

Graeme Biggar appointed NCA Director General

Home Secretary Priti Patel has appointed Graeme Biggar CBE as Director General of the National Crime Agency (NCA) to lead the fight against serious and organised crime and bring drug and people traffickers to justice.

Mr Biggar has led the NCA on an interim basis since October 2021. He has driven the UK's firm response to cracking down on kleptocracy and illicit finance, as well as abhorrent child sexual abuse.

During this time, the NCA has delivered more disruptions and targeted an increasing proportion of those criminals causing the most harm. In the past year the NCA has:

- taken decisive action to crack down on people smugglers, resulting in the arrest of 244 offenders outside of the UK
- increased disruptions against modern slavery, protecting over 900 people
- seized around 250 tonnes of Class A drugs and dismantled eight global networks facilitating the supply of illegal firearms
- increased disruptions of fraud, including working with international partners to facilitate the recovery of proceeds of fraud for repatriation to victims across the world
- frozen more than £358 million of criminal assets
- led the implementation of a cross-law enforcement ransomware threat group, protecting the UK economy from losses of at least £600 million
- helped coordinate activity across local police forces against online child sexual abuse, which is seeing about 800 arrests or voluntary attendances, and around 1,000 children safeguarded or protected every month.

He will take on the role on a permanent basis, focusing on hunting ruthless cyber criminals and dismantling serious and organised crime groups peddling drugs and illegal firearms, and exploiting vulnerable people.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Serious and organised crime, the gangs and violence bring misery to our streets. As well as exploiting children and the vulnerable, this criminality also costs more than £37 billion a year to our economy.

Going after the criminals who profit from human misery, abuse our children and citizens and show no regard for our borders and laws is what I and Graeme continue to drive.

From dismantling people smuggling networks through the biggest illegal migration law enforcement operation across Europe to bringing the monsters who sexually abuse children in the UK and

abroad to justice, Graeme and his remarkable NCA team have an outstanding track record of delivery.

I have put the right resources and skills into the NCA, including increases to the Agency's budget and additional resources to tackle new and emerging threats. The UK's National Crime Agency is world leading and in a formidable position to tackle some of the most complex global threats we face and to help make our streets and our country safer.

Mr Biggar has now been appointed for a term of five years after a fair and open recruitment process. Mr Biggar has a wealth of experience, having served as Director General of the National Economic Crime Centre (NECC) at the NCA between 2019 and 2021. He has also served as Director for National Security at the Home Office, Chief of Staff to the Defence Secretary and has held senior positions in the Ministry of Defence and other government departments.

He helped to shape the response to the 2017 terrorist attacks, the Salisbury poisoning attack, and as Director of National Security in the Home Office, oversaw implementation of the Investigatory Powers Act.

Graeme Biggar CBE, Director General of the NCA, said:

I am delighted to have been asked to lead the National Crime Agency. The Agency's mission – to protect the public from serious and organised crime – has never been more important.

Serious and organised crime is chronic, corrosive and complex. The people and groups behind it have global reach, are technically sophisticated and digitally-enabled.

In response, the Agency must focus upstream, overseas and online – while continuing to work with our partners systematically to target criminals, bring them to justice and reduce the harm they cause.

It has been a privilege to lead our officers over the past ten months. I will continue to support them in protecting the public while ensuring we operate with the highest integrity and standards

As the head of the NCA, the Director General leads around 6,000 officers based in the UK and overseas. The DG determines the NCA's operational priorities and ensures that the Agency is developing the right intelligence, delivering successful investigations and driving the overall UK law enforcement response to serious and organised crime.

Although the DG is accountable to the Home Secretary, the NCA is a non-ministerial department in its own right and is operationally independent from the Home Office.

British High Commission staff plant 75 trees to mark 75 years of UK – Pakistan relations

World news story

On Friday to commemorate 75 years of UK – Pakistan relations, British High Commission staff joined by Chevening alumni and personnel from the Islamabad Capital Development Authority, planted 75 trees native to Pakistan, in the Shakarparian National Park.



