

Press release: The Minister for Europe meets Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister

The Minister for Europe, Sir Alan Duncan, today (16 February) held a meeting with his Russian counterpart First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov, at the Munich Security Conference on 15-16 February.

A Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesperson said:

The Minister for Europe met First Deputy Foreign Minister Titov today in the margins of the Munich Security Conference.

Sir Alan underlined that we have deep differences, and the Russian state would need to choose a different path and act as a responsible international partner before there can be a change in our current relationship with Russia.

The Foreign Office Minister reiterated the UK's and Allies' firm stance in response to the Russian state's reckless use of chemical weapons in Salisbury.

He noted that functional channels of engagement are important to raise concerns and discuss international issues. But he made clear that Russia must address the concerns of the international community. This includes ending its destabilising activity in Ukraine; and the persecution of the LGBT community in Chechnya.

Sir Alan reiterated to First Deputy Foreign Minister Titov that the UK Government has no quarrel with the Russian people. The UK will continue to build and strengthen our cultural ties and people to people links with Russia wherever we can.

Newsdesk

Media Office l Foreign and Commonwealth Office l 020 7008 3100

All the latest news is available on the Foreign Office page of the gov.uk website at: www.gov.uk/fco

Follow the Foreign Office on twitter @foreignoffice and Facebook

Follow the Foreign Office on Instagram, Youtube and LinkedIn

Subscribe to the announcements feed or email alerts to get our latest news and announcements

Press release: Justice Secretary unveils GPS tag rollout to better protect victims

- satellite tracking to be rolled out nationwide by summer
- GPS tags to better protect victims of domestic abuse and stalking offences
- new tagging can toughen community sentences
- evaluation of pilot also published shows positive findings

Justice Secretary David Gauke today announced the national roll out of new GPS tags which will provide 24/7 location monitoring of offenders. This will help strengthen supervision, enforce exclusion zones and give victims greater peace of mind.

If a tagged domestic abuser or stalker enters a banned area or a gang member is found somewhere they should not be, this new capability will issue an automatic alert and their whereabouts will be known. Victims can now feel safer in the knowledge that any breach of an exclusion zone will result in an immediate alert. The tags also provide a tougher option for community sentences which can be used alongside requirements like alcohol or drug treatment programmes.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

GPS tagging will help to better protect victims and give them the reassurance that perpetrators will not be able to breach an exclusion zone without triggering an immediate alert.

I am confident that this important new technology will become a vital tool to increase public protection and strengthen options for tougher community sentences.

The GPS tags have so far been rolled out to 3 regions, the North West, Midlands and North East, with other regions due to go live in the coming months. The tags will be available across England and Wales by the summer.

The new technology is also set to be piloted in London (by the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime) to monitor offenders released from prison who have been convicted of knife crime offences. Offenders will have their movements checked against locations of reported crimes, in an effort to tackle violence in the capital.

DCC Jon Stratford, Gloucestershire Police, NPCC Electronic Monitoring lead:

The potential benefits of using this new technology to better protect victims are recognised by the police service and we're working closely with the Ministry of Justice to identify a suitable joint implementation programme.

A wide range of offenders will be eligible for the new tags, including those subject to court-imposed bail, community orders and suspended sentence orders, as well as those on Home Detention Curfew and indeterminate sentenced prisoners released by the Parole Board.

Location monitoring can be used to:

- enforce an exclusion zone – an offender or individual on bail can't enter a specific location or area
- keep a given distance from a point or address, including victim's address or that of a known criminal associate
- monitor an offender's attendance at a certain activity – for example work or a rehabilitation programme
- monitor an offender's movements to support discussions with probation about an offender's lifestyle and behaviours

The tags will transmit an offender's location 24/7 to a specialist monitoring unit in Manchester and if an offender enters an excluded zone and breaches their conditions, they face being recalled to prison or returned to court.

Also published today are the [findings of an extensive evaluation](#) following a pilot involving 8 police forces, testing the delivery and usage of the GPS tags. The evaluation found that tags could have a positive impact on compliance, with the tags acting as a constant physical reminder of an offender's licence conditions. One offender who participated in the pilot of the project said:

I've walked in an exclusion zone before, not realising... that was before I had the tag on, so I wasn't really bothered about getting seen. Now, with the tag, I knew full well that if I go in to that exclusion zone, I'm going to get seen no matter what.

The pilot also found that the impact of enforcing GPS tagging on police was low and that it can potentially save police investigation time by providing vital evidence ruling suspects in and out of crimes.

