK research and development investment is financed from abroad, and the modern Industrial Strategy commits to keeping the UK connected to other leading international sources of ideas and learn about advances being made around the world.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

Science has no borders. By collaborating with our US colleagues, we are pooling our power to find the answers to the biggest science questions of today and making the most of the inventions of tomorrow.

Building on our reputation as a global force in science is at the heart of our modern Industrial Strategy and we will continue to learn with and from international innovators to push new boundaries.

The minister used the opportunity to learn how leading academic and business partnerships between the UK and the US are commercialising technology. One example being the partnership between the University of Cambridge and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, which is developing research programmes to generate new ideas and encourage entrepreneurship that improve productivity and competitiveness.

During the trip the minister met:

- LearnLaunch and its member community to learn about the emerging Education Technology in Boston
- aerospace start-ups in Houston and NASA's senior leaders at the Johnson Space Centre and in DC to promote UK investment in aerospace and to highlight our ambitions for the UK space sector

- the Challenger Education Centre about how we can work together to use space to inspire and challenge more young people to take up stem subjects
 - National Institutes for Standards and Technology (NIST) where he discussed the vital role that science and technological standards play in supporting US innovation
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[News story: Collaborative decommissioning research TRANSCENDS the individual approach](#)

The research will span 40 projects lasting up to 4 years each, helping to build the next generation of nuclear experts as well as developing technical solutions.

Building on a core grant of £4.6 million from the [Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council \(EPSRC\)](#), AWE, Cavendish Nuclear, Low Level Waste Repository Ltd, National Nuclear Laboratory, Radioactive Waste Management Ltd, Sellafield Ltd and TUV SUD Nuclear Technologies are all supporting the programme through direct funding and/or supervisory expertise, use of facilities and researcher training, resulting in the total funding pot of more than £9 million.

Those working on the projects will include a mixture of PhD students and Post-Doctoral Researchers, each with academic and industrial supervisors, the latter being technical experts from within industry to ensure maximum 2-way knowledge transfer.

Known as TRANSCEND (Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning), the work builds on 2 previous programmes, DIAMOND and DISTINCTIVE, the former having concluded in 2013, with the latter due to finish in early 2019.

The consortium of 11 universities will be led by the University of Leeds and includes:

- Imperial College London
- Lancaster University
- Queen's University Belfast
- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- University of Leeds
- University of Manchester
- University of Sheffield
- University of Southampton

- University of Strathclyde
- University of Surrey

The research topics to be explored by the TRANSCEND consortium align with the NDA's key themes of:

- Integrated waste management
- Site decommissioning and remediation
- Spent fuel
- Nuclear materials

TRANSCEND's work will build on the significant progress made in these areas by the DISTINCTIVE consortium, contributing to tackling the UK's nuclear legacy.

NDA Research Manager Dr Rick Short said:

Our industry benefits hugely when high-level academic research is focused at some of the challenges we face in decommissioning our nuclear legacy. We welcome this collaboration and look forward to seeing the progress that these important projects will deliver. Equally valuable will be the development of knowledge and expertise for the participants – we hope their skills will be with us for many years ahead.

Jon Martin, Head of Research at RWM, said:

Research is critical to exploring and understanding all aspects of the science associated with a future geological disposal facility that will be required to keep radioactive waste safe for many thousands of years. We welcome the news that the TRANSCEND collaboration has received approval and look forward to working in partnership with the many world-class research institutions and industry representatives involved.

NNL's Science Ambassador, Gareth Headdock, said:

As a national research lab, NNL will provide the key integrating interface between those carrying out the research and those needing solutions, to ensure they are aligned. This is primarily through the provision of industrial supervision and access to the world-leading facilities in our Central Laboratory on the Sellafield site.

We know that to achieve transformational developments in the way we approach waste management and decommissioning, we need to think differently, disrupt the established ways of working and collaborate with others like never before.

Geoff Randall, Senior Scientist at Sellafield Ltd, said:

The previous programmes have led directly to the development of new equipment like Acoustic Back Scattering technology that is being installed in a settling tank for Pile Fuel Storage Pond sludge removal. We've also been able to accelerate hazard reduction, partly as a result of fundamental research into Magnox Swarf Storage Silo materials, and prepare the next generation of engineers and scientist to face our challenges. We are pleased to be part of this exciting new programme.

