

# Press release: Mark Field begins trip to Solomon Islands, New Zealand and Australia

His first stop will be Honaria, the capital of the Solomon Islands, where he will meet the Governor General Sir Frank Kabui, and the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Hon. Rick Houenipwela to discuss trade and the UK-Solomon Islands bilateral relationship post-Brexit.

The Minister will then travel to New Zealand, where he will meet the Mayors of Auckland and Whangarei, as well as taking part in a roundtable discussion with the Regional Chamber of Commerce. In Wellington, he will meet the Minister for External Trade, Minister for Environment and Minister for Economic Development among others, and attend an England vs New Zealand cricket match at Westpac stadium.

In Australia, Mark Field will visit Sydney, Canberra and Perth. In Sydney the Minister will have a tour of the Royal Botanical Gardens, where he will learn about the Garden's science activities and research links with London's Kew Gardens. He will also meet the New South Wales Minister for Innovation.

In Canberra the Minister will discuss UK-Australia cooperation on key regional issues with the Minister for International Development and the Pacific. In Perth he will be visiting Pawsey Supercomputing Centre to explore opportunities for collaboration on high-performance computing, and hear about the centre's involvement in the Square Kilometre Array.

Rt Hon Mark Field, Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific said:

This is my first visit to the Pacific region since becoming Minister at the Foreign Office, and I am delighted to be here.

The UK enjoys a historic relationship and modern partnership with the Solomon Islands, New Zealand and Australia. We have strong ties and an enduring friendship with this region, built on friendship and shared values.

Our strong security, prosperity and people-to-people links are more relevant than ever as work towards advancing our common interests both in the region and further afield.

## Notes to editors

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

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# [Press release: Police trial new Home Office mobile fingerprint technology](#)

An app on an officer's phone, combined with a handheld scanner, will mean police will be able to check fingerprints against both criminal and immigration records by connecting to the two live databases (IDENT1 and IABS) via the new Biometric Services Gateway.

West Yorkshire Police (WYP), who worked with the Home Office to trial the new system, will begin an initial roll out of 250 scanners to officers in the coming weeks – the app is already available to its 5,500 frontline officers. It is expected that another 20 forces across the country will roll out the system by the end of this year.

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service Nick Hurd said:

The Biometric Services Gateway is just one of a series of national systems the Home Office is designing with policing to give officers information at their fingertips faster than ever before.

By cutting out unnecessary trips to and from the police station, mobile technology is really helping to save valuable time and allowing officers to do what they do best – cutting crime and keeping us safe.

It's clear that by embracing technology the police can improve efficiency and, if all forces delivered the level of productivity from mobile working as the leading forces, the average officer could spend an hour a day extra on the frontline.

The Biometric Services Gateway, enabled by Home Office technology, will also lead to significant costs savings, with the new system available at a fraction of the cost of those currently in use. The scanners used by WYP cost less than £300 – 10% of the cost of current mobile fingerprint systems.

To ensure the information accessed from the Biometric Services Gateway remains secure, fingerprints are not stored and are automatically deleted from the device once they have been checked.

As well as identifying a person of interest who may be withholding their name, the technology enables officers to rapidly identify someone experiencing a medical emergency and make contact with their next of kin.

Early examples of the new system in action include a firearms unit, who detained a driver after a short pursuit and were able to identify him as a disqualified driver, despite him giving false details. He was issued with a summons for three offences and his vehicle seized. The armed response unit returned to patrol within ten minutes, and without the mobile fingerprint scanner this could have resulted in the unit being out of action for four hours taking the individual to a custody suite.

West Yorkshire Police, Assistant Chief Constable Andy Battle said:

The introduction of these fingerprint devices is a significant step forward for West Yorkshire Police and marks another milestone in our technological ambitions.

As we have already experienced in the trial, the combination of these digital solutions bring tangible benefits to policing our communities.

It means we can submit fingerprints of suspects from the street to a live time national database and receive results in less than a minute.

We have seen first-hand, for instance, how this rapid identification has enabled speedy and accurate medical treatment based on the records available. Its use also allows relatives to attend hospital to see their loved ones when time is of the essence.

From an operational perspective, they quickly open investigative leads into serious crimes and can often reveal the associates of an otherwise unknown victim.

Likewise, they can immediately identify suspects who attempt to give false details and will prompt people to be more forthcoming in the first place.

The added benefit is that they provide greater value for money, which means we can increase their usage across the organisation.

West Yorkshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Mark Burns-Williamson and National APCC lead on Forensics and Biometrics said:

The introduction of the Biometrics Services Gateway shows how West Yorkshire Police is once again leading the way with new technology and builds on the investment and introduction of the handheld mobiles that all frontline officers use.

Using this advanced technology means officers are out on the street providing that visible presence rather than dealing with suspects in custody and could eventually enable the introduction of new automated systems, further ensuring officers are freed up to provide reassurance in our communities.

It is important that we continually improve our services to make sure the needs of our communities are at the heart of delivery. Investing in this cutting edge technology forms a crucial part of that picture, ensuring the public of West Yorkshire are safer and feel safer, but crucially testing this proof of concept so that the overall benefits can be rolled out across policing nationally for everyone's benefit.

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## **Press release: Foreign Secretary meets Bangladesh Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to discuss the Rohingya, the Commonwealth and trade**

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson today (9 February) met the Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed in Dhaka.