The new location monitoring capabilities will be in addition to the existing curfew tagging provision already in place, which monitors offenders on licence, community sentences and those on court bail. Around 60,000 individuals are subject to these tags each year.

These measures build on a package of reforms aimed at reducing reoffending and better protecting victims, with GPS tags strengthening the supervision of offenders, so the courts will have confidence that monitoring will be strict and community sentences will be robust and effective.

Notes to editors

- Location monitoring is currently live in 3 National Probation Service regions: North West, Midlands and North East. Location monitoring will go live in the South West, South East and Wales by April 2019.
 - Location monitoring will be available for: court-imposed bail, community orders, suspended sentence orders, home detention curfew cases and Parole Board cases for life sentences, IPP (imprisonment for public protection) offences and extended determinate sentences.
 - For tags used for 'court imposed bail' individual Police forces can choose to roll out the service as soon as it is available in their region. Some forces are keen to proceed with GPS tagging and we will continue to work closely with those who want further information before rolling this service out.
-

[Press release: Business booms for Leeds-based company thanks to HS2 contracts](#)

The company has expanded its workforce and is providing more jobs for local people, as well as continuing to take on more apprentices and graduates. Now employing 177 people, staffing levels are at their highest since the financial crisis, demonstrating the growth and confidence that HS2 is creating, years before the first trains arrive into Leeds station.

Soil Engineering Geoservices Ltd is one of 2000 companies across the UK that are already working on HS2, and providing some of the 7,000 job roles that are already being supported by the project.

The company has spent 4 years investigating ground conditions for construction of the Birmingham to London route, and is one of 90 Yorkshire companies already benefiting from contracts working on HS2, securing jobs, skills and opportunities for local people in the region.

Mark visited Soil Engineering, guided by Tristan, to see the work they undertake on HS2.

Visiting Soil Engineering Geoservices this week, HS2 Ltd CEO, Mark Thurston, said:

The HS2 project is a once in a lifetime opportunity for firms from all parts of the UK to get involved and help deliver Britain's new high speed railway. Soil Engineering Geoscience is a great example of a business that has already got on board with HS2. It's clear to

see that they're benefiting from the investment happening now, which is enabling them to sustain jobs for local people, apprentices and graduates, increase their capacity and grow their business.

As we move ahead with the project, there will be thousands of opportunities on offer, and now is the time for businesses in Yorkshire to get involved. We're looking for everything from engineering to catering services, designers to ecologists, and concrete to electronic components. It is not just about track and trains. I encourage any business interested in working on HS2 to look out for the opportunities on offer.

Managing Director of Soil Engineering Geoservices Ltd, Tristan Llewellyn, said:

Since joining the HS2 supply chain we have completed multiple packages of works, enabling long term expansion of our business, and investment in our people and equipment. We're very proud to have recruited several graduates from Leeds University as part of this expansion.

As work develops on HS2 from Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds we expect there to be even greater opportunities for businesses like ours, supporting growth and sustaining investment in upskilling our workforce, and cascading investment into our supply chain.

Postgraduate placement engineer, Emma, demonstrates sampling methods to Mark.

Chair of the West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce's Transport Group, Sara Gilmore, said:

The Leeds Chamber of Commerce has been a supporter of HS2 since it was first announced because it will provide much needed additional capacity on the rail network, as well as improving connectivity between many of the key economic centres in the country. In addition the Chamber has encouraged local businesses to get involved in the exciting opportunities that HS2 brings and it's great to see a Leeds based business taking advantage of this.

The size of the HS2 project means that there will be thousands of opportunities within the HS2 supply chain, across many business sectors, requiring a wide range of capabilities, over a number of years that will be suitable for suppliers of all types and sizes. It is expected that every 10 direct tier one major works contracts will result in over 10,000 indirect supply chain opportunities.

Last year, HS2 Ltd launched its Skills, Education and Employment Strategy,

setting out interventions that will ensure that the UK not only has the skills to deliver the HS2 project, but to become a world leader in high speed rail. At peak construction, 30,000 jobs will be supported by the project, and 2,000 apprentices will be on offer.

Press release: Thousands of fish released into North East rivers

Thousands of young fish have been released into North East rivers to give stocks a boost and encourage people to go fishing.

This week more than 1,600 barbel were released into the River Tees at Broken Scar, Darlington, and more than 2,300 roach into the River Skerne at South Park, also in Darlington.

