

Technical advisory group on alternative arrangements to the backstop established

The Government has taken a significant step forward in delivering on its commitment to find workable alternatives to the Northern Ireland backstop by establishing an advisory group of technical experts in customs and trade to test ideas.

The UK and EU have a shared desire to replace the backstop with alternative arrangements to ensure there is no hard border – and both sides have previously committed to prioritising the development of these in the next phase of talks.

The Technical Alternative Arrangements Advisory Group is the first of three domestic advisory groups that the Government [announced earlier this year](#). The second will be comprised of business and trade unions, and the third made up of parliamentarians.

These groups will help inform the UK's negotiations with the EU on developing alternative arrangements to the Northern Ireland backstop, set out in the Withdrawal Agreement, with the aim of replacing it by December 2020 so that it is never needed.

The first meeting of the technical group will take place today (Thursday 20th June). It will be co-chaired by Brexit Secretary, Steve Barclay, and Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Jesse Norman.

Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Steve Barclay, said:

“There has been considerable debate about the alternative arrangements that could be put in place to replace the backstop, including how we could harness the power of cutting-edge technologies, trusted trader schemes, and IT systems.

“There has also been shared recognition by both the UK Government and the EU Commission that this work must be an absolute priority as we shape the future partnership.

“The technical group will provide a forum for experts to discuss workable alternative arrangements, assessing both capability and timelines and bringing their significant experience to bear.”

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Jesse Norman said:

“This group represents a broad spectrum of views and expertise, all of which will be needed to achieve our economic, fiscal and security objectives in the unique circumstances of the Northern Ireland land border.”

The technical group will bring together individuals from both the public and private sector, and academia, who have expertise on issues spanning law, customs, supply chains, cross-border trade and technology.

They will consider processes associated with the movement of goods across borders and options for simplifying them, such as trusted trader programmes and advanced use of data and IT systems.

The Government has made available £20 million of funding to support the development, testing or piloting of ideas, including those that emerge from these groups.

Technical Alternative Arrangements Advisory Group Members:

Secure by design, secure by default: self-certification scheme launched

Today on the world's first Surveillance Camera Day Tony Porter, the Surveillance Camera Commissioner, is launching another global first: secure by default/secure by design minimum requirements for manufacturers of surveillance camera systems and components.

Several high profile and well publicised compromises of systems demonstrated that they were being left live and internet-facing in an unacceptable security configuration. Some of these compromises, like Mirai botnet, that brought down social media and financial websites across the globe, also showed the root cause was down to poor design and manufacturing.

Driven by the need to ensure the UK's resilience against this and other forms of cyber security vulnerability, as well as to provide the best possible assurance stakeholders, the new minimum requirements are an important step forward for manufacturers, installers and users alike.

The work has been led by Mike Gillespie, cyber security advisor to the Commissioner (Advent IM) and Buzz Coates (Norbain) and developed in consultation with manufacturers (Axis, Bosch, Hanwha, Hikvision and Milestone Systems). It's been designed by manufacturers for manufacturers.

Mike Gillespie said,

If a device comes out of the box in a secure configuration, there's a good chance it will be installed in a secure configuration. Encouraging manufacturers to ensure they ship their devices in this secure state is the key objective of these minimum requirements for manufacturers. Manufacturers benefit by being able to demonstrate

they take cyber seriously and their equipment is designed and built to be resilient. Installers and integrators benefit from the introduction of the requirements by not having to know how to turn dangerous ports or protocols off during the installation. End users benefit because they know they are buying equipment that has demonstrated it has been designed to be resilient to cyber-attack and data theft.

Manufacturers can demonstrate they meet the minimum requirements by [completing a self-certification form](#) and submitting it to the Commissioner's office for validation. If successful they will be able to list the component or system as certified by the Commissioner and will be able to display his certification mark.

Tony Porter said:

It has been an enlightening and positive experience working with manufacturers toward a common goal and it's a genuine first and further standards will follow over the next couple of years.

[Queen's birthday celebration 2019 in Uganda: High Commissioner's speech](#)

Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Members of Cabinet, Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament, your excellencies and colleagues from the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to you all! Tonight we celebrate the UK's national day and Her Majesty the Queen's 93rd Birthday.

