

Speech: We haven't won fight against Daesh yet

The words of the leader of Isis were the purest hubris. In the summer of 2014, he claimed that he would "conquer Rome and own the world". At that time, Isis controlled an area of Syria and Iraq roughly the size of the UK. Its terrorists were imposing a rule of obscurantist barbarism on about 7m people.

Yet today (Saturday 23 March 2019), [the last fragment of territory is prised from its grasp](#). We should welcome the blow struck against one of the most depraved terrorist movements in history, guilty of imposing unspeakable suffering on countless people in the Middle East.

We should keep at the centre of our minds the bereaved families of the Britons who were murdered by terrorists inspired by Isis. And we should remember the sexual slavery inflicted on women and girls in the territories it occupied. Isis recruits were given a pamphlet called Questions and Answers on Taking Captives and Slaves. One passage read: "It is permissible to buy, sell or give as a gift female captives or slaves, for they are merely property."

Nadia Murad, the brave Nobel laureate, was among thousands of women from the Yazidi minority treated in this abominable way. In her book, she wrote: "When Daesh [Isis] took over Sinjar and began kidnapping Yazidis, they called their human spoils sabaya, referring to the young women they would buy and sell as sex slaves. This was part of their plan for us."

The hard lesson for those who opposed military action [political content removed] is that, without the use of force, this sickening behaviour would have continued unchecked. They should reflect that whatever mistakes may have been made in the past, it would be profoundly wrong to rule out military action in all circumstances.

Another myth is that the battle against Isis has been waged largely by Britain, America and other western countries. In fact, we are part of a global coalition of no fewer than 75 countries, including many in the Middle East, adding to the moral as well as practical force of our actions. The Iraqi security forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces have borne the brunt of the ground fighting: they deserve our thanks for their courage and sacrifice.

But we should not mistake the loss of territory by Isis for final defeat. As they are driven underground, they are adopting insurgency tactics and forming covert networks in Syria and Iraq. Isis remains a threat, so military action will continue to be necessary.

The survival of their murderous ideology does not depend on control of territory. They can still use the internet to raise funds and spread the

propaganda that encouraged young people in Britain such as Shamima Begum with such terrible consequences.

I believe we can draw three lessons. First, that the internet is part of the battlefield just as much as the sands of Syria or Iraq. Since 2016, Britain has led the international campaign to counter the ability of Isis propaganda to incite, inspire and recruit. The Foreign Office hosts the global coalition's strategic communications cell, putting UK expertise at the heart of the effort to expose the reality behind Isis lies.

Second, the successes against Isis would not have been possible without a broad coalition under US leadership, even though America is much further away from the conflict zone than European countries. If we want the US to continue to play its part in maintaining peace around the world, European nations must be prepared to carry our share of the global burden.

Finally, even if Isis has lost physical territory today, other extremist ideologies will be back tomorrow. Isis was a successor to al-Qaeda and the movement will spawn its own successors. History shows that groups such as Isis can survive and remain dangerous even without territory.

So we must continue to be vigilant. That means pressing on with military action while countering online propaganda and using every diplomatic and humanitarian lever to address the conditions that allowed the rise of Isis in the first place. It also means defending our democratic liberal values with much more confidence.

And our confidence is justified, because while the struggle against Isis is not over, the recapture of its territory means a major battle has been won.

Press release: £3.7 million to fund 5 new garden towns across the country

Five brand new garden towns have been unveiled unlocking up to 64,000 much-needed homes across England, the Minister of State for Housing has announced today (25 March 2019).

The locally-led new communities, from Hertfordshire to Gloucestershire, will receive a share of £3.7 million of funding to fast-track specialist survey work and planning works necessary for each new town's development.

The funds will be spent by councils to help to deliver the homes and infrastructure needed for both neighbouring communities and future residents who will call the new town home. This includes specialist survey work and planning applications.

The 5 successful bids are:

- Grazeley Garden Settlement, delivering up to 15,000 homes
- Hemel Garden Communities, delivering up to 11,000 homes
- Easton Park Garden Community, North Uttlesford Garden Community and West of Braintree Garden Community, an opportunity to deliver up to 18,500 homes
- Tewkesbury Ashchurch Garden Community, delivering up to 10,195 homes
- Meecebrook, in the north of Stafford borough, delivering around 10,000 homes

Councils and groups from around the country submitted more than 100 ambitious proposals with the 5 taken forward receiving an initial £750,000 to help develop plans for vibrant, thriving settlements where people can live, work and raise families.

Today's announcement is the next step in the government's drive to build the homes this country needs, and follows the news last month of a [£9 million investment](#) to speed up the building of existing garden towns and villages.

Minister of State for Housing Kit Malthouse MP said:

These new towns will not only provide homes for families, but will be vibrant communities where everyone, including neighbouring communities can benefit from new infrastructure – leaving a legacy for future generations to be proud of.

I congratulate these councils who have put forward ambitious proposals, which will build many thousands of high-quality homes, and am pleased to support them as they work to make these plans a reality.