The team also put almost 2,000 bream and 1,300 rudd into Lockwood Beck, which is just south of Guisborough. Add to that the almost 11,000 fish released into stillwaters across County Durham and Northumberland last week and it means more than 18,000 young fish have been released across the North East.

All the fish were reared at the Environment Agency's national fish farm near Calverton, Nottinghamshire, using funding from rod licence sales.

The work is part of the Environment Agency's ongoing plan to develop and restore rivers and fisheries in the region, to encourage people to get outdoors and enjoy angling.

Natural recovery and development

Paul Frear, Fisheries Officers for the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

Restocking is one of many things we do together with our partners to develop fisheries, including reducing the impact of pollution, improving habitats and removing barriers to fish migration.

This past two weeks has seen more than 18,000 young coarse fish released into rivers and stillwaters to help the process of natural recovery and development. We hope it will encourage more people to get out and enjoy fishing on the North East's beautiful rivers.

We target our work to rivers which may have suffered from previous pollution incidents or where there are barriers for fish passage. Restoration and the creation of new fisheries for all people to enjoy is a very important aspect of our work.

More than 11,000 fish – roach, bream, tench, crucian carp and rudd – were released into six stillwaters in the region across County Durham, and Northumberland last week.

Those that received a boost in County Durham were Greencoft Pond near Annfield Plain, and Wellfield Lake near Wingate, while in Northumberland fish were released into Hebron Lakes near Morpeth, Dissington Pond near Ponteland, the Environment Agency's Wydon Water at Hexham and Northumbrian Water's Whittle Dene reservoir at Harlow Hill.

The Environment Agency releases fish into our waterways annually. Fisheries officers target fish stocking activity using data from national fish surveys to identify where there are problems with poor breeding and survival, as well as supporting angling clubs to boost local fishing spots.

Many of our industrialised rivers have improved dramatically in water quality in the last 30 years and targeted and appropriate restocking has helped the restoration of natural fish stocks and viable fisheries.

Angling is a great way to keep healthy and enjoy the natural environment. All rod licence income is used to fund work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries.

Fishing is free for children under 16, although those aged between 12 and 16 still need a junior licence. For anyone over 16, a full annual licence costs from just £30, with some short term and concessionary licences also available. [You can buy your rod licence online](#)

Getting out on the region's rivers is a great way to support the 2019 Year of Green Action (YoGA) aimed at connecting people with nature and taking positive action to improve the environment.

Speech: The Munich Security Conference

It's a huge privilege to attend my first Munich Security Conference.

While you have heard this message before many times, we will continue to repeat.

Whilst the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union, I want to start by saying our commitment to European security remains steadfast.

We have delivered European security long before the creation of either the European Union or NATO and we will continue to deliver it when we leave the EU. Britain will remain an outward looking nation. We will look for new opportunities, enhance our bilateral relationships and take Brexit as an opportunity to do more on a global stage. Delivering the leadership that the

world turns to Great Britain to actually provide.

For me, one of those key bilateral relationships is with Germany.

GERMANY AND THE UK PARTNERSHIP

We are proud, very proud, of our deep friendship with Germany.

260 years ago we fought side-by-side at the battle of Minden. Since then, it is fair to say, our partnership has greatly evolved. The odd ups and downs. Today, we are both defending the borders of Eastern Europe as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence. We are taking on Daesh in the Middle East. And, we are working together in Afghanistan, Lithuania and Mali.

With the signing of the UK-Germany Joint Vision Statement (JVS) last October it is obvious to both that there is much more to achieve as two nations.

The fact both our nations are increasing their defence budgets reflects the growing threats we are facing. And, we must not forget what can be achieved by working together.

As the world becomes darker and more dangerous, allies must stand together.

RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EU

And, I know this is something Ursula very clearly recognises. She has spoken of her determination to take forward greater EU defence co-operation. This is something we welcome, European countries combining to develop capabilities that are available to the Alliance.

The EU's role in stabilisation and capacity building is also important for the future.

But it is important that an EU which shuts out non-EU NATO allies from capability development will only weaken its own industry base and capabilities it wishes to develop.

AND NATO MUST STEP UP TOO

NATO must remain the bedrock of our security in Europe. Since 1949 it has stood the test of time. It is combat proven. It deters the most serious threats.

So, let's support the world's most successful military Alliance. Let's deal with Russia's breach of the INF Treaty and the threat of new Russian missiles.

Let's be ready to handle their provocations.

Russian adventurism must have a cost.

