

Simon Blagden CBE confirmed as new Chair of Building Digital UK

Simon Blagden CBE has been appointed by Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries to chair Building Digital UK (BDUK) – the agency in charge of delivering the government’s roll out of faster broadband and mobile coverage across the UK.

Simon has 30 years’ experience in the IT, telecoms and digital industry. For 14 years he was non-executive Chairman at Fujitsu Telecommunications UK.

The new role will place him at the helm of the executive agency overseeing Project Gigabit, the biggest broadband roll out in British history backed with a record £5 billion to connect hard-to-reach areas across the UK, as well as the £1 billion Shared Rural Network which will dial up 4G phone signal rural areas.

In 2000 he joined Spescom, a specialist business communications technology group based in Johannesburg, as CEO to lead its international telecoms and IT business. He continues to serve as non-executive Chairman of management consultancy Larkspur International. In 2016, he was awarded a CBE for services to the economy.

He will step down as Chair of the Telecoms Supply Chain Diversification (TSCD) Advisory Council, a position he has held since last year. The Advisory Council is a non-statutory advisory committee of independent members set up to provide advice to the government on measures to build a more diverse, innovative and secure telecoms supply chain.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

“ BDUK is critical to rolling out the lightning-fast broadband and mobile coverage needed to improve lives and drive productivity across the UK. Simon will be an extremely capable chair of BDUK thanks to his deep understanding of telecoms and wide breadth of experience in the sector.

“ He will lead the team delivering the country’s biggest digital connectivity projects, including our £5 billion investment in Project Gigabit and the £1 billion Shared Rural Network.”

Chair of BDUK, Simon Blagden CBE, said:

“ I’m pleased to be taking on the role as Chair of BDUK at this exciting time for the telecoms sector. I am determined to use my experience gained through more than 30 years in the industry to maximise BDUK’s potential and to advance the pace and ambition of our delivery.

“ Communities from Perth in Scotland to Padstow in Cornwall are already benefiting from gigabit-capable connections to their homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and libraries. My priority will be for BDUK to build on these foundations and deliver the digital infrastructure that is vital for

people, communities and businesses across the UK.”

Ends

Notes to editors

Chair appointment

- The appointment is for a term of four years. The role is for two days per week, remunerated at £80,000 per annum.
- The new Chair was appointed through a fair and open process, in line with the methods used for other DCMS Public Appointments.
- Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - Playing a leading role in BDUK’s engagement with its key stakeholders, both within government and externally with telecommunications network providers and suppliers
 - Establishing a close and effective working relationship with the CEO and ensuring that the Board is effective in holding the executive to account for programme delivery and providing direction
 - Effectively leading the Board, drawing out the skills and experience of other Non-Executive Directors
 - Promoting the highest standards of integrity, probity and corporate governance, ensuring that BDUK complies with all governance requirements
 - Ensuring the Board has a succession planning strategy, including providing advice to Ministers on other appointments to the Board; maintaining a focus on promoting equality and diversity through Non-Executive and Executive appointments and throughout the organisation as a whole

Building Digital UK

BDUK is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. It works to ensure that homes and businesses across the UK can access fast and reliable digital connectivity, by investing in the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband across fixed and mobile networks.

Project Gigabit

Project Gigabit is the government’s flagship £5 billion programme to connect hard-to-reach communities unlikely to be connected through commercial rollout, meaning families no longer having to battle over bandwidth and people in rural areas can have the freedom to live and work more flexibly, helping businesses to grow and vital public services to thrive.

The faster connections delivered by the scheme have been levelling up rural communities across the UK: enabling businesses to grow by using digital technology to boost their productivity and giving people living in more remote areas better access to good jobs.

Shared Rural Network

The Shared Rural Network is the government’s £1 billion deal with the four

Mobile Network Operators to ensure 95% of the UK's geography has a 4G signal by the end of the programme. This will be delivered through a shared network of new and existing phone masts in partial not spots (areas where there is currently coverage from at least one, but not all operators) and total not spots (areas where there is currently no coverage from any operator). More information on the programme can be [found here](#).