Principal Investigator for the DISTINCTIVE and TRANSCEND programmes, Professor Michael Fairweather of the University of Leeds, said:

This research consortium represents an important activity in reinforcing the industry-academia links that have grown significantly in recent years, and provides key support to underpin an academic skill base in this crucial area for the UK. The world-leading team of academic experts provides both depth and breadth across all areas of current research need, and the strong support of our key industry partners validates the usefulness of the research programme we will undertake.

[News story: Government announces definition for cannabis-based products for medicinal use](#)

The government has announced that cannabis-based products for medicinal use will be available for specialist doctors to prescribe legally and [today sets out which product categories the law-change covers](#).

The Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, committed in July to swift action on behalf of those whose medical conditions could potentially be eased by cannabis-based products and these products will be lawful later in the autumn.

Together with the Health and Social Care Secretary, the Home Secretary has now set out how cannabis-based products for medicinal use will be defined in order to make it lawful for them to be prescribed when specialist doctors believe this is appropriate.

Specialist doctors specialise in one field of medicine such as neurology or paediatrics. In the UK, specialist doctors are listed on the General Medical

Council's (GMC) specialist register.

The Home Secretary's decision takes into account recommendations made by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) and the UK's Chief Medical Adviser.

The government has been clear it has no intention of legalising the recreational use of cannabis. Due to the known harms of smoking and the potential operational impact on misuse and diversion, smoking will remain prohibited.

Patients will not be able to get cannabis-based medicinal products from their general practitioner.

Home Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

After hearing of the cases involving sick children, I pledged to make cannabis products legally available for medicinal use as soon as possible.

Agreeing this definition means specialist doctors will be able to prescribe them to patients most in need later this autumn.

There will be strict controls in place and this is in no way a step towards legalising the recreational use of cannabis.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, said:

The Chief Medical Officer's review of the evidence was clear – cannabis-based products can be effective for some conditions. So from autumn specialist doctors will be able to prescribe them when they judge that patients will benefit.

However, these are largely still unlicensed medicines, so it is also important that we build a greater research base on the therapeutic benefit of these products so we can maximise their potential as medicines.

This decision as to which products will be made available is the result of work between the Home Office, ACMD, Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

There are 3 broad requirements for products before they can be prescribed:

- the product is or contains cannabis, cannabis resin, cannabidiol or cannabidiol derivatives
- the product must be produced for medicinal use in humans
- it must be a product that is regulated as a medicinal product or an ingredient of a medicinal product

Until the autumn, specialist doctors will still be able to apply to the independent expert panel on behalf of patients wishing to access these products.

[News story: UK boosts cyber links after tri-nation visit to Central America](#)

As the cyber threats we face evolve and intensify, it is vital we deepen our international partnerships to stay one step ahead of those who would wish to do us harm, a Defence Minister has stated.

Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster signed a letter of intent between the UK and Chile on cyber co-operation ensuring closer links in that sphere, during a visit that also took in Mexico and Belize.

He also attended a British-led cyber defence workshop that was jointly supported by the Ministry of Defence, Department for International Trade, National Cyber Security Centre and Government Communication Headquarters. He also visited a Chilean Peacekeeping School.

Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Information technology provides a new and unconventional battlefield, with cyber-attacks increasing as modern warfare evolves and adapts. The UK will play a leading role in countering these threats, but I am delighted to see like-minded partners across the globe sharing this belief and taking steps to keep our people safe.

In Mexico, Mr Lancaster was a special guest at the country's independence celebrations, before meeting Mexico's Defence Minister and Navy Secretariat, Admiral Vidal Francisco Soberon Sanz, reinforcing our strong defence relations and discussing the role of Latin American nations working alongside NATO and the UN.

He also met Commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command, General Terrence J. O'Shaughnessy, reaffirming the special relationship and exploring how the UK and US can collaborate further in these fields.

In Belize, Mr Lancaster spent the day visiting the 2nd Battalion of the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, to understand the benefits to the Army from training

in a jungle environment as well as tour touring the British Army Training and Support Unit Belize.

Mr Lancaster also signed a treaty and memorandum of understanding concerning the status of UK forces in Belize, deepening the longstanding defence co-operation between the two nations.

Mr Lancaster met the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wilfred Elrington; Minister of National Security, John Saldivar, and Commander of the Belize Defence Force, Brigadier General Steven Ortega.