

UK works with Central America to build a more transparent infrastructure sector

The aim of the workshop was to provide a global standard for CoST implementation in enhancing infrastructure transparency and accountability in Central American Countries. Representatives of the Governments, academia and civil society from Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Panama attended the activity.

The UK Government hopes the conference can spur countries on to enhance project concepts, embrace technology and curb political friction, among other challenges. By increasing investments in the infrastructure sector, Central America will be working towards increasing its competitiveness and trade.

The UK Technical Adviser to CoST, Hamish Goldie-Scot, participated in the seminar to provide guidance, technical support and promote the exchange of knowledge and experience from a UK perspective. At the end of the course, participants will be able to deal with specific problems and introduce reforms that prevent similar situations. Ultimately, this would result in better quality public services that enable businesses to grow and communities to thrive.

The British Government believes that informed citizens and responsive public institutions help drive reforms that reduce mismanagement, inefficiency, corruption and the risks posed to the public from poor quality infrastructure. We will continue working closely with Central America in promoting these initiatives.

New system to simplify and speed up modern slavery referrals

A new system to simplify and speed up referrals of potential victims of modern slavery for government support has been rolled out by the Home Office.

The fully digitised system will simplify the process that first responders – including police officers, social workers or immigration officials – follow when referring victims of modern slavery to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

Until now, first responders have used paper forms to refer victims for support through the NRM. Under the new system, rolled out last week this

system will be digitised at the point of referral.

Further reforms to be rolled out shortly will also digitise the system used by caseworkers in the Single Competent Authority.

The new system will make referring victims for support more efficient, simplify the process for front-line workers and ensure those providing support for victims of modern slavery have all the information they need to provide good quality, tailored support.

Minister for Safeguarding and Vulnerability Victoria Atkins said:

Modern slavery is a truly abhorrent crime and the government is committed to stamping it out wherever it occurs.

These reforms will simplify the entire referral process, meaning that victims of modern slavery can receive the support they need sooner and abusers can be brought to justice more quickly.

These reforms are part of a package of measures to speed up and improve the NRM decision-making. In April, the Home Office launched a new Single Competent Authority to handle all cases referred from front line staff and to make decisions about whether somebody is a victim of modern slavery.

Through the world leading Modern Slavery Act, the government is ensuring victims have access to the support they need to begin re-building their lives.

In February 2019 the minimum period of support for confirmed victims was increased to 90 days, and the government is in the process of implementing a range of other reforms to the NRM.

In April, the Home Office introduced new independent panels to scrutinise negative “conclusive grounds” decisions – decisions which find that people are not considered to be victims of modern slavery – made by the Single Competent Authority, to provide greater transparency to the decision making process.

Improvements to support include introduction of places of safety for those rescued by law enforcement bodies prior to entering the NRM and implementation of post-NRM support to help victims transition to the next phase of their lives.

The improvements in support for victims sit alongside a range of measures to tackle modern slavery in the UK and overseas. These include:

- the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015, which gave law enforcement agencies better tools to tackle modern slavery and enhanced protection for victims
- requiring companies to publish transparency statements on what they are doing to tackle modern slavery in their own supply chains and recently

announced that the government will shortly be publishing its own statement

- £4m in funding for initiatives to tackle modern slavery and labour exploitation overseas through the Modern Slavery Innovation Fund.

PM statement on G7 Summit: 3 September 2019

Mr Speaker, before I begin, I am sure that the whole House will join me in remembering that it is 80 years today that this country entered the Second World War.

And though it is of course true that the horror of that conflict surpasses all modern controversies, it is also true that this country still stands then as now for democracy, for the rule of law, for the fight against racial and religious hatred, and Mr Speaker I know that this House is united in defending those values around the world.

Mr Speaker, with permission I will make a statement about the G7 summit in Biarritz.

As I speak, vast tracts of the Amazon rainforest are on fire, free trade is in retreat,

130 million girls worldwide are not in education, our oceans are being foully polluted,

And so it has never been more important for a Global Britain to use our voice as an agent of change and progress.