Garden communities can take the form of new villages, towns or cities and have the potential to deliver well designed homes at an increased scale, boosting the local economy and creating new jobs.

The 5 new schemes announced today will join the 23 existing garden communities the government is currently supporting, which are already delivering new homes today, bringing us closer to the government's aim to deliver 300,000 new homes a year by the mid 2020s.

A garden town is a development of more than 10,000 homes.

Including a project in the garden communities programme does not prejudice or presuppose the planning system – the appropriate planning processes will still need to be followed.

The government is committed to bringing forward a minimum of 5 additional Garden Communities, which is on top of the 23 already supported by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. These schemes are located at:

- Bicester
- Didcot
- Basingstoke
- Otterpool Park in Kent
- Aylesbury
- Taunton
- Harlow-Gilston
- North Essex
- North Northamptonshire Garden Villages
- Long Marston in Stratford-on-Avon
- Oxfordshire Cotswold in West Oxfordshire
- Tresham in East Northants
- Culm in Mid Devon
- Welborne near Fareham in Hampshire
- West Carclaze in Cornwall
- Dunton Hills near Brentwood, Essex
- Spitalgate Heath in South Kesteven District, Lincolnshire
- Halsnead in Knowsley, Merseyside
- Longcross in Runnymede and Surrey Heath
- Bailrigg in Lancaster
- Infinity Garden Village in South Derbyshire and Derby City area
- St Cuthberts near Carlisle City, Cumbria
- Handforth in Cheshire East

In addition to the 5 garden town schemes outlined above, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will also shortly announce further successful bids, including garden villages submitted prior to the 9 November 2018 deadline.

[News story: Celebrating UK skills for nuclear](#)

David Peattie, Chief Executive of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), spoke of the need to prioritise skills if the industry was to meet its future challenges.

As keynote speaker for both events, David detailed the work taking place within NDA group to ensure a current and future workforce capable of driving forward the nuclear decommissioning industry.

He said:

We were delighted to support the first Nuclear Skills conference and this year's Nuclear Skills Awards showcasing the breadth of talent in the nuclear industry.

Ensuring we have the right skills in place both now and in the future, is vitally important to the NDA and our mission to clean up the UK's nuclear sites. Developing young people and talented individuals into tomorrow's leaders, innovators, engineers and professionals is crucial for the future of our sector and the wider nuclear industry.

The events shed light on the skills and expertise in the industry and rightly celebrate the exceptional work of individuals from across the nuclear sector.

The skills conference and awards welcomed nuclear leaders, supply chain companies and young people who are currently benefitting from nuclear skills programmes, including apprentices and higher and further learners.

The events were organised by the Nuclear Skills Strategy Group, and NSAN and Cogent Skills respectively.

During the skills conference, delegates discussed issues around the Nuclear Sector Deal workforce themes including skills leadership, diversity, subject matter experts, a talent pipeline through apprenticeships and sector transferability.

While the awards ceremony saw a new ED&I category, supported by the NDA, highlighting the exceptional work of individuals from the nuclear industry, in the promotion and support of equality, diversity and inclusion.

David added:

Making our organisations more inclusive is not only the right thing to do, but is crucial if we want to continue to attract, progress and retain talented people with the skills and diverse thinking we need in the years to come.

The first Nuclear Skills conference was held at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall and the 11th UK Nuclear Skills Awards were held at Hilton Hotel, in Manchester.

[Press release: Brokenshire backs 2050 vision for the Thames Estuary](#)

- The government pledges support for the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission's vision to create 1.3 million new jobs in the area by 2050
- £1 million committed to set up a new Thames Estuary Growth Board to

drive economic growth in the region

- £4.85 million committed to support local partners to develop proposals for enhancing transport services between Abbey Wood and Ebbsfleet

A multi-million pound package of commitments to drive forward growth in the Thames Estuary has been announced today (25 March 2019) to create jobs, build new homes and boost local economic growth.

In its [response](#) to the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission's 2018 report, the government backs the Commission's ambitious plans to create 1.3 million new jobs and generate an extra £190 billion for the local economy.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP also put forward a number of new measures as part of a wider government support to realise the 2050 growth vision for the Thames Estuary. These include a commitment to give:

- £1 million to establish a new Thames Estuary Growth Board oversee and drive economic growth plans for the area
- £4.85 million to support local partners to develop low-cost proposals for enhancing transport services between Abbey Wood and Ebbsfleet
- a Cabinet-level Ministerial Champion will be appointed to act as an advocate and critical friend for the region within government will also be appointed

Communities Secretary, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, said:

The Thames Estuary has long been a gateway to the UK economy and has enormous untapped potential, which has the power to benefit those that live and work in the area.

Having considered the recommendations of the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission, I have announced a number of steps we are taking to unlock an even brighter future for the Estuary's economy, marking the beginning of a new and bolder approach by this government to support the area.

The government's response sets out its priorities for the Thames Estuary, including the delivery of jobs and homes, addressing local skills challenges and agreeing fully-evidenced Local Industrial Strategies.

