

Press release: Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan visits Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan



FCO Minister Sir Alan Duncan has visited Nur-Sultan, the newly-renamed capital of Kazakhstan, following the resignation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev after almost 30 years of leadership.

Sir Alan Duncan was welcomed by Prime Minister Askar Mamin, Minister of Foreign Affairs Beibut Atamkulov, Chair of the Senate Dariga Nazarbayeva and Chair of the Majilis Nurlan Nigmatulin, ensuring that our strong government-to-government contacts flourish throughout this time of leadership change in Kazakhstan. He also visited the Astana International Financial Centre. The Minister for Europe and the Americas reaffirmed the UK's close ties with Kazakhstan and our shared vision for a peaceful and prosperous Central Asia.

Speaking after the visit, Sir Alan Duncan said:

The recent resignation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev was a momentous event in the history of Kazakhstan, and Central Asia. At this important moment of transition, I would like to express the UK's best wishes to the First President Nursultan Nazarbayev, his successor Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, and to the country.

Kazakhstan is an important partner for the UK. During my visit we discussed how the UK and Kazakhstan could further our shared objectives for stability and security in Central Asia and the wider region. Both countries are committed to strengthening our bilateral relationship and to develop our already strong commercial ties including in legal services and higher education.

Last year, we celebrated the opening of the Astana International Financial Centre – the first international financial centre established in Central Asia with a special legal regime based on the principles of English law.

Since independence in 1991, UK investment in Kazakhstan has

totalled over £20bn. As one of Kazakhstan's top investors, we are confident that the close links between our two countries will continue to flourish and expand in the years to come.

Further information

Published 18 April 2019

Last updated 24 April 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 24 April 2019 We are adding a Russian translation to the press release
2. 18 April 2019 First published.

[News story: Watersports participation on the rise](#)

The annual watersports participation survey showed that approximately 3.9m UK adults took part in one or more of 12 core boating activities¹ in 2018, a rise of around 1.1% on the previous year, thanks in part to 2018 being the joint hottest summer on record.

This equates to a volume increase of 700,000 people with the highest participation rates for any activity coming from family groups. The number of young people and women has increased significantly in 2018.

The survey showed that canoeing was the most popular of all boating activities and that the long term growth trend of canoeing remains at a four percent year on year increase with 2.1m people going paddling at least once a year, in canoes, kayaks or stand up paddleboards.

The number of people who own boats has increased by around 800,000, since the beginning of the survey.

Guin Batten, head of strategy and development, said: "Last year we saw a small dip in the overall number of canoeist and kayakers, this was offset by an increase in the number of stand up paddleboarders, so the overall number of paddlers getting out onto the water is still growing."

The watersports participation survey is conducted annually by a consortium of leading marine bodies including British Marine, Royal Yachting Association (RYA), Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), British Canoeing (BC) and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas).

¹ 'The 12 core boating activities' covers small sail boat racing, other small sail boat activities, yacht racing, yacht cruising, power boating, general motor boating/cruising, canal boating, canoeing, rowing/sculling,

windsurfing, water skiing and wakeboarding and using personal watercraft.

[Press release: Trustees to mitigate the effect of unequal GMP's on pension income](#)

Official government guidance mitigating the effect of unequal Guaranteed Minimum Pensions (GMP) was published today (18 April 2019).

The 10 step process follows last year's landmark Lloyds judgment and provides trustees with a road map to mitigate the effect of unequal Guaranteed Minimum Pensions on pension income.

The guidance, developed in conjunction with an industry working group, provides a recommended road map for trustees to follow in ensuring they comply with last year's landmark Lloyds judgment.

Judges in that case found the GMP system had historically operated unequally. The High Court ruling endorsed the government's methodology for the complex process of restoring equality to GMP schemes.

Minister for Pension and Financial Inclusion, Guy Opperman said:

This vital guidance will provide pension trustees with the detailed road map they need to navigate this complicated equalisation process, ensuring they can meet their legal obligations.

I am determined to ensure that pensions are fair for everyone and this guidance will help achieve this.

