

Defence Minister visits West Africa and extends language training to Senegalese Armed Forces

During the visit the Minister announced that the UK has extended its English language training for members of the Senegalese Armed Forces (SAF). The programme will continue to 'train the trainer', with further groups of Senegalese troops upskilled so they can lead language courses for other SAF personnel.

Over the last three years, the UK has so far trained 680 Senegalese personnel, readying them for deployment to international peacekeeping operations.

Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster said:

The UK has always been a key partner in West Africa and we have maintained strong, generational relationships across the area. It is beneficial for all our friends and partners in the region that we continue to support peace, development, and prosperity.

Senegal plays a vital role in peacekeeping missions across Africa and soon our troops will work side by side with them as part of the UN mission in Mali. By extending this training, we're supporting our Senegalese partners to fulfil their important international commitments.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster watches a demonstration of Senegalese Marine Capabilities

Starting his six-day trip in the Ghanaian capital Accra, Mr Lancaster met the Vice President of Ghana Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, Minister for National Security, Albert Kan-Dapaah, and Deputy Minister of Defence, Derrick Oduro. He highlighted the long tradition of partnership between the UK and Ghana, and reaffirmed the UK commitment to countering terrorism in West Africa and strengthening the Ghanaian Armed Forces.

Whilst in country, the Minister also had lunch with a number of Ghanaian veterans, re-stating the enormous gratitude of the British Government and people for the contribution of the Ghanaian soldiers who served the British Army during the Second World War.

Mr Lancaster then travelled to Senegal for a meeting with his Senegalese

counterpart, Mr Sidiki Kaba. He welcomed the growing UK and Senegal defence relationship, demonstrated by the Royal Marines providing important training to the Senegalese Navy's Marine Special Forces.

The Minister also commended the vital role that Senegal plays in the UN Mission in Mali, supporting some of world's most vulnerable people. The UK has recently announced that it will be committing an additional 250 troops to the operation. The British troops will work alongside the 1,200 Senegalese troops and over 300 police officers currently deployed.

Finishing the West Africa visit in The Gambia where the Minister met President Adama Barrow and other members of his Government and the country's Armed Forces. He then visited the Gambian Armed Forces Training School. The UK is committed to building its defence relationship with The Gambia and, for the first time in over a decade, both nations undertook a three week joint exercise in June 2019 focussing on infantry skills.

[Updated plans for A27 Arundel bypass go on show](#)

The plans will help improve journeys for tens of thousands of drivers using the A27 around Arundel, the only section of single carriageway between Worthing and the New Forest. Each option aims to protect Arundel's historic town centre and draw long distance traffic away from other, less suitable roads through the South Downs National Park.

Each of the six route includes creating a new dual carriageway to join up the two existing sections of dual-carriageway either side of Arundel, and will help to reduce journey times, improve reliability and make the road safer. Each option has been developed in detail and a [public consultation](#) on the proposals starts today and runs for eight weeks until 24 October.

Highways England A27 Arundel Bypass programme leader Jason Hones said:

These plans will tackle one of the biggest traffic bottlenecks in the south-east, and will improve journeys for thousands of drivers of the A27, not only in and around Arundel but along the whole south coast. I encourage anyone with an interest in the A27 and Arundel to get involved in this consultation – whether they're commuters, residents or visitors the area for leisure; their input will be vital in finding the right balance going forward.

Arundel has a unique cultural heritage and is surrounded by precious special environments, which are rightly protected. We have assessed all the viable options in greater detail than before so

that people can see and understand all the factors and help us decide which one strikes the right balance.

We very much would like to hear people's ideas and feedback on the proposals in this consultation; all the information is available online and my team and I will be out at public events over the coming weeks ready to answer people's questions.

The plans for upgrading the A27 at Arundel include six new options, and feature a mix of improvements along the existing road, and other new sections south of the town. This announcement follows Highways England's commitment last year to consult the public again after extensive development and enhancements to the scheme following the original preferred route announcement last May.

This consultation includes updates and variants to all three routes which were consulted on during the original consultation in 2017. All six routes have been evaluated to the same high standard of evidence, allowing people to make a comparison between them.

A27 Arundel options

The options

All six options feature a new bridge spanning the River Arun and a bridge over the Arun Valley Railway, as well as a new junction at Crossbush.

- Cyan (Option 1 v5): Improvements mostly along the route of the existing A27, with around 4.5km (2.8 miles) of new dual carriageway between Crossbush and the west of Arundel.
- Beige (Option 1 v9): Improvements mostly along the route of the existing A27, with around 4.5km (2.8 miles) of new dual carriageway between Crossbush and the west of Arundel.
- Crimson (Option 3 v1): Around 6km (3.7 miles) of new dual carriageway located to the south of the existing A27, between Crossbush junction and a new junction at Havenwood Park, with around 4km (2.4 miles) of the existing A27 being detrunked.
- Magenta (Option 4/5A v1): Around 7.2km (4.4 miles) of new dual carriageway located to the south of the existing A27, from Crossbush junction to just west of Yapton Lane. Features a new bridge over Binsted Rife, with around 6.1km (3.7 miles) of the existing A27 being detrunked.
- Amber (Option 4/5A v2): Around 6.9km (4.2 miles) of new dual carriageway

to the south of the existing A27, starting at the Crossbush junction and ending just west of Yapton Lane. Features a new bridge over Binsted Rife, with around 6.2km (3.8 miles) of the existing A27 being detrunked.

- Grey (Option 5B v2): Around 8km (4.9 miles) of new dual carriageway to the south of the existing A27, from Crossbush to Fontwell roundabout. Features a new bridge over Binsted Rife, with around 6.6km (4.1 miles) of the existing A27 being detrunked.

Highways England is holding 10 information exhibitions at venues across the area so that people can examine the proposals and put any questions directly to project team.

