

Press release: Foreign Secretary holds talks with Aung San Suu Kyi

Lasting an hour, the talks focused on the Rohingya crisis and took place a day after the Foreign Secretary visited Cox's Bazar where he saw first hand the scale of the humanitarian disaster.

During the meeting Mr Johnson expressed his deep concern over the current situation and urged Burma to work with the international community to create conditions in Rakhine which will allow Rohingya refugees to return safely, voluntarily and in dignity to their homes under international oversight.

The Foreign Secretary also urged for the involvement of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) in the repatriation of the Rohingyas and raised the plight of two Reuters journalists currently detained in Burma.

Speaking after the meeting Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

I have held talks with Aung San Suu Kyi and discussed the range of challenges facing her country.

I spoke to her about my own experience witnessing the terrible conditions of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, and my deep concern about their future.

I underlined the importance of the Burmese authorities carrying out a full and independent investigation into the violence in Rakhine, and to hold to account those responsible for human rights violations.

I underlined the urgency of creating the conditions in Rakhine that could make it a safe place for the Rohingya refugees to return to, free from fear, and in the knowledge that their basic rights will be respected and upheld.

The UK is already a major donor to the humanitarian crisis. We will continue to use all our diplomatic tools and influence on the global stage to find a way to provide a better future for the Rohingya community.

I encouraged her efforts to broker a nationwide peace settlement to put to an end seventy years of conflict in her homeland.

News story: £30 million investment in revolutionary V2G technologies

New technology which will unlock the potential for electric vehicles to help power people's homes is being boosted by almost £30 million in government funding.

Through the Industrial Strategy the government is committed to becoming a world leader in shaping the future of mobility and in the design and development of the clean technologies of the future. This investment will help deliver on that ambition, supporting vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technologies that could enable electric cars and other vehicles to deliver electricity back to the smart grid, to light homes and power businesses.

The funding has been awarded to 21 V2G projects, to pay for research and design and development, with the aim of exploring and trialling both the technology itself and commercial opportunities.

These schemes, including EDF Energy's V2G0 scheme, will demonstrate how energy stored in electric vehicle batteries could be borrowed by the electricity system during peak hours, before being recharged during the off-peak in time for their drivers to set off on their next journey.

Using electric vehicles in dense urban areas like Oxford will significantly reduce local emissions and improve air quality, boosting the quality of life for residents and benefitting businesses. Led by EDF Energy R&D UK, the 'V2G0' is a large scale demonstration of V2G charging in Oxford using 100 electric fleet vehicles (cars and vans) from a number of organisations including several delivery and taxi companies.

The project will develop, trial and evaluate potential business models for fleet operators' use of electric vehicles and their suitability for vehicle to grid (V2G) charging.

The consortium is made up of 8 organisations with expertise in energy and power markets and systems, fleet operation value chains and electric mobility: EDF Energy R&D UK, University of Oxford, Oxfordshire County Council, Arrival, E0 Charging, Upside Energy, and Fleet Innovation.

At the same time these electric vehicles will provide a cleaner alternative to many of the fleet vehicles operated in UK cities, including Royal Mail vans, and Addison Lee taxis.

Transport Minister, Jesse Norman said:

As the number of electric vehicles grows and their battery capabilities increase, there is a huge opportunity for them to make a significant contribution to a smart grid.

These projects are at the cutting edge of their field. Just like the visionary designs of Brunel and Stephenson in transport, they could revolutionise the ways in which we store and manage electricity, both now and in the future.

Business Minister Richard Harrington said:

The UK's automotive industry is a great British success story, and as set out in our ambitious Industrial Strategy we are determined to lead the way in innovative, low-emission vehicle production.

We have shown that growing the economy while cutting emissions, can, and should, go hand in hand. Vehicle-to-grid technology provides another opportunity for the UK to showcase to the world our leading expertise in game-changing automotive and low carbon technologies.

Dan Bentham, Head of R&D, Smart Customers, EDF Energy said:

Electric vehicles will play an important role in the future of UK energy and its economy. They will have a beneficial impact on the environment by reducing emissions and improving air quality.