A GMP is the minimum pension that an occupational pension scheme, contracted out of the Additional State Pension between 6 April 1978 and 5 April 1997 on a salary-related basis, has to provide to its members. GMPs were abolished for contracted out service after 5 April 1997.

There is no single method by which schemes can equalise benefits for the effect of GMPs. It is for the trustees of each scheme to decide the methodology that is most appropriate for their scheme.

Read the guidance on [equalising pension for the effect of unequal Guaranteed Minimum Pensions](#)

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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[News story: Annual Safety Review 2018 published](#)

The [Annual Safety Review 2018](#) contains information on the AAIB's activity during 2018 and includes an overview of the 15 Safety Recommendations published in the 31 field and 184 correspondence investigations during the year.

The review includes statistical information on the accident causal factors established by AAIB investigations across the aviation industry. There are articles on how we investigate drone accidents and how we use communication as part of our investigations.

[News story: Geospatial Commission making geospatial data more accessible](#)

Today, the [Geospatial Commission](#) and its [partner bodies](#) have launched a new single Data Exploration Licence to harmonise and simplify access and use of geospatial data. This is part of its [£5 million investment](#) made to the partner bodies last year for data foundation projects.

The Geospatial Commission was created in April 2018 in the centre of government, as an independent, expert committee. We aim to unlock the significant economic opportunities offered by geospatial data, and to reinforce the UK's geospatial expertise on the global stage. As part of that, the Geospatial Commission is working with its six partner bodies to make the UK's location data more accessible and useful.

The Data Exploration Licence means that anyone can now freely access data held by the British Geological Survey, Coal Authority, HM Land Registry, Ordnance Survey and the UK Hydrographic Office, for research, development and innovation purposes.

This single licence will mean that, without having to take a separate licence:

- researchers will be able to access data held by five partner bodies via one licence, rather than many

- users can be confident that they are using the data on consistent, harmonised terms, and that the various datasets can be used, combined and delivered in the same way, subject to the same conditions
- innovators have access to the data at no cost
- users will be permitted to share some of the results of their work with others

The project was driven by a collective determination to change the licensing landscape and simplify data access for users.

Nigel Clifford, Deputy Chair of the Geospatial Commission, said:

This is strong and collaborative progress against the commission's mission of maximising the value of geospatial data for the UK. This makes geospatial data accessible for researchers in one place for the first time using a simplified licence.

This is one of four initial data improvement projects taken forward by the Geospatial Commission in partnership with the partner bodies to improve the UK's geospatial data infrastructure. This joint programme of work aims to develop consistent data standards, whilst improving the accessibility, interoperability and quality of these datasets.

To date, this joint programme has run four programmes:

- **Data Discoverability** – through this project, the partner bodies have published catalogues outlining all of the datasets they hold and have made this available on data.gov.uk. Enhanced versions of these catalogues will be published at the end of April.
- **Licensing** – this project has resulted in today's launch of the joint Data Exploration Licence. Work continues to look at ways to simplify licensing across the partner bodies.
- **Linked Identifiers** – this ongoing work is looking at how to increase the integration potential of different datasets across partner bodies and beyond, in order to drive both operational efficiency and innovation
- **Enhancing of the Core Data Asset** – this work led to the partner bodies sharing information and approaches on using third-party data, to enhance the quality of publicly-held geospatial datasets, specifically their own data.

The programme of work will continue through the next year, building on early successes and exploring new areas. The Geospatial Commission will say more about this programme of work in the annual plan it will publish this spring.

Professor John Ludden, CEO of the British Geological Survey, leaders of the licensing project, added:

BGS are always looking for ways to get its data used in new and novel ways. This new licence gives innovators a safe space to see what's possible with data without having to worry about financial

commitments or complicated restrictions on how the data should be used. We're delighted to have joined up with our partner bodies of the Geospatial Commission to make this happen.

For further information, see the [British Geological Survey](#), [Coal Authority](#), [HM Land Registry](#), [Ordnance Survey](#) and the UK Hydrographic Office at intellectual.property@ukho.gov.uk.