It is only by exerting our influence at a global level,

only by sticking up for our values and beliefs, that we can create the international context for Britain to prosper,

and to ensure that this is greatest place on earth to live, to work, to start a family, open a business, trade and invest.

And so, at the G7, I made the case for free trade as an engine of prosperity and progress that has lifted billions out of poverty.

And yet the reality is that trade as a share of the world economy has been stagnant for the last decade.

In the Leaders' Declaration, the G7 unanimously endorsed "open and fair world trade"; and we're determined to reform the World Trade Organisation and reach agreement next year to "simplify regulatory barriers".

Britain is on the verge Mr Speaker, of taking back control of our trade policy and restoring our independent seat in the WTO for the first time in 46 years.

And we could achieve even more in our trade with the United States by using the powers we will regain to do a comprehensive free trade deal, a deal in which President Trump and I have both agreed that the NHS is not on the table.

[Political content removed]

Mr Speaker, I know that the whole House will share my concern about the gravity of the situation in Hong Kong.

As a nation with a deep belief in freedom of expression and assembly, we stand firm in upholding Hong Kong's way of life, guaranteed by one country, two systems.

And I welcome the unwavering support of my G7 counterparts on this vital matter.

Mr Speaker the UK is at the forefront of a new campaign to end the tragic loss of species around the world.

We cannot bequeath a planet where the Sumatran Tiger and the African Elephant and entire ecosystems like the Great Barrier Reef live in the shadow of destruction.

So I am delighted that the G7 accepted UK proposals for more ambitious targets to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity.

Britain is responsible for 2.6 million square miles of ocean – the fifth largest maritime estate in the world.

Our Blue Belt programme will ensure that marine protected areas encompass 1.5 million square miles and, at the G7, I announced a further £7 million for this vital effort.

I also announced another £10 million to protect the rainforest in Brazil, where 41,000 fires have raged so far this year, more than twice as many as in the same period in 2018.

Britain is bidding to host the UN's 26th Climate Change Conference next year. If we succeed, we shall focus on solutions that harness the power of nature, including reforestation.

[Political content removed]

There is one measure that would address all those issues and that is ensuring that every girl in the world receives the education that is her right.

This would not only curb infant mortality, eradicate illiteracy and reduce population pressures, it would strike a blow for morality and justice.

In Biarritz, the G7 therefore endorsed the UK's campaign for 12 years of quality education for every girl in the world.

And I announced new funding of £90 million so that 600,000 children in countries torn by conflict – where girls are twice as likely as boys to be out of the classroom – get the chance to go to school.

And as well as my G7 colleagues, I was delighted to meet other leaders, including President Ramaphosa of South Africa, Prime Minister Modi of India,

And Prime Minister Morrison of Australia who heroically masked his emotions in the face of the historic innings of Ben Stokes.

In every conversation, I was struck by the enthusiasm of my colleagues to strengthen their relations with this country, whether on trade, security and defence, science and technology.

Mr Speaker, I was also able to use the G7 to follow up my conversations in Berlin and Paris with Chancellor Merkel and President Macron on Brexit, as well with Prime Minister Conte, Prime Minister Sanchez, and President Tusk. I have since spoken to Commission President Juncker, and many other leaders.

And I was able to make clear to them all that everyone in this government wants a deal. But it is a reality that the House of Commons has rejected the current Withdrawal Agreement three times and it simply cannot be resurrected.

That is why I wrote to President Tusk on the 19th August to set out our arguments why any future Agreement must include the abolition of the anti-democratic backstop.

We have also been clear that we will need changes to the Political Declaration, to clarify that our future relationship with the EU will be based on a Free Trade Agreement, and giving us full control over our regulations, our trade, and our foreign and defence policy.

This clarity has brought benefits. Far from jeopardising negotiations, it is making them more straightforward.

In the last few weeks, I believe the chances of a deal have risen. This week we are intensifying the pace of meetings in Brussels. Our European friends can see that we want an agreement. And they are beginning to reflect that reality in their response.

