

Press release: Minister Field visits China for trade, security & human rights talks

Mark Field, the FCO minister for Asia and the Pacific, will arrive in Beijing today (Tuesday 22 August) for high level talks on regional security, trade and investment, human rights and the illegal wildlife trade.

He will become the first UK minister to visit China since the general election in June 2017 and will meet China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Vice Foreign Minister Wang Chao and Assistant Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou.

The minister will also meet representatives of organisations involved in combating the illegal wildlife trade, ahead of the Illegal Wildlife Trade conference being held in London in March 2018.

Beijing will be the first stop in a ten day visit to Asia, which will include meetings in Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore.

Mark Field, minister for Asia and the Pacific, said:

China is a key global player and an essential partner for the UK in many areas, not least trade and investment and foreign policy. This has been particularly clear in recent weeks as we worked closely with China and other United Nations partners to respond to the threat North Korea poses to regional stability and security. We exported £16.7 billion worth of goods and services to China in 2016 and that figure will continue to grow as we strengthen links between our countries.

I look forward to discussions on these issues in Beijing, and harnessing the UK-China Global Partnership to tackle issues of global concern such as the illegal wildlife trade.

Notes to editors

1. Mark Field MP was appointed as minister for Asia and the Pacific at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in June 2017.
2. China has the world's second largest economy (contributing 15% of global GDP) and the UK remains one of the top destinations for Chinese investment. The UK's total exports to China have grown by almost 68% between 2010 and 2016. £16.7bn worth of goods and services was exported in 2016.
3. Over half a million Chinese visitors applied for visas to come to the UK for tourism and study last year. There are currently over 155,000 students from China, Hong Kong and Macau studying in the UK.
4. The UK is committed to tackling the illegal wildlife trade, including

for ivory. The London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade in early 2014 brought together the international community, including representatives from the Chinese Government, to strengthen cooperation. China has since increased its enforcement and publicly destroyed over six tonnes of seized ivory.

Further information

[Press release: Trial of improved smart motorway emergency areas continues](#)

The new look emergency areas have bright orange road surfaces to help improve visibility so they are more obvious to drivers on smart motorways. It is also hoped that it will encourage drivers to only use them in emergency situations.

The first of the new emergency areas went live on the M3 near Camberley in Surrey last month. This change is part of a review into the design and spacing of emergency areas on smart motorways.

The first orange emergency area on the M25 is on the anti-clockwise side, between junctions 25 (Waltham Cross) and 24 (Potters Bar). The remaining 22 emergency areas on the M25 will have the distinctive orange colour added between junctions 23 (Hatfield) to 27 (for the M11) and junctions 5 (interchange with M26) and 7 (for the M23) if the trial is successful.

Highways England Chief Executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

We recognise the public concern about smart motorways and we also believe that changes such as these will help drivers have confidence when using them and be clear about where they can stop in an emergency.

That is why we are trialling these highly visible new style emergency areas. The bright orange colouring will make them as easy as possible to spot and should also discourage drivers from using them in non-emergency situations.

This is just one of the ways we are helping drivers to understand smart motorways and their benefits. I hope it helps drivers feel more confident about using a smart motorway. !!n Smart motorways use variable speed limits to manage traffic and tackle frustrating stop-start congestion, new technology to give drivers better information on road conditions ahead and – in smart motorway upgrades delivered since 2004 – convert the hard shoulder into an

extra traffic lane. Evidence shows that smart motorways are successfully adding extra capacity, improving journey times and are just as safe as conventional motorways.

The redesigned emergency area supports Highways England's drive to improve awareness of smart motorway driving, including what to do in an emergency and when to use an emergency area. It sits alongside a national TV, radio and social media campaign covering key themes such as not driving in lanes closed by Red X signs, how to stop in an emergency and the importance of carrying out appropriate vehicle checks, like checking fuel levels, before setting out on a journey to avoid unnecessary breakdowns.

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Response to Daily Telegraph story on new GCSE grades](#)

Today's Daily Telegraph (22 Aug) contains both inaccurate and misleading statements in relation to new GCSEs. The assessment of new GCSEs has been designed to support 9 to 1 grading and we have not 'warned' about their use as suggested. The Ofqual report cited is not a commentary on the new grades and the selected excerpts within the story are taken completely out of context.

Dr Michelle Meadows, Executive Director, Strategy, Risk and Research said: "New GCSEs have been designed from first principles to deliver better differentiation on the new 9 to 1 grading scale. The new GCSE exams and mark schemes have been created to support the increase in the number of grades, with better spread of grade boundaries and reliable assessment."