Through our research, EDF Energy will use new technologies, business models and smart systems to make low carbon transport, and the infrastructure and market conditions needed for its success, a reality.

The investment will help deliver on the government's ambition, set out in the recently published [Automotive Sector Deal](#) , to be at the forefront of low-emission and electric vehicle production, powering the next generation of innovative, environmentally-friendly vehicles.

The competition for government funding, run by Innovate UK, saw a host of winners including SSE Services, Nissan, OVO Energy, Octopus Energy, Cisco, Flexisolar and AT Kearney.

Innovate UK recently concluded the assessment process, with OLEV and BEIS providing almost £30 million to grant fund industry led collaborative R&D in electric 'vehicle to grid' technology for up to 70% of project costs.

Press release: Welsh Secretary announces trade and investment visit to New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia

A three-day trade mission to New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, led by Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns, will begin today.

With the aim of attracting American businesses to invest in Wales and build on a trading relationship already worth more than £33.5 billion, Mr Cairns will meet with companies operating in sectors from cyber security to pharmaceuticals.

He will be joined by two Board of Trade Advisers: former Chairman of Cardiff Airport and Welsh Development Agency, Lord Rowe-Beddoe and Chief of Staff for Manchester Airport Group Collette Roche.

Secretary of State for Wales and Board of Trade Adviser, Alun Cairns, said:

Wales and the United States are close trading partners – and I want to ensure that we continue to build on this important relationship by creating more investment and exporting opportunities for companies from both countries.

US firms invest more than £30 billion in the UK and our commercial relationship is stronger than ever. We want to see that partnership continue to grow and flourish, making Wales the place of choice for investors.

In the year 2016-17, the Department for International Trade (DIT) supported 85 investment projects in Wales, generating 2,581 jobs. In the same year, Welsh companies exported more than £16 billion to the world's largest economy, up 18.8% on the previous year.

International Trade Secretary and President of the Board of Trade, Dr Liam Fox, said:

I'm delighted to see this Board of Trade delegation head across the Atlantic, seeking to attract investment into Wales – bringing prosperity, jobs and growth.

As our largest trading partner, the US remains an enormously important market for Wales as well as the rest of the UK, with

exports of Welsh goods to the US increasing by almost 19% last year.

The Department for International Trade's expert advisers stand ready in 108 countries across the world, to support British companies to export and help overseas investors find the right partners in the UK.

Just one of the Welsh companies taking advantage of the huge opportunities offered by the United States is Halen Môn – Anglesey Sea Salt.

The ambitious North Wales company first sent their product abroad in 2001, finding an American distributor shortly after. Their sea salt is now enjoyed in 22 countries around the world.

Used by chefs and food lovers, it has been served at the London 2012 Olympics, political summits and royal weddings and the US market continues to be one of the most important to the company.

Co-Founder of Halen Môn, Alison Lea-Wilson, said:

We have found exporting to the US an extremely positive process, and would urge other Welsh businesses to look to the market for the range of opportunities it offers.

Minister for Investment Graham Stuart will also be heading to Boston and Miami later this month to conduct a series of bilateral meetings with business leaders to discuss investment opportunities.

[News story: Measures announced to ensure talented trainees get into teaching](#)

Aspiring teachers across the country are set to benefit from a number of changes designed to allow them to begin training, and make a difference in the classroom, more quickly.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb has today (12 February) announced that thousands of would-be teachers are now eligible for three attempts at the professional skills tests they must pass to begin Initial Teacher Training (ITT) before they incur any cost, rather than one.

On top of this change – worth up to £77 per candidate – the government has

removed the lock-out period that previously prevented candidates from re-taking tests for two years if they had been unsuccessful in two re-sits.

The changes follow feedback from the teaching profession and remove financial and administrative barriers – ensuring capable trainees do not give up on their hopes of becoming a teacher while they wait to re-take the tests.

Since the government introduced the more rigorous skills tests in 2012, the entry requirements to teacher training have remained unchanged so that only the very best and brightest enter the profession. Today's announcement builds on a number of measures to recruit and retain high-calibre teachers, including a £75million investment in teachers' professional development and follows the recruitment of 32,000 new trainees in 2017.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Standards are rising, with 1.9million more children in good or outstanding schools since 2010 and a record number of teachers in our schools – 15,500 more than in 2010.