President Macron said if, I quote, Mr. Speaker, they don't want to hear the words of our counterparts across the Channel, they don't want to hear about any progress that we might be making, they don't.

Mr Speaker, I think they are wilfully closing their ears to the reality that our friends and partners are increasingly seeing the possibilities of an agreement and again I quote President Macron of France: "If there are things which, as part of what was negotiated by Michel Barnier, can be adapted and are in keeping with the two objectives I've just mentioned – stability in Ireland which we all support and the integrity of the single market – we

should identify them in the coming months.”

[Political content removed]

And speaking in Berlin of possible alternatives to the backstop, Chancellor Merkel of Germany said: “Once we see and say this could be a possible outcome, this could be a possible arrangement, this backstop is a sort of placeholder which is no longer necessary”, she said. [Political content removed].

I believe there are indeed solutions.

[Political content removed]

There are practical arrangements that we can find which avoid anyone putting infrastructure on the Irish border. These have been well worked out and involve measures such as trusted trader schemes, transit provisions, frontier zones, reduced bureaucracy for small and local traders, and many others.

In particular, we recognise and I advise the Members opposite to pay attention to what is being said. We recognise that for reasons of geography and economics, agrifood is increasingly managed on a common basis across the island of Ireland. We are ready to find ways forward that recognise this reality, provided it clearly enjoys the consent of all parties and institutions with an interest.

We will also be discussing all this with the EU shortly and I will be discussing it with the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, when I see him in Dublin on Monday.

Mr Speaker, it is simply wrong to say we are not making progress. There is a lot to do in the coming days. But things are moving.

A major reason for that is that everyone can see this government is utterly determined to leave the EU on 31 October, come what may, without a deal if necessary.

And that is why over the summer my RH Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has been leading the government’s efforts, seven days a week, to accelerate our national preparations for this possibility. And he will be making a statement on that subject shortly.

My RH Friend the Chancellor has made all the necessary funds available. We have already reached agreements with our partners to roll over trade deals worth around £89 billion of exports and imports. We have secured air services agreements around the world.

We have increased the capacity of our Border Force, strengthened the resilience of our ports, bolstered our freight capacity, and worked with meticulous detail to ensure the uninterrupted supply of critical goods, including medicines. We will be ready, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I returned from the G7 with real momentum in the Brexit

discussions.

Mr Speaker, I want to return from next month's European Council in a similar way, with a deal that this House can debate and scrutinise and endorse in time for our departure on October 31st.

But Mr Speaker, there is one step that would jeopardise all the progress that we have made at the G7 and around the capitals of Europe.

And that is if this House were to decide that it was simply impossible for us to leave without a deal. And to make that step illegal. That's what they want, to force us to beg for yet another pointless delay. If that happens, all the progress that we have been making will have been for nothing.

Yesterday Mr Speaker, a Bill was published – a Bill that the leader of the Opposition has spent all summer working on.

This is not a Bill in any normal sense of the word. It is without precedent in our history – it is a Bill that, if passed, would force me to go to Brussels and beg an extension. It would force me to accept any terms offered. It would destroy any chance of negotiations or a new deal. And indeed it would enable our friends in Brussels to dictate the terms of the negotiation, that is what it does.

[Political content removed]

It means running up the white flag.

I want to make clear to everybody in this House – there are no circumstances in which I will ever accept anything like it.

[Political content removed]

Mr Speaker, we promised the people we would get Brexit done. We promised to respect the result of the referendum and we must do so now.

Enough is enough. This country wants this done. They want the referendum respected. We are negotiating a deal and though I am confident of getting a deal we will leave on 31 October in all circumstances. There will be no further pointless delay.

This House has never before voted to force the Prime Minister to surrender such a crucial decision to the discretion of our friends and neighbours overseas.

What is this bill would mean is that unless we agree to the terms of our friends and partners they would be able to keep us in the EU for as long as they want and on their terms.

I urge therefore this House to reject this Bill tonight so that we can get the right deal for our country, deliver Brexit and take the whole country forward.

And I commend this statement to the House.