Ministry of Defence announces further crackdown on unacceptable behaviour in the Armed Forces

Two more policies and a new strategy have been announced today as part of Defence's commitment to crack down on unacceptable sexual behaviour in our Armed Forces.

The new procedures, will build on measures already introduced by the Ministry of Defence to tackle unacceptable sexual behaviours in the UK Armed Forces and improve the experience for everyone, and in particular women in the Armed Forces. The policies and new strategy have been created alongside the [Zero Tolerance policy: Discharge for sexual offences and sexual instructor-trainee relationships](#) that was announced earlier this year as part of the wide-ranging programme of work that has been delivered across Defence

Minister for Defence People, Leo Docherty said:

Abusive, discriminatory or predatory behaviour has no place in our Armed Forces and these measures send a clear message that these types of behaviours will not be tolerated.

As a forward thinking and modern employer, the Armed Forces are a place where our serving personnel can thrive, and we will continue to expect the highest values and standards of each and every one of them.

Key details of the publications include:

Zero Tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy: Sexual exploitation and abuse involves sexual activity where there is an imbalance of power. This policy supports Defence's commitment to crack down on unacceptable sexual behaviour and prohibits all sexual activity which involves the abuse of power, including buying sex whilst abroad. The policy will ensure that every allegation will be responded to, no matter where the allegation takes place, and introduces a presumption of discharge for anyone found to be engaging in

the targeted behaviours, including buying sex whilst deployed outside the UK.

Tackling Sexual Offending in Defence Strategy: This strategy prioritises victims and aims to reduce the prevalence and impact of sexual offending in the Armed Forces. This will be done through the application of preventative measures such as awareness-raising, training and better understanding the most prevalent types of offenders. Survivors who do not think they will be believed will be reassured and encouraged to come forward and seek support, and the adoption of recommendations from reviews into the Service justice System will encourage increased reporting, engagement and successful prosecutions.

Zero Tolerance to Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour Policy: A Victim/Survivor Focused Approach: This applies to all UK Armed Forces personnel and follows the recently published Zero Tolerance to Sexual Offending and Sexual Relationships Between Instructors and Trainees policy which introduced mandatory discharge for anyone convicted of a sexual offence. This new policy places greater emphasis on the support for victims, with a presumption of discharge from the Armed Forces for any person who behaved in a sexually unacceptable way. This policy builds trust and confidence in Defence's ability to deal with unacceptable behaviours and demonstrates that supporting people who are victims of unacceptable sexual behaviour is a top priority.

These new measures demonstrate significant progress against the recommendations made by Rt. Hon. Sarah Atherton MP in her report ['Protecting Those Who Protect Us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life'](#).

In parallel to these new publications, an extensive programme of work has been delivered across Defence as part of the [Government's Response](#) to Sarah Atherton's Inquiry. This includes training developments around the concept of consent, transformation of the Service Complaints system, the stand-up of the Defence Serious Crime Unit HQ, delivery of improvements to uniform and equipment for women, and the Servicewomen's Health Improvement Sprint, which will ensure our Armed Forces are delivering against being a truly inclusive employer.

Read the [Ministry of Defence policies to tackle unacceptable behaviour](#).

[**Russia's illegal war against Ukraine increases risk of trafficking: UK statement to the OSCE**](#)

The armed conflict in Ukraine, caused by the unprovoked invasion by Russia, has created an increased risk of human trafficking across Europe. The number

of girls and vulnerable women who find themselves unaccompanied or separated creates significant risks of gender-based violence, and child protection and trafficking risks. Difficulties in accessing basic goods and services and lack of access to safe shelter have rendered women and girls extremely vulnerable to this form of exploitation.

The seriousness of the situation makes it all the more regrettable that Russia refused to support the renewal of the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine's mandate, whose office was doing excellent work with local authorities and social services on mechanisms to help victims of human trafficking.