The US has been stepping up its commitment to NATO. But, as Ursula and I agreed with Pat Shanahan when we met at NATO earlier this week, Europeans

should not be spending two per cent of GDP on defence for America. We should be spending it for ourselves and our security. And, I applaud Ursula's personal efforts to drive investment in German defence.

It is a genuine and real privilege to be able to work side-by-side with a colleague who is not only so personally inspiring but a lady of deep compassion and a real sense of duty, not just to her nation, but to her friends and allies as well.

And, it is that sense of duty which means all European nations must take responsibility for the security of our continent.

THE UK WILL CONTINUE LEADING IN NATO

This is something the UK is continuing to do, as we step-up our efforts in NATO.

In NATO, we are ready to defend what's right. Ready to fight what's wrong. And, ready to lead.

At the recent Defence Ministers meeting, I announced the increased commitment to Alliance readiness in Estonia, adding to our presence with Apache attack and Wildcat reconnaissance helicopters.

In NATO's 70th anniversary year, we are also hosting a NATO Heads of State Meeting at the end of December.

Significantly, in the next few months our UK-led nine-nation Joint Expeditionary Force will conduct its first deployment in the Baltic Sea delivering reassurance to our allies and deterrence to those who wish to do us harm.

And, we continue to increase our defence budget, creating a new Transformation Fund to boost our nation's global presence, and the armed forces' mass and lethality.

RUSSIA THREAT

NATO matters more than ever because an old adversary is back in the game. 30 years since the Berlin Wall fell and five years since the illegal annexation of Crimea – Russia remains a threat to our security.

Russia's illegal activity continues unabated on land in the Donbas, and, at sea with the seizure of Ukrainian naval ships and the imprisonment of their sailors.

We've seen Russian recklessness and disregard for life on the streets of Britain. With Russia degrading its reputation with such blatant disregard of international borders and sovereignty.

Meanwhile Russia, despite its denials, has clearly breached the INF treaty. It has made clear it is developing more missiles and nuclear-capable weapons that break this agreement. Trying to goad the West into a new arms race it

simply is not interested in and does not want. Making the world a less safe place. They claim they want greater security on the one hand. While undermining trust on the other.

The Kremlin is also taking the fight into the 'grey zone'. Operating without rules using espionage, military, political, cyber, economic and even criminal tools to undermine its competitors. Russian Governmental subversion of Western elections through disinformation, online trolling and persistent cyber-attacks has become its new norm.

Their clandestine use of proxies...mercenary armies... like the infamous and unaccountable Wagner Group...allows the Kremlin to get away with murder while denying the blood on their hands.

But, as a nation who hold dear the values of democracy, tolerance and justice we must not be cowed or intimidated.

That's why our military continues asserting its legitimate freedom of access and action across the globe...deploying our forces in a measured and resolute way.

And, we all continue to work together to lift the veil on this behaviour and always deliver a clear response – for actions must have consequences.

THE UK WILL ALSO CONTINUE TO LEAD OUTSIDE NATO

And, we will not abandon countries Russia seeks to undermine, like Ukraine and those in the Western Balkans. In the Cold War those behind the iron curtain saw us as a beacon of liberty. Now they have achieved their freedom the UK will continue to help them defend their right to choose their own destiny.

But, let me be clear this is not the relationship with Russia that we want.

We remain open to a different kind of relationship and options of dialogue remains on the table. It is vital that we always work to avoid escalation and avert risks of miscalculation.

And, we encourage Russia to start acting within the rules-based international order. Step back from the path it has been taking and look to a new and different way.

This very conference has long honoured those with the vision and courage to bring an end to the Cold War – inspirational people such as, Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, George Bush, Helmut Kohl and, of course, Mikhail Gorbachev.

These were patriots. Figures who understood strength. Leaders who fought for their country's interests. And, they understood the value of being open to different kinds of relationships. As we are today. We hope Russia chooses a different way. Being inspired, not by those who wish to bring fear and hate, but, be inspired by those who wish to bring hope and peace.

But, as we continue to face threats in an increasingly dangerous world we know that NATO is the best guardian of our security.

CONCLUSION

So, for the sake of our values, allies and friends we will continue to lead in NATO.

We will continue to build our alliances with close friends like Germany.

We will continue to deliver European security.

We will continue to step out into the world protecting our friends, defending our interests and standing-up for our values.

And, let us never forget that the reason that we will invest in our defence is to deliver a more peaceful, a more prosperous, and more just world.