All responses to the consultation will be carefully considered before an announcement is made on a new preferred route early next year. Subject to a successful outcome, construction could start in late 2022.

Details on the proposals and feedback forms will be available online from today until 11.59pm on 24 October 2019 on the [scheme web page](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Britain and France to strengthen joint action against small boats](#)

The Home Secretary and her French counterpart have agreed to intensify joint action to tackle small boat crossings in the Channel.

Priti Patel met French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner in Paris yesterday evening to discuss what more can be done to deter migrants making the perilous journey across one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.

The pair acknowledged the extensive joint cooperation already taken to tackle the issue of small boats crossing the Channel – but agreed tougher action was needed following the concerning rise in incidents over the summer months.

They also discussed how more resources to intercept and stop crossings along

the French coast were crucial – and agreed to immediately draw-up an enhanced action plan to deliver this.

The ministers also agreed that UK teams will work with their French colleagues to increase intelligence gathering in the fight against the organised people-smuggling gangs responsible for driving illegal crossings.

The Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

I will not let the ruthless gangs of criminal people smugglers continue to put lives in danger – which is why I'm doing everything in my power as Home Secretary to put a stop to these illegal crossings.

We've been working extremely closely with our French colleagues to tackle the use of small boats but we both agreed more needs to be done.

It's vital we ensure our collective expertise is used to stop the boats from leaving French shores and dismantle the criminal networks driving this activity.

Today's meeting follows the introduction of the joint action plan agreed by the UK and France in January. The plan included over £6 million (£7 million) investment in new security equipment, increased CCTV coverage of beaches and ports and a mutual commitment to conduct returns of migrants under international and domestic laws.

Since January, the UK has returned over 65 migrants who arrived illegally in small boats to countries across Europe.

[Veterans ministers meet ex-forces personnel on first joint visit](#)

The Office for Veterans' Affairs ministers have met with ex-service personnel working at world-leading cloud software firm Salesforce, as they undertook their first engagement in post.

Cabinet Minister Oliver Dowden and Defence Minister Johnny Mercer discussed their plans for the new offering to veterans, taking views from those who have transitioned out of the military into new careers within the private sector.

They were also briefed on the business' veterans programme, VetsForce, which provides online training workshops and mentoring to service leavers and their

partners.

The programme aims to educate Salesforce's staff on the significant value military experience brings to the private sector, and works closely with the MOD's Career Transition Partnership to support the employment of veterans.

Minister for the Cabinet Office Oliver Dowden said:

It was wonderful to meet the former service personnel at Salesforce and to see how they are now applying their skills in the private sector. Through the new Office for Veterans' Affairs, the Government is committed to ensuring that veterans have all the support they need, so that they know just how much the country values them.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said:

The skills and values developed throughout military service set you up for success in the civilian world, but society has a long way to go to change the perception of veterans in this country. Companies like Salesforce are leading the way in recognising the unique contribution our service leavers can bring to a business, and I urge all employers to follow suit.

Salesforce cemented their commitment to the armed forces by signing the Covenant, pledging to support the careers of veterans and their families, as well as accommodating the training and deployment of employees who join the Reserves.

The ministers have been appointed by the Prime Minister to champion veterans and oversee the provision of support across government, ensuring relevant departments work together to address the challenges service leavers can face. From mental and physical health to housing and employment, the new Office for Veterans' Affairs represents a holistic approach to caring for those who have served, and the Prime Minister will be updated on its progress at the end of September.

Last year, the UK Government launched the 'Strategy for Our Veterans' which, in partnership with the Scottish and Welsh Governments, aims to improve the delivery of support to ex-service personnel. The consultation sought views from across all sectors as well as the armed forces community, and the response will be published in due course.

Thousands sign up to Help to Save to earn 50p for every £1 saved

Over 132,000 people have signed up to the government-backed savings account Help to Save – depositing more than £31.4 million.

The account offers working people on low incomes a 50% bonus on what they save –rewarding them with 50p for every £1 they put away. Over 4 years, a maximum bonus of £1,200 is available on savings of up to £2,400.

Statistics published today (30 August 2019) reveal that those using Help to Save accounts are already eligible for bonuses totalling around £14 million. The accounts make saving affordable, achievable and worthwhile. Some participants now see themselves as ‘savers’ rather than ‘spenders’.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen, said:

Saving shouldn't be seen as a luxury but as an essential part of planning for the future.

That's why I launched the Help to Save scheme last year, and it's been great to see so many people using it to put money aside for themselves and their loved ones.

Around 3.5 million people could benefit from the scheme, so if you're eligible but haven't yet opened an account, you should take a look. Saving comes with a 50% government bonus, and even a small amount could help you to be more prepared for the future.

Help to Save is easy to use, flexible and secure. It helps those on lower incomes build up a 'rainy day' fund, and encourages a long-term savings habit. How much is saved, and when, is up to the account holder, and they don't need to pay in every month to get a bonus.

Help to Save is available to working people on Tax Credits, or Universal Credit claimants with a minimum earned income equivalent to 16 hours per week at the National Living Wage in their last assessment period.

Account holders can save between £1 and £50 every calendar month and accounts last for 4 years from the date the account is opened. After 2 years, savers get a 50% tax-free bonus on the highest balance they've achieved. If they continue saving, they could receive another 50% tax-free bonus after a further 2 years.

On maximum savings of £2,400 over 4 years, the overall bonus would be £1,200.

Further Information

1. The latest Help to Save statistics are now available on [GOV.UK](#).
2. [Help to Save: Research to understand customer behaviours](#) during the trial of Help to Save found many now see themselves as 'savers' rather than 'spenders'.
3. Download the free HMRC app from the [App Store for iOS](#) or the [Google Play Store for Android](#).