It makes me happy to see such a wide range of Ugandan society and other friends joining us. It is a reminder of the diversity and depth of the relationship between our two countries. We are honoured, proud and grateful for these links, which we do not take for granted. Thank you for coming.

I'm particularly pleased to welcome partners who implement projects on behalf of the British Government, our consular wardens who generously give up their time to help us provide services to British nationals in Uganda, and representatives of the British and Ugandan business communities.

I want to thank the sponsors of this event: Uganda Breweries, G4S, Barclays Bank, Bollere, Cipla Quality Chemicals, Colas, DFCU, FBW, JCB Ganatra, Kibimba, Prudential, Stanbic Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, Texo Compliance,

Tullow Uganda and Vivo Energy. They and other member of the private sector are important partners. You have heard me say before that the private sector is the cornerstone for long-term sustainable development. I know that is also a view which the President shares. Understanding and helping the sector and supporting the government to take measures to put in place a stable and predictable environment conducive to business is the best guarantee for Uganda to achieve the Government's aspiration of middle-income status by 2040.

There are a few other people I'd also like to thank. The St John's Ambulance, who are once again helping us tonight – I know some of our guests appreciated your help last year; to the Drum Major and drummers of First Battalion the Coldstream Guards for providing us with a fine display of military music. I also want to make a special mention and thank all my colleagues at the High Commission who have worked so hard to make this evening a success.

There is a lot happening in the UK at the moment. Yesterday, Her Majesty the Queen hosted a number of world leaders at commemorations of the D-Day landings, which took place 75 years ago today. On the sporting front, England and Wales are currently hosting the cricket World Cup – Uganda isn't represented this time but good luck for the next time! Uganda is however represented at the Netball World Cup in Liverpool later this month. We wish the She Cranes great success, including in their opening game against England. The team are here with us tonight, and I'm sure you'll join me in wishing them well.

British Politicians are also grappling with big decisions in relation to our future relationship with the EU. We will need to deal positively with the outcome of these deliberations. But I want to be clear that our focus here meanwhile is on taking forward the whole range of our partnership with Uganda. Let me mention a few highlights from the last 12 months.

Top of the list was the President's two visits to London: for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting; and the conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade after which he was also hosted by the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy at the House of Lords' Business Forum. Also in pursuit of our mutual prosperity, UK Export Finance has now approved £200m credit for the construction of Kampala Industrial Business Park, Namanve; I also was pleased to witness recently an MOU for British companies, notably Alvan Blanch, to supply £120million of Agro-processing equipment to Uganda – a top priority for the President.

On the development front, the UK provided £42 million to assist Uganda in supporting the world's third largest refugee population and local host communities. This included food assistance to over one million people. We continue to support 13 shelters for the victims of gender-based violence, helping 13,000 people a year. Jointly with another donor, we have rolled out senior citizens grants to over 190,000 Ugandans. Importantly, since Uganda is only achieving a return of 70 cents in every dollar invested here, we are giving £20million to improve public investment management and revenue collection, improving Uganda's tax base. We have also worked closely with the Government over the Ebola outbreak in Eastern DRC, providing £7.5million to

support preparedness efforts. As someone who experienced the outbreak in West Africa, it is greatly reassuring to witness the work undertaken so far. I commend and congratulate the Government on their leadership, although there is no room for complacency.

We have continued our defence and security cooperation. In the last year British soldiers along with the US, French and Dutch have prepared over 7000 UPDF soldiers for service with AMISOM in Somalia. The UK has spent £3.5 million on projects to support the Uganda Wildlife Authority, including training rangers in the National Parks. We are told this has contributed to an 80% reduction in poaching in Murchison Falls.

And our cultural partnership has flourished: the British Council connects thousands of young creatives in Uganda and the UK to learn critical business skills through its Creative Enterprise programme, has brokered nearly 500 UK Uganda school partnerships and helped improve the quality of learning for nearly 150 000 children in 2018. And at a leadership level, there are 11 Ugandan scholars currently studying under the Chevening Scholarship programme in the UK, taking the total since 1983 to 231 Ugandan Chevening Scholars, many of whom are with us this evening.

We look forward to continuing and expanding this scale of activity. One factor which will send a strong signal to investors will be a positive decision on the Final Investment Decision – a decision by 31 December 2019 will be markedly better than one by 1 January 2020.