Madam Chair, given the number of refugees vulnerable to exploitation, we must continue to mitigate the risk that Ukrainians are either trafficked into our countries for onward exploitation, or exploited after arriving via a safe and legal route. This requires an end-to-end response.

There are various actions States can take to help those most vulnerable to the effects of Russia's illegal invasion. For the UK's part, our [Homes for Ukraine scheme](#) allows individuals, charities, community groups and businesses in the UK to bring Ukrainians to safety – including those with no family ties to the UK.

To address the risk that the scheme may be used for trafficking, sponsors are subject to criminal and accommodation checks soon after, or prior, to the guest arriving. These checks are enhanced in the cases of children. We also ensure that law enforcement bodies are involved in the scheme and that local authorities are aware of who to work with, on the ground, to help mitigate those risks. Our National Crime Agency generates, disseminates and acts upon intelligence through our International Liaison Officer or ILO network, as well as with multilateral partners such as Europol and Interpol.

Also, civil society groups have collated resources to help inform displaced people arriving in the UK of their rights, entitlements and essential services to further mitigate risks of exploitation.

As Russia's invasion continues, global drivers of serious organised crime strengthen, as organised crime groups seek to exploit the mass movement of people. In countries neighbouring Ukraine, UK ILO officers are introducing and participating in multi-partner hubs involving Ukrainian and in-country officers, NGOs and refugees. We are sharing UK best practice and materials to displaced Ukrainian law enforcement on the ground in Poland, as well as to local law enforcement partners in Romania, Moldova and in Ukraine.

Madam Chair, we commend the work of the OSCE in its efforts to respond to the heightened risk of trafficking brought about by President Putin's illegal war against Ukraine, including documenting the testimony of those who have fled. But the responsibility to end this threat lies with Russia, and Russia alone. It must immediately cease its invasion and withdraw its forces. To delay doing so simply continues to create more displacement, more uncertainty, more anguish and more misery.

Thank you.

Norfolk man jailed for illegal waste operation

A Dereham garage owner who repeatedly ignored Environment Agency warnings about storing end of life vehicles (ELVs) and parts has been jailed.

Colin Barnes of Podmore Lane, Scarning, Norfolk, was handed a 6 month jail sentence at Norwich Magistrates' Court on 15 July 2022. And he was ordered to pay £5,000 costs.

The 65 year old was also handed a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO), which sets out a series of legally-binding conditions he must adhere to or face further punishment.

In November 2021 he pleaded guilty to storing ELVs and parts without a permit at his premises. Barnes was given a suspended sentence of 16 weeks for those offences, on the condition he remained offence free. The court also made a Remediation Order that he must clear the waste from his site by mid-January 2022 or face immediate imprisonment.

Following expiry of the Remediation Order in January 2022, Environment Agency officers inspected the site and found it had not been cleared. They found more ELVs and various car parts including gearboxes, suspension units and tyres stored at the site.

Environment Agency prosecutor Sarah Dunne said:

Barnes had been given 'chance after chance' to clear the waste and to work with the Environment Agency.

The site remained a risk to the environment and undermined competitors who operated within the law.

The court heard how officers had visited the site 18 times between November 2019 and July 2022 and had made every effort to work with Mr Barnes.

Ms Dunne then applied to the court for a CBO.

District Judge Wilson granted the order and set out the following prohibitions and requirements under the Order for Barnes to obey. Under the CBO, he must:

- not hold a Waste Carrier Licence

- surrender his waste carrier licence to the Environment Agency to the Environment Agency's office at within 7 working days of the date of this order
- not apply for a further Waste Carrier Licence
- not register or cause to be registered, with the Environment Agency, any waste exemption and
- not be involved with the operation of any business, in his own name or otherwise, under any waste exemption that has been registered with the Environment Agency

This order remains in force for a period of 5 years.