Acting British High Commissioner, Andrew Dalglish, plants 1 of 75 trees to mark 75 years of UK – Pakistan relations.

This activity complements a vast year-long tree planting programme carried out in the UK by the British Pakistan Foundation and Pakistan High Commission. Named 'The Legacy Project', this was launched to celebrate the achievements of British Pakistanis over the last 75 years. A total of 7,500 trees are set to be planted.

The UK – Pakistan relationship has gone from strength to strength this year, with major events such as the independence anniversary and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games revitalising deep people-to-people ties.

On the occasion the Acting British High Commissioner Andrew Dalglish said:

Right now the UK and Pakistan are collaborating to tackle some of the world's most pressing challenges from driving forward action on climate change to improving gender equality. I know that we will continue to do so over the next seventy-five years. Happy Birthday, happy Independence Day, Azm-e-aali Shaan, Shaad rahe Pakistan!

Notes to editors:

1. Tackling climate change is the UK's top international priority and a key area of collaboration with Pakistan. Pakistan is suffering from some of the worst effects of climate change, but showed the world that great ambition is possible through its NDC commitments made ahead of COP26. At COP26 the UK pledged financial support to help Pakistan fight climate change, promote more sustainable water use, and unlock climate investment. The UK also helped to mobilise 31 leading Pakistani businesses to commit to net zero emissions by 2050, through the Race to Zero campaign.
2. As hosts of COP26 (co-hosted with Italy), the UK has been driving international action and support to adapt to the effects of climate change, which are already impacting lives, livelihoods and natural habitats across the world. Thirty five countries have joined the Adaptation Action Coalition, and over 2,000 businesses, investors, regions, cities and other non-state actors have joined the Race to Resilience. Over 40 countries and organisations have joined the Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership, committing to make 1 billion people safer from disaster by 2025. Pakistan participated in the COP26 and the PM Boris Johnson appreciated Pakistan's ambitious country goal which should serve as a blue print in climate action.
3. The Climate Finance Accelerator (CFA) is a £10.8 million technical assistance programme funded by International Climate Finance (ICF), through the UK Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The CFA is implemented in eight countries (Colombia, Egypt, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, South Africa and Turkey) and is working to develop a sustainable pipeline of bankable, low-carbon projects in each country. The CFA is part of the UK's efforts to support climate action on a global scale, facilitating access to finance and helping governments achieve climate targets under the Paris Agreement. Pakistan is also a beneficiary country and should make use of these funds in the battle against climate challenge.
4. In celebration of the achievements of British Pakistanis during the last 75 years in the UK, 'The Legacy Project' was launched at the Pakistan High Commission London on 18 July 2022. The Project is a collaborative effort by the British Pakistan Foundation (BPF) in partnership with the National Trust, World Congress of Overseas Pakistanis (WCOP), The Pakistan Society, and a host of other British Pakistani organizations.

For updates on the British High Commission, please follow our social media channels:

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[Environment Agency chairs National Drought Group as parts of country move into drought](#)

The [National Drought Group](#), made up of senior decision makers from the Environment Agency, government, water companies and key representative groups, joined by Water Minister Steve Double, met today (Friday 12 August) to discuss the response to the driest summer in fifty years and the continued action needed. The group discussed the current outlook and the associated risks and impacts and agreed to further collaborative work across sectors to balance water needs and conserve water.

At the meeting , the Environment Agency said that the drought trigger threshold had been met to move parts of the South West, parts of Southern and Central England, and the East of England into Drought.

The Environment Agency confirmed Drought status in eight of its 14 areas:

- Devon and Cornwall
- Solent and South Downs
- Kent and South London
- Herts and North London
- East Anglia
- Thames
- Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire
- East Midlands

On Tuesday 16 August, the Environment Agency subsequently confirmed that Yorkshire had also moved into Drought status.

The triggers used to confirm the move to Drought status for these areas include the hydrological position (including rainfall, river flows, groundwater levels, reservoir levels, and the dryness of soils), as well as the impacts these conditions have on public water supply, abstractors (including farmers) and the environment. This is determined by the Environment Agency at a local level, rather than nationally.