Encompassing East London, North Kent and South Essex, the Thames Estuary has the potential to support growth right across the country. Served by international airports and seaports, it is home to an internationally-significant financial services cluster at Canary Wharf and is achieving huge success as a cultural and creative powerhouse.

Despite its strengths, the economic growth is slower and unemployment levels are higher in the Thames Estuary compared to the country's averages. That is why in 2016 the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission was tasked with developing an ambitious vision for growth in the area.

Grateful for the expertise and independent challenge provided by the Commission, the government welcomed the [Commission's report](#), published on 25 June 2018. After considering its recommendations in detail, the government has now [responded](#) with its commitments to the Estuary, which marks an important first step towards delivering the Commission's vision.

The government worked with local partners in preparing its response to set out its measures boost the region.

[Press release: Britain's biggest road just got bigger](#)

3.5 miles of the A1 in Cambridgeshire has been widened from two to three lanes in each direction as part of Highways England's £1.5 billion project to upgrade the A14, the country's biggest road upgrade.

Today, the extra lanes are open to traffic and the A1's 70mph speed limit has been restored, benefiting the 31,000 drivers who use it every day.

Highways England is upgrading 21 miles of the A14, the east of England's major trunk road, between Cambridge and Huntingdon. The improvements include creating seamless links between the A14 and the A1, with a redesigned junction and widening of the A1 either side of it.

The improvements the A14 scheme is delivering will boost the local and national economy, upgrade a key link between the east coast and the midlands and save up to 20 minutes for the 85,000 drivers who use it every day. And, with a decision due soon on designating part of the improved A14 and A1 as motorways, the project could create a continuous motorway from London to Peterborough for the first time.

Highways England Executive Director for Major Projects and Capital Portfolio Management Peter Mumford said:

Today is a great step forward for people living, working and driving in and around Cambridgeshire as we open the first section of this ground-breaking road upgrade. The A14 sets the standard for how Highways England is delivering the first class infrastructure that the country needs to be successful, and it is great to see this new section of the A1 opening for traffic. It is just a taste of the huge benefits that the A14 upgrade will bring.

Highways England Project Director for the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme David Bray said:

This is a big step in delivering a new, improved A14, and drivers can see just how much work has been done over the last couple of years. The upgraded A1 will fit seamlessly together with the new A14 and improve journeys on both roads.

The A1 is a vital road for England, just as the A14 is for the East, and we'll have transformed both in this area into three-lane, 70mph roads, making journeys safer and faster. The A1 is just one of six phases of the overall A14 upgrade project, and our 2700-strong team is working tirelessly to deliver the rest of this huge scheme, with work expected to be complete by the end of next year.

Part of the new Brampton interchange, with the A1 running left to right and the future A14 running over it before rejoining the old A14 at Ellington.

At 410 miles the A1 is Britain's longest road, connecting London to Edinburgh. The A14 meets the A1 at Brampton in Cambridgeshire and, as part of the A14 project, Highways England has widened it from two lanes to three in both directions between Alconbury and Buckden and built a redesigned junction at Brampton Hut.

Alongside the upgraded A1 there will also be a new local access road to help drivers making local journeys to get around. This will run from the new Ellington junction alongside the A1 northbound and is in addition to the new five-mile long local access road running parallel to the new A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon, the first section of which opened to traffic last week (18 March). Together, they will strengthen local links between villages, improve access to Cambridge for local communities and will become part of the local road network when the new A14 opens.

Councillor Ian Bates, Cambridgeshire County Council's Chairman of the Economy and Environment Committee, said:

This is more great news for the residents and drivers of Cambridgeshire and another milestone achievement. These improvements to the A1, between Alconbury and Buckden, will provide a smooth link into the A14 avoiding the Brampton Hut roundabout and improve journey times. There will also be a local access road alongside the improved A1 from the new Ellington junction connecting local communities without them needing to use the A14. We're looking forward to the opening of the whole A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon upgrade.

Councillor Graham Bull, Leader of Huntingdonshire District Council, said:

The new A14, and the improvements to this section of the A1, are key to ensuring that Huntingdonshire can fulfil its potential as a truly great place to live, work and invest, and we are delighted to see new sections of the road beginning to open. It is part of an

important wider network, including the A428 and the A1 between Buckden and Black Cat, which we are keen to work with partners to continue to improve.

There will still be some finishing works on the A1 such as completing the Woolley Road access, commissioning the gantries to help share real time information with drivers, and completing the links to and from the new A14 later this year. This work will require some overnight closures and information will be shared in advance so people can plan journeys.

The [A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon](#) project is now more than half way through construction. Nine of the project's 34 bridges and structures have already opened to traffic and the longest one, the half-mile long River Great Ouse Viaduct, was completed in February. The team has worked hard to protect and enhance the natural environment, and made incredible archaeological discoveries including a 100,000-year-old woolly mammoth tusk and woolly rhino skull, and more recently the earliest evidence of beer brewing in Britain, dating back to 400BC.

The A14 project is due to be completed and fully opened by December 2020.

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.