In 2012, the government introduced more rigorous skills tests for teachers to ensure they have the highest standards of English and maths. The bar for entrance to the teaching profession remains as high as ever, as parents and pupils would expect, and this is evidenced by the fact that the quality of new entrants into the profession is at an all-time high, with 19% of this year's cohort holding a first-class degree.

It is absolutely right that aspiring teachers can begin training as soon as they prove they are ready and these changes – backed by the profession – will help ambitious graduates to join the profession.

Professional bodies such as the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) and the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), have welcomed the changes.

Emma Hollis, Executive Director of NASBTT, said:

NASBTT welcomes these changes to the administration of the skills tests. We have seen all too many examples of candidates with excellent potential being locked out of the profession for the sake of one or two marks on a test. This move will keep the profession open to those who deserve the opportunity to train to teach.

James Noble-Rogers, Executive Director of UCET, said:

This is a sensible and pragmatic move. It will allow potentially good teachers who would otherwise have been kept out of the

profession to begin their training.

In the past good candidates have been prevented from re-taking the skills tests because they failed by just one or two marks, often because of the pressure they experience having reached their final attempt.

The measures announced today will be effective from 15 February, but are relevant to all applicants who applied on or after 24 October 2017 – with refunds offered automatically. Candidates still need a degree for graduate training and all assessment criteria for Qualified Teacher Status remain unchanged.

The recently published 2017 Initial Teacher Training census showed that more than 32,000 new trainee teachers were recruited in a competitive labour market, with historic low unemployment rates and a growing economy, showing that the teaching profession continues to be an attractive career.

In full today's changes are:

- The removal of a lock-out period that previously prevented aspiring teachers from re-taking tests for two years;
- No limit on the number of tests, and the first three tests are free of charge to all candidates; and
- Refunds for anyone who has already paid for tests in this year's recruitment cycle – on or since 24 October 2017.

Today's news adds to a growing number of initiatives to attract the brightest and best into the teaching profession, including:

- Increasing bursaries to £26,000 for all trainees with a 2:2 or higher in the highest priority subjects; physics, languages, chemistry, biology, computing, geography and classics.
 - Offering a £20,000 bursary for maths trainees followed by two additional early-career payments of £5k each (£7,500 if teaching in local authority areas where teachers are most needed) in their third and fifth year of teaching, if they have taught in a state school in England since completing their teacher training course.
 - Offering scholarship schemes in six subjects for 2018/19; physics, maths, languages, chemistry, computing, and geography. Successful scholars will receive £28,000 tax-free in all subjects except maths, where scholars will receive £22,000 tax-free.
 - Offering bursaries for English trainees have been increased to £15,000 for all trainees with a 2:2 or higher, and bursaries in all other subjects are unchanged for 2018 to 2019.
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Press release: UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson holds talks with political leaders in Thailand

During his visit, the Foreign Secretary met Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai. The Foreign Secretary encouraged swift progress towards democratic elections. Mr Johnson updated Foreign Minister Don on what he had seen during his recent visit to Bangladesh and Burma, and discussed how to do more to address the Rohingya crisis. The wide-ranging discussions also covered co-operation on education, the digital economy, science and innovation, financial technology, and trade and investment, as well as further co-operation to tackle the Illegal Wildlife Trade. Prime Minister Chan-o-cha confirmed that Thailand would be represented at Ministerial level at the London Illegal Wildlife Trade conference this autumn.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

The UK is a country that goes out into the world to build and develop relationships and it was a great pleasure to meet Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai.

Our relationship with Thailand spans a broad range of issues from bilateral trade and investment to regional security and the Illegal Wildlife Trade. I look forward to further strengthening the UK's relationship with Thailand in the future.

During his visit Mr Johnson also met Dr Surakiart, Chairman of the International Board to Rakhine Advisory Commission, viewed illegally trafficked ivory, pangolin scales and other animal parts seized by Thai customs, and visited a transport development to highlight opportunities for UK businesses in the infrastructure sector.

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Further information