East Anglia Area Enforcement Team Leader Lesley Robertson said:

Despite the court imposing a suspended custodial sentence and Order in November 2021 to remove waste from his site, Mr Barnes continued to store and treat waste illegally without an environmental permit.

Barnes operated at a commercial advantage, undermining legitimate business with little or no regard for the environment or residents. By imposing this prison sentence, CBO and £5,000 costs, the District Judge demonstrated how seriously they viewed Mr Barnes' activities and behaviour.

Between 31 January 2021 and 5 February 2022 at CT Barnes Autos, Podmore Lane, Scarning, Dereham, Colin Barnes operated a regulated facility. Namely a waste operation for the deposit, treatment and storage of waste, except under and to the extent authorised by an environmental permit contrary to Regulations 12 and 38(1)(a) Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

[Sustainable fuel set to power the Royal Air Force reaches landmark new stage](#)

- Major new research into mass production of sustainable aviation fuel is set to get underway
- British technology could have the potential to eliminate use of fossil fuels in military aircraft
- New fuel could increase resilience and boost RAF's Net Zero goal

The research, carried out by the RAF in partnership with British firm Zero Petroleum, and focussed on using synthetic fuel technology, was announced

today at the Farnborough International Airshow.

It will provide crucial data to evidence the scalability and efficiency of the synthetic technology, which has the potential to revolutionise the RAF's fuel while ensuring its capability remains cutting edge.

The Royal Air Force, having flown a world-record first 100% synthetic flight in November 2021, will move to the next phase producing more fuel for certification and testing. Design blueprints from this research will enable construction of squadron-scale fuel manufacturing capability as a next stage.

Synthetic fuels are believed to burn more cleanly and consistently than fossil fuels – that theory will form part of the testing in this phase. Fuel manufactured using this technology could eliminate fossil carbon emissions in flight, lessen the RAF's reliance on global supply chains, and improve operational resilience through reducing the necessity for fuel resupplying.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

The creativity and ingenuity of the RAF and UK industry, backed by our ring-fenced research and development funding, has resulted in ground-breaking new fuel technology.

It has the potential to improve operational resilience while eliminating fossil carbon emissions in flight.

In November 2021 the Ikarus C42 microlight aircraft, which was on display at Farnborough today, completed a short UK flight, powered by 15 litres of whole-blend synthetic gasoline. Whilst green technologies like electric and hydrogen power generation are viable for many RAF platforms, high-performance aircraft for example fast jets require a liquid fuel alternative to maintain operational capabilities.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston said:

This ground-breaking collaboration with Zero Petroleum is a glimpse of the future for aviation fuel. It points to how we will crack the NetZero challenge as a national and international endeavour, and the leading role the Royal Air Force and UK science and technology can play in that.

Zero Petroleum's synthetic fuel is manufactured by extracting hydrogen from water and carbon from atmospheric carbon dioxide. Using energy generated from renewable sources like wind or solar, these are combined to create the 'drop-in' synthetic fuel.

Paddy Lowe, founder of Zero Petroleum, said:

The RAF's vision for fossil-free flight using synthetic fuels is matched by Zero Petroleum's commitment and enthusiasm to deliver the solution using unique British technology. Together we showed what was possible with our record-breaking demonstration flight in 2021.

We are incredibly excited to start now on the important development of this technology to production-readiness in advance of deployment at scale to flight operations. We could not wish for a better partner than the RAF which has been a pioneer throughout its 100+ years of existence.

The revolutionary breakthrough underscores the MOD's solution-based approach to addressing climate change issues whilst meeting operational commitments and remaining agile in a world of evolving threats. It also supports ambitions laid out in the [Defence Command Paper](#) and is backed by the £24 billion defence settlement, including a £6.6 billion R&D investment.

The sustainable aviation fuel could mark a step-change towards the RAF's goal to be Net Zero by 2040. Working towards the Government's Net Zero by 2050 goal, the RAF also plans for their first Net Zero airbase by 2025.