[Improving safety and security on railways: apply for contracts](#)

[Network Rail](#) is to invest up to £3 million in innovative projects that could help to improve efficiency and safety by automating the examination of rail tunnels and by using data analytics to minimise disruption from security incidents.

The company is responsible for more than 600 tunnels with a combined length of 335km. Examinations are carried out by humans and are expensive, time-consuming and dangerous. Network Rail wants to automate them to make them more efficient and safer.

Incidents in its stations often cause significant delays. Network Rail wants to investigate how it could use data analytics alongside its existing security systems to improve safety and reduce delays.

Funding for the 2 competitions is from Network Rail under the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) and managed by Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation.

Tunnel examination must be demonstrated on railway

This competition is seeking projects that develop an automated solution for examining tunnels and demonstrate it on the live railway.

The system must:

- reduce the need for manual examinations
- remove human-centric bias
- inspect both surface and sub-surface defects
- use machine learning to identify and track defects
- remove the need for human review and analysis
- align with Network Rail IT systems and condition-marking systems
- allow engineers to view and analyse results

Competition information

- the competition opens on 16 September 2019, and the deadline for registration is at midday on 6 November 2019
- organisations of any size may apply
- we expect projects to be awarded contracts of between £350,000 and £500,000

- [a briefing event takes place on 19 September 2019](#)

System must identify a range of security risks

This competition aims to develop systems that can identify loitering, undesirable behaviour, hostile reconnaissance, crowding, and high-risk abandoned objects such as bags and suitcases.

It is in two phases. Phase 1 projects are expected to develop and demonstrate an analytics system using pre-recorded data. Successful projects will be able to trial their ideas in a live station in the second phase.

They must show they can:

- handle feeds from 20 to 30 cameras in a variety of station environments
- process 720p and 1080p image quality
- work without external connectivity on the cloud or internet
- comply with Network Rail security, technical and data standards
- work with the station management system after the trial
- give audible and visual alerts to operators, show the location in the station and identify the camera location
- monitor all day, every day

Competition information

- the competition opens on 16 September 2019, and the deadline for registration is at midday on 6 November 2019
- organisations of any size may apply
- we expect projects to be awarded contracts of up to £121,000 in phase 1 and £250,000 in phase 2
- [a briefing event takes place on 19 September 2019](#)

History made as final fuel leaves iconic nuclear plant

It means the world's first full-scale nuclear power station is empty of fuel for the first time since the 1950s.

The achievement marks an important milestone in the decommissioning of Sellafield.

It also means the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's Magnox Operating Programme is a step closer to completion.

The opening of Calder Hall by the Queen in 1956 sparked national celebration.

Hailed as the dawn of the atomic age, it made Britain a world leader in the civil nuclear industry.

When the station was switched on, nearby Workington became the first town in the world to receive heat, light, and power from atomic energy.

Calder Hall's Magnox design was the template for Britain's first generation of nuclear power stations and the technology was exported around the world.

The station provided carbon-free electricity for 47 years. It stopped generating power in 2003 and defueling began in 2011.

Stuart Latham, head of remediation for Sellafield Ltd, said:

This is a truly iconic moment.

Calder Hall was the birthplace of the civil nuclear industry. It inspired the world and put our site at the forefront of the atomic age.

Completing the defueling programme is an important moment for Sellafield.

The defueling team have completed the task safely and professionally and have made a huge contribution to our mission.

Removing fuel from Calder Hall's 4 reactors was a complex task.

A total of 38,953 spent fuel rods had to be carefully retrieved from the station's 4 reactors.

The same machines that were used to load fuel into the reactors during its operational life were used to pull it out.

Once removed, the fuel was transferred in shielded flasks to Sellafield's Fuel Handling Plant.

After being cooled in a storage pond, its casings are removed and the rod taken to Sellafield's Magnox Reprocessing Plant to be reprocessed. This extracts the reusable uranium and plutonium from the fuel.

Calder Hall's reactor buildings will now be placed into a state known as 'care and maintenance'. In due course they will be fully decommissioned and demolished.