This change in status to drought is a change in categorisation, indicating the impact prolonged dry weather is having on water resources and the environment. It does not automatically trigger actions itself, but moving to drought status means that the Environment Agency and water companies will step up their actions to manage the impacts and press ahead with implementing the stages of their pre-agreed drought plans. These plans follow local factors including reservoir levels, demand and forecasts, and lead to precautionary actions such as Temporary Use Bans. The last drought in England was 2018.

Essential supplies of water are safe. Water companies have a duty to ensure these supplies and have reassured regulators and Government that they will remain resilient across the country. Defra and the Environment Agency are urging water companies to continue with their precautionary planning to protect essential supplies in the event of a dry Autumn.

In drought affected areas the public and businesses should be very mindful of the pressures on water resources and should use water wisely. But while there is an important role for individuals to sustainably manage their usage, Government expects water companies to act to reduce leakage and fix leaking pipes as quickly as possible and take wider action alongside government policy.

National Drought Group members agreed to:

- Recognise the new risks and impacts associated with the current outlook.
- Ensure water companies are following their Drought plans.
- Continue working collaboratively across sectors to manage current impacts – working together to balance water needs and conserve water.

Harvey Bradshaw, Environment Agency executive director for the environment and chair of the NDG, said:

The current high temperatures we are experiencing have exacerbated pressures on wildlife and our water environment.

EA staff are doing an excellent job responding to environmental impacts and working with water companies to make sure they are following their drought plans.

This meeting has helped to build on our coordinated action to manage water supplies, consider water users and protect the environment. We urge everyone to manage the amount of water they are using in this exceptionally dry period.

Water Minister Steve Double said:

We are currently experiencing a second heatwave after what was the driest July on record for parts of the country. Action is already being taken by the Government and other partners including the Environment Agency to manage the impacts.

All water companies have reassured us that essential supplies are still safe, and we have made it clear it is their duty to maintain those supplies.

We are better prepared than ever before for periods of dry weather, but we will continue to closely monitor the situation, including impacts on farmers and the environment, and take further action as needed.

Action is already being taken by Government, Environment Agency, water companies, environmental and angling groups and farmers to manage the impacts. The EA's ongoing actions include:

- Managing abstraction licences to balance the needs of water companies and our natural environment;
- Working with farmers, businesses and other abstractors to manage water availability and ensure they get the water they need to be resilient while maintaining our protection of the environment.
- Operating water transfer schemes between different areas of the country, to make sure water gets to the areas which are worst affected by prolonged dry weather;
- Planning with water companies and ensuring they have and are implementing their pre-agreed [drought plans](#). Every water company in England has a published drought plan available on their website;
- Monitoring environmental conditions on key rivers to check temperature, dissolved oxygen levels and algae activity
- Activating EA waterways drought plans to carefully manage navigations
- Reoxygenating water and rescuing fish in distress where river flows are especially low;
- Supporting the Fire and Rescue Service to tackle waste fires and wildfires.

The Environment Secretary also granted the EA's application to Defra for a 'drought order' this week which will help prevent Holme Styes reservoir in Holmfirth from running dry. This means the Environment Agency can ask Yorkshire Water to lower the flow of water leaving the reservoir, as required, to allow the reservoir to support habitats and wildlife in the River Ribble over a longer period. The flow from the reservoir will reduce from 2million litres per day to 1million litres.

The order will have no impact on the public water supply as the Holme Styes Reservoir is a historic mill reservoir and not part of the public water infrastructure.

Prolonged dry weather this year has led to exceptionally low river flows and reservoir levels falling across much of England. High temperatures, including this week's heatwave, continue to add additional pressures on the water environment and wildlife.

The [Environment Agency published its water situation national report for July](#) today, providing a picture of the rainfall, soil moisture deficit, river flows, groundwater levels and reservoir levels over the last month. The report highlights that it was the driest July across England since 1935, and since records began for the East and South East, with monthly rainfall totals for the majority of river catchments classed as exceptionally low for the time of year.