[Press release: New victim and witness rooms to improve court experience](#)

In many courts, traditionally victims and witnesses are asked to wait in sparse, unfriendly surroundings. So HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has

invested £80,000 in victim and witness waiting rooms in five courts across the country – making a number of changes including the addition of children's toys.

Research conducted with court users has shown that small changes such as these can make the court experience less intimidating for some of the 156,000 victims and witnesses who give evidence each year – particularly children and the vulnerable.

The model victim and witness waiting rooms have been established at Nottingham Justice Centre, Manchester Magistrates' Court, Newcastle Crown Court and Aldershot Justice Centre, with work ongoing at Liverpool Crown Court. They will provide a template for courts nationwide.

HMCTS worked closely with stakeholders including the Victim's Commissioner, the Witness Service and court users to identify areas across the estate to develop and analyse the best way to support victims and witnesses through the court process. This work informed how the rooms were developed, and they will now be used as models for further estate changes.

Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales, Baroness Newlove:

I welcome HMCTS' initiative to enhance the victim and witness room facilities across the court estate. I am looking forward to seeing the pilot rooms and very much hope that they will set the standard for victims' facilities in all court rooms across the country. The court process can be a traumatic experience for victims and any attempt to make this environment less impersonal and more comfortable is most definitely a positive step.

I am looking forward to seeing how the remodelled rooms can provide a change for victims and hope they will assist victims and witnesses to have a better experience of the court process.

Gillian Guy, chief executive of Citizens Advice, said:

Giving evidence in court can be a difficult and stressful experience so it is crucial that witnesses are supported to perform their invaluable role.

It's our role as the Witness Service to provide information and support to help people feel as comfortable and confident as possible when giving evidence. We know all too well that even small changes to make waiting areas more comfortable can make big differences to a witness's experience – providing a welcoming space for child witnesses is particularly important.

This is on top of a range of measures the Government has put in place to help reduce the anxiety of attending court, including giving evidence behind a

screen and the use of a registered intermediary. In criminal courts the government is driving the increased use of video links – meaning more vulnerable victims can give evidence away from the court room and without having to meet their attacker face to face.

HMCTS is also assessing criminal courts to ensure they are properly equipped for victims and witnesses, and monitoring individuals' experiences of the court system. This will provide a yardstick for key improvements across the estate. A range of work will be carried out in the coming months to improve the information available to victims and witnesses before coming to court – making the often painful process clearer and easier to understand.

The £1bn investment will ensure that HMCTS are providing targeted care to those who need it – by reducing unnecessary stress for victims and the most vulnerable, and lessening the emotional turmoil experienced through crime. That £1bn is made up of £855 million to modernise and digitise the courts, and £240 million to deliver a fully connected criminal courtroom.

More modern and robust technology will be put in place in courts, such as Wi-Fi, modern telephony and screens for sharing evidence. This transformation of the estate will create a user-focused and modern justice system which supports the most vulnerable.

[Press release: Leeds Festival advice for drivers](#)

Drivers are advised that motorways and major A roads leading to the Leeds Festival site at Bramham Park are likely to be busy later this week (24 – 26 August) as music fans make their way to the site.

It is expected that the busiest day for festival traffic will be Thursday 24 August.

Emergency planning manager for Highways England in Yorkshire, Hayley Robson said:

Highways England will be doing all we can to alleviate congestion on the major routes to the event to keep traffic flowing, even so it will be busier than normal in this area over the festival weekend.

We have a lot of experience of handling events like this and have tried and tested systems in place. We work with our emergency service colleagues and the event organisers to ensure those heading for the events get there with minimum fuss and delays.

Drivers are advised to plan and check their travel routes in advance, and to keep up-to-date with the latest road conditions.

Traffic travelling northbound will access the festival site on the A1 for Leeds at junction 45, southbound traffic will be directed to use junction 44.

Increased levels of traffic are also expected on Monday 28 August as people leave the festival.

The A64 will be closed from 9pm on Sunday 27 August at the Bramham Interchange and the Fox and Grapes pub until mid-afternoon on Monday 28 August.

It will be completely closed eastbound at the Fox and Grapes pub and signed as closed westbound at Bramham Interchange.

Incoming traffic for pick up will use junction 44 of the A1(M) turning left onto the A64 towards Leeds. Non-festival traffic is advised to consider alternative routes or allow more time for their journey.

Highways England will use its electronic message signs on approaching motorways to give drivers information about any diversions and delays, and provide [up-to-the minute traffic information](#) via local radio and our website.

All routes to the festival will be well signed and information can be found on the [Leeds Festival website](#).

General enquiries

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Media enquiries

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