During their hour-long meeting they discussed the upcoming Commonwealth Summit taking place in London in April and additional trade opportunities between the two countries once the UK leaves the European Union. They also discussed the importance of free and fair elections, and the Foreign Secretary encouraged Prime Minister Hasina's continued commitment to women and girls, including her efforts to achieve gender equality.

In a separate meeting with Foreign Minister Abdul Hassan Mahmud Ali, the Foreign Secretary raised the ongoing Rohingya crisis. During the meeting Foreign Secretary Johnson welcomed the Government of Bangladesh's commitment to the voluntary, safe and dignified return with international monitoring for the Rohingya community to their homes in Burma when the conditions are right. Mr. Johnson also reiterated the UK's support to the international Rohingya humanitarian response. He also invited the Foreign Minister to attend the London Illegal Wildlife Trade conference in autumn.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

The UK is grateful to the Government of Bangladesh for their hosting of the Rohingya refugee community during this terrible humanitarian crisis. I am pleased that Bangladesh has once again confirmed its commitment to voluntary, safe and dignified return of the Rohingya community in Bangladesh when the conditions in Burma are right.

The UK is committed to the international humanitarian Rohingya response, and we are the largest bilateral donor to the crisis. UK Aid is making a real difference with £59 million helping to provide the food, water and shelter that is still so needed.

But our partnership with Bangladesh goes beyond the Rohingya crisis, as we continue to work together on vital bilateral and global issues such as girl's education, the illegal wildlife trade, and human rights.

## **Further information**

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## **[Press release: New M20 junction leads record South East road investment](#)**

The construction of junction 10a, near Ashford, will unlock job-creating developments, improve journeys, and open the door to further inward economic investment for communities along the M20, a crucial link to the south coast.

Since the project was given the go ahead in December 2017, final preparations for starting construction in 2018 are nearly completed and now work will start on setting up a site compound ahead of main construction starting in the spring.

It is one of four major improvements that will start construction across South East England in the first six months of 2018, promising better, safer journeys.

The projects hitting milestones between January and June 2018 across the South East

Between now and June this year, work will also start on three smart motorway upgrades in Kent, the Solent and on the M23 near Gatwick. Together valued at over £550m, they will add around 65 miles of new lanes, increasing capacity by a third, and introducing new technology to tackle congestion and keep

drivers informed. Four other upgrades across the region will hit crucial points – including public consultations that will help shape the proposals, and route announcements.

A consultation on improving junction 9 of the M3 near Winchester launched in January. And on Monday 12 February 2018, a consultation into major improvements of the M25's interchange with the A3 near Wisley in Surrey will also begin.

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

These upgrades in the South East will improve millions of journeys. Each of these milestones in the region is evidence of Highways England delivering major infrastructure upgrades for the whole country.

Nationwide, 37 projects will hit milestones over the same period, including seven schemes starting construction and four improvements opening to traffic, adding much needed extra capacity to some of the country's busiest roads and improving journeys for millions of drivers.

The upgrades are funded by the Government's £15bn investment in motorways and main A roads and being delivered by Highways England.

April will mark three years since Highways England embarked on delivering the Government's Road Investment Strategy, the biggest investment in the country's major roads since the 1970s.

The 37 schemes reaching milestones in the first half of this year will join the 18 major projects that have already opened to traffic since April 2015. A further 16 are presently in construction. Those which opened include the M3 smart motorway between the M25 and Farnborough, and a new dual carriageway on the A21 near Tonbridge in Kent.

## **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.

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# Press release: Terrier rescued after a ruff time on the motorway

Highways England traffic officers Nick Sivell and John Winser were called to an incident on the M23 on Tuesday after reports of a car colliding with the central reservation.

The driver, from Brighton, had to be taken to hospital, leaving Sally and the car on the hard shoulder while recovery was arranged.

Nick and John paws-ed for thought and then took it upon themselves to look after the pooch in peril.

Nick said:

If you have an emergency on the motorway and need to stop, it is always safest to leave any animals travelling with you in the car, while you and any passengers get out and behind a barrier. The driver did the right thing. Normally, we'd contact a local animal sanctuary or kennel who could look after any stranded animals, but on Tuesday there was no one who could help straight away.

Poor Sally was stressed and having a really ruff time, not only after the impact of the collision, but seeing her owner being taken away in an ambulance. We realised that the only solution to this canine conundrum was for us to look after her for a while.

Nick and John calmed the terrified terrier down and took her to Highways England's regional control centre in Godstone where she was looked after while they tried to find someone to solve their doggy dilemma.

John said:

Part of our job is being able to be adaptable and keeping an eye out for anything unusual, and we always keep our eyes and ears open, but this was certainly something we don't deal with every day.

Highways England traffic officers handled 49,000 incidents last year alone and are used to dealing with a variety of incidents and problems during their shift – and not always just with humans.

Nick and John had recently been on an animal handling course which gave them training and techniques on how to deal with a variety of stressed animals, from swans to horses, which helped them know how to comfort 15 year old Sally.

Sally made herself at home at the control centre and John and Nick got in touch with Furry Friends (a rescue centre based near Godstone), who arranged to come out and collect Sally while her owner recovered.

John continued:

Luckily the driver was okay and has been discharged from hospital. Sally was collected from Furry Friends in Coulsdon, and the driver and Sally are now reunited at home in Brighton. We are so glad this tail had a yappy ending.

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