Finally, let me flag as a further example of our commitment to genuine collaboration, skills and technology transfer and working to make Uganda's local content policy work, our intention to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. We will do this by launching a UK-Uganda High Level Forum on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation. This will increase the impact of the UK's already considerable investment in the sector (some £500 million over 15 years) and identify new areas where we can partner with Ugandan companies and research institutes. In keeping with this theme, I'm delighted that the UK Met Office has provided equipment and training to the Uganda National Metrological Authority in Entebbe. The Director of Forecasting Services, Solomon Mangeni is here tonight: he has promised us good weather for the event!

Also looking ahead, I am delighted that His Excellency will be travelling to the UK in January for the Africa Investment Conference. And next month Uganda will attend the Global Conference for Media Freedom, which we are co-hosting with Canada. Here in Uganda we will continue to work in partnership with government, civil society, the media and business to further the UK-Uganda relationship for our mutual prosperity.

Honourable Prime Minister and distinguished guests, thank you for honouring us with your company. As a symbol of the friendship between our peoples and our countries, may I ask you and all our guests to join me in a toast to His Excellency the President and to the People of Uganda.

[New space mission to chase down comet will be led by UK scientists](#)

Comet Interceptor would be the first mission to travel to a comet which has never previously encountered the inner Solar System.

To do this, it will need to launch and reach a holding position around 1.5 million miles away from Earth. There it will lie in wait until astronomers on the ground spot a suitable comet for it to intercept.

Scientists will then choose to target either a pristine comet travelling inward from the far reaches of our Solar System for the first time, or an interstellar object similar to Oumuamua – the cigar-shaped asteroid which passed through the Solar System last year – both untouched by the effects of the Sun.

This makes them scientifically important as ‘time capsules’ which offer an opportunity to study the conditions of the early Solar System and understand its formation.

The Comet Interceptor mission will involve a main spacecraft – a ‘mothership’ – that will make observations of the comet from a distance. It will deploy two smaller ‘daughter’ spacecraft which then move in closer to measure features such as the comet’s structure and surface material, as well as the cocktail of gases it is releasing.

The European Space Agency Science Programme Committee has selected the project as the first in a new class of ‘Fast’ missions, which use existing, flight-proven technology to speed up the journey from mission concept to implementation.

Science Minister Chris Skidmore said:

Comet Interceptor sounds like something from a science fiction film but UK scientists are working to make it a reality in collaboration our partners in the European Space Agency.

This new type of fast mission is a great example of how advances in space technology can bring benefits back to the science community. Our modern Industrial Strategy is ensuring that the UK takes these opportunities to lead the new space age.

Comet Interceptor is a UK-led proposal with UCL and Edinburgh University leading the international payload consortium which includes the Japanese (JAXA) and American (NASA) space agencies, as well as other UK institutions.

Now that ESA has selected the proposal, the scientists and engineers will work together to develop the design and mission programme further.

The scheduled launch in 2028 would mean the mission sharing a ride on a rocket with another UK-led mission – the ARIEL (Atmospheric Remote-sensing Infrared Exoplanet Large-survey) space telescope, which aims to study the atmospheres of around 1,000 planets orbiting stars other than our own, known as exoplanets.

Chris Lee, Head of Science Programmes at UK Space Agency, said:

I'm delighted that our academic community impressed ESA with a vision of what a small, fast science mission can offer. In 1986 the UK-led mission to Halley's Comet became the first to observe a cometary nucleus and, more recently, UK scientists took part in another iconic European comet mission, Rosetta. Now our scientists will build on that impressive legacy by attempting to visit a pristine comet for the very first time and learn more about the origins of our Solar System.

[‘Lifeline’ community treatment pilots to steer offenders away from crime](#)

- successful Community Sentence Treatment pilots to be rolled out to 9 more courts in 2 new areas
- cutting edge virtual technology to streamline prison healthcare and reduce pressure on prison and NHS staff
- first ever Health and Justice Plan to be published in the Autumn

Vulnerable offenders in the criminal justice system will be offered targeted treatment under new plans designed to boost rehabilitation and reduce re-offending announced by the government today (20 June 2019).

Where appropriate, through the new pilots more offenders will be diverted towards community sentences in where they will receive treatment for mental health, drug or alcohol issues, often deemed to be the root cause of offending behaviour.