There have been five consecutive months of below average rainfall across all geographic regions in England and above average temperatures. River flows, Groundwater levels and Reservoir stocks all decreased during July. Thirteen EA monitored indicator rivers are at the lowest levels ever recorded and soil moisture deficit is comparable to that seen at the end of the 1976 drought.

The National Drought Group will continue to work together very closely over the coming weeks. Environment Agency Chief Executive, Sir James Bevan, will chair a further meeting of the Group with water company Chief Executives on Tuesday 23 August.

[Foreign criminals and illegal entrants to the UK removed to Albania](#)

News story

Offenders removed had received combined prison sentences of more than 46 years.



Yesterday (Thursday 11 August) the UK government removed 20 foreign criminals on a charter flight to Albania.

An individual who overstayed their leave in the UK illegally and two individuals with failed asylum claims were also removed. This included an individual who arrived illegally via a small boat in March.

The foreign national offenders removed had received combined prison sentences of more than 46 years and were convicted of crimes including possession with intent to supply class A drugs, possession of an offensive weapon in a public place and production of a class B drug.

Individuals returned on this flight to Albania include:

- an individual sentenced to six years' imprisonment for possession of an offensive weapon in a public place and possession with intent to supply class A drugs
- an individual sentenced to three years' imprisonment for possession with intent to supply class A drugs
- an individual sentenced to over five years' imprisonment for conspiring/supplying class B controlled drugs

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

These criminals have violated our laws and our values, and we will stop at nothing to remove those with no right to be here. They are responsible for appalling offences including involvement in the supply of class A drugs, which has a devastating impact on people, their families and our communities.

Since 2021, we have removed nearly 1,000 Albanian foreign national offenders, including some who crossed the Channel illegally to come to the UK.

The British public should be in no doubt of my determination to make our streets safer by continuing to remove foreign criminals. Our new Nationality and Borders Act will help end the cycle of last-minute claims and appeals that can delay removals.

This is part of a regular schedule of returns to multiple countries, to remove those with no right to remain in the UK.

In July 2022, 243 foreign national offenders were removed from the UK on both charter and scheduled flights.

Since January 2019 the UK has removed 10,741 foreign national offenders (to year ending December 2021).

The Nationality and Borders Act will further deter illegal entry into the UK,

breaking the business model of people-smuggling networks and speed up the removal of those with no right to be in the UK.

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[jHub Fellowship Scheme: Empowered to Challenge](#)

News story

From phase two naval aviation training to jHub Futures Scout, Lieutenant Ollie couldn't have asked for a more contrasting work environment.



You're given an incredible number of freedoms working in the jHub and you're trusted to work within those. The difference with a naval training environment is significant.

Despite only having worked in the team for 6 months it has provided him with more than enough time to appreciate jHub career opportunities:

There is a real push to experience the job hands on. Whether that be going out to where the users are, either operationally or at home, or meeting and working alongside industry suppliers who are at the bleeding edge of modern technology.

The integrated nature of Strategic Command means dotted lines connect everyone working in Defence, and means the pool of potential users for Ollie to work with is incredibly broad.

A common theme with those we've spoken to at the jHub is the feeling of

empowerment among the workforce. By encouraging contributions from everyone a holistic approach to tasks is generated and this is echoed by Ollie:

You're empowered to challenge, ask questions and voice your opinions, and this is all handled delicately by the leadership. What you're left with are the views and experience from a range of different people which can then be used in the most effective way.

And whereas some within the MOD plan and prepare for the long-term future, Ollie highlights the here and now work he's involved in at the jHub:

On any given day I might be working with the Special Forces and industry leaders to help solve a problem that could have immediate risk to life which is an incredibly rewarding experience.

There aren't many fields of work where someone in a junior role would be tasked with liaising with industry leaders to help solve urgent problems however this, Ollie tells us, is what makes jHub the place it is:

I'm given the authority to engage with both the upper ends of Defence and the upper end of industry and, as an opportunity, this is second to none.

As Ollie concludes, if you're looking for a role that will provide you with the freedom and power to make critical decisions, look no further than the jHub.

You can find more information about working for the jHub and their new Innovation Fellowship by reading the [Innovation Fellowship Launches](#) article.

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