Pilots have already seen an almost 250% increase in those referred for mental health treatment within 18 months and a higher rate of compliance with the terms of an order, just 8% failed to comply with their requirements. The approach will now be rolled out to new sites in London and Greater Manchester.

This focus on ensuring people get the right care, at the right time, in the right setting will be integral to the forthcoming Health and Justice Plan, announced by Health Secretary Matt Hancock and Justice Secretary David Gauke today. This comes 10 years on from the landmark Bradley Report, which set out a comprehensive plan to reduce reoffending and improve public health for vulnerable offenders.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Providing targeted, tailored and timely mental health and addiction treatment for vulnerable offenders across the country will help cut reoffending – saving taxpayers' money and making our communities safer.

We will support agencies across health and justice to work more closely together to ensure offenders have the right support and to build greater confidence in community sentences.

This is just the start of our shared vision to reshape offender health and strengthen community sentences, ultimately improving rehabilitation and breaking the cycle of offending.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock:

Addressing prisoners' physical and mental health needs early on can help tackle the root cause of their criminality and steer them away from the path of reoffending. It is crucial the health and justice systems work together to provide the best possible care for prisoners.

Today's announcements demonstrate our commitment to giving people the support and treatment they need to live healthy lives in prison and reintegrate into society when the time comes.

Prisoner health technology pilots:

The government has also announced cutting edge technology being piloted in prisons up and down the country, which will increase access to vital services and reduce pressure on prison and healthcare staff. This is supported by a new system, developed by the NHS, to improve information sharing between custody and community settings – a major step forward for patient safety and continuity of care.

Across 35 prisons in England, offenders can now have consultations with clinicians over a specially designed video link, removing the costly need for them to leave the prison and travel long distances for an appointment.

The new Telehealth programme has been running for 10 months and has already seen 800 consultations provided to prisoners.

In the West Midlands, ten prisons are also piloting virtual GP clinics, allowing prisoners to speak to a GP – reducing waiting time and unnecessary delays for access to treatment.

At HMP Isle of Wight, an automatic drug dispensing unit has been installed which uses secure fingerprint technology to automatically deliver medication to prisoners. Not only can this increase flexibility, allowing prisoners to improved access medicines; it can also reduce security challenges around multiple prisoners receiving prescriptions at one time. The unit is being piloted until October this year before being considered for a wider national roll out.

Edward Argar, Justice Minister responsible for offender health, and his counterpart at the Department for Health and Social Care, Jackie Doyle-Price, will use speeches to announce the expansion of CSTR programme at an event today, commemorating the Bradley Report's 10 year anniversary (Thursday, 20 June).

This pilot sees justice and health services coming together to deliver tailored rehabilitation at the point of sentencing. Specialist staff assess offenders whose crime makes them eligible for a Community Order.

Probation and healthcare staff then ensure Magistrates and Judges have the information they need to determine whether the offender should receive treatment for their mental health, alcohol or drug issues – each issue affects approximately one third of assessed offenders.

The launch of the pilot last summer has resulted in a significant 250% increase in the number of offenders being diverted towards mental health treatment programmes in the community, over an 18-month period. That means fewer short-term custodial sentences, which are often ineffective at turning vulnerable offenders away from crime.

The programmes will now be expanded across nine new sites in London and Greater Manchester.

An evaluation of the current pilots showed that:

- 80% of CSTRs were sentenced on the day, offering offenders treatment without adjournments or delays
- just 8% of offenders who received a CSTR failed to comply with their requirements – five per cent lower than the national average of 13%
- the programme provided a clearer pathway for the use of mental health treatment requirements

An offender who received treatment under the programme said:

The treatment that was offered to me was a lifeline which has helped me in more ways than I could have ever imagined. I now have a permanent contract at work, I have been promoted, I am looking after myself physically and mentally and even though I have done it myself I don't think I would have ever been able to do what I have

done without the therapy I have received.

Notes to editors

- Research shows that around 29% of offenders who start Community Orders self-report having mental health problems and of, those who are formally assessed, 32% were identified as having a drug misuse need and 38% an alcohol misuse problem.
- The new CSTR test bed sites are Greater Manchester and London, with the protocol operating in courts in Bolton, Salford and Trafford in Greater Manchester and 6 boroughs in London – Lewisham, Wandsworth, Lambeth, Croydon, Sutton, Southwark.