

'Polar Preet' embarks on 700-mile trek to the South Pole

Self-titled 'Polar Preet', Captain Chandi is in the final phase of her rigorous training ahead of the 45-day challenge, where she will endure temperatures of up to -50 degrees Celsius and wind speeds of up to 60mph.

The British-born Indian Sikh's preparation has been underway for two years and included various extensive training exercises such as dragging tyres to simulate pulling a 90kg sled. Earlier this year, Preet headed to Greenland for a 27-day 'warm up' expedition encountering gruelling weather conditions. She will head to Antarctica in November and, if she completes the unsupported trek, will pull and carry all her equipment without resupply.

Defence Minister Leo Docherty said:

People are Defence's best asset and Preet's determination and drive to complete this momentous challenge is a true testament to that. The physical and mental resilience shown during her preparations is something we can all learn from. Preet shows that people from all backgrounds can achieve incredible things through a career in the Armed Forces.

We all wish Preet the very best of luck and will be eagerly following her progress.

At a launch event held at The Shard on 21 October, Preet spoke to guests about the physical and mental training she endured ahead of the trek. Equipment she will be carrying with her such as a pulk (a Nordic small sled), cooker, freeze-dried food and specialist clothing were also on display highlighting the extensive preparation she has undergone and the enormity of the challenge ahead.

Brigadier Lizzie Faithfull-Davies CBE, Commander 102 Logistics Brigade said:

It is genuinely inspiring to watch Captain Harpreet Chandi's polar ambition turn into reality and every aspect of her preparation demonstrates the values and standards that are so important to the British Army.

We are delighted to have such a talented and determined officer in 102 Logistic Brigade who can set such a great example to all our people about how to turn a dream into reality. We will all be avidly watching and supporting her endeavours from afar and, from the whole brigade, we wish Polar Preet the very best for her expedition.

Preet joined the Army in 2008 and has served for 13 years, including supporting the Covid-19 vaccination efforts in recent months. She had never camped or hiked prior to joining, it was participation in Adventurous Training which sparked her passion and drive to complete this incredible feat. Preet has already set her sights higher and plans to also complete a solo and unsupported full crossing of the continent from coast to coast.

Captain Harpreet Chandi said:

There is so much to prepare for an expedition like this and I'm really proud to be representing the Army. As I started to train for it, I learned more about it and it just shows the more you do, the more you realise you're capable of.

So, wherever you're from, whatever experience you've got, if you want to go out and do something different, take that first step and go for it.

[Scotland to benefit from UK trade deal with New Zealand](#)

- Prime Minister seals free trade deal with New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern
- Boost to British exporters and small businesses as both countries ditch tariffs and cut red tape
- More opportunities to live and work in New Zealand and deeper cooperation on digital trade and climate change

A comprehensive trade agreement with New Zealand will cut red tape for businesses, end tariffs on UK exports and create new opportunities for tech and services companies, while making it easier for UK professionals to live and work in New Zealand.

The ground-breaking deal was agreed in a video call between Prime Minister Boris Johnson and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, after 16 months of talks by Department for International Trade negotiators.

UK-New Zealand trade was worth £2.3 billion last year and is set to grow under the deal. The deal will remove barriers to trade and deepen access for our advanced tech and services companies, while making it easier for smaller businesses to break into the New Zealand market.

Tariffs as high as 10% will be removed on a huge range of UK goods, from clothing and footwear to buses, ships, bulldozers and excavators, giving British exporters an advantage over international rivals in the New Zealand import market - a market which is expected to grow by around 30% by

2030. High-quality New Zealand products loved by British consumers, from Sauvignon Blanc wine to Manuka honey and kiwi fruits, will be cheaper to buy.

UK workers will benefit from improved business travel arrangements and professionals such as lawyers and architects will be able to work in New Zealand more easily, allowing UK companies to set up shop and bring the best British talent with them. Both sides have also committed to a mobility dialogue outside the trade agreement that will consider how people-to-people links can be deepened further.

The New Zealand trade deal follows advanced free trade agreements already struck with Australia and Japan and helps pave the way for UK to join Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a free trade area of 11 Pacific nations with a GDP of £8.4 trillion in 2020.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

This is great trade deal for the United Kingdom, cementing our long friendship with New Zealand and furthering our ties with the Indo-Pacific.

It will benefit businesses and consumers across the country, cutting costs for exporters and opening up access for our workers.

This is a fantastic week for Global Britain. On Tuesday we raised almost £10bn in investment for the industries of the future, and this new deal will help drive green growth here and on the other side of the world in New Zealand.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said:

The United Kingdom and New Zealand are great friends and close partners. The historical connections that bind us run deep.

This world-leading free trade agreement lays the foundations for even stronger connections as both countries embark on a new phase in our relationship. It is good for our economies, our businesses and our people.

The deal will provide benefits for people and businesses across the UK:

- Edinburgh's financial and insurance services companies will benefit from greater access to New Zealand's market and easier digital trade and business travel.
- Welsh auto companies that exported £3.4m of road vehicles to New Zealand last year will now benefit from the removal of tariffs of up to 10%, while manufacturing companies like Zip-Clip and K-form will also see the removal of tariffs up to 5% on metal goods and construction products.

- Northern Ireland's Wrightbus, from Ballymena, will benefit from the removal of a 10% tariff on buses, helping to boost £2.4m of road vehicle exports to New Zealand last year. Textile producers, such as Ulster Weavers, who exported £1.5m to New Zealand last year, will also benefit from the removal of tariffs of up to 10%.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

This deal is a win-win for two like-minded democracies who believe in free and fair trade. It delivers for families, workers and businesses across Britain, and sets the stage for greater cooperation between our two nations on global challenges like digital trade and climate change.

It is a vital part of our plan to level up the country: slashing costs and red tape for exporters, building new trade routes for our services companies and refocusing Britain on the dynamic economies of Asia-Pacific.

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

This modern and progressive trade deal with New Zealand is hugely exciting for Scotland and the whole of the UK.

Our thriving financial services sector, whisky and food producers are set to receive a boost, while our auto-industry will benefit from the removal of tariffs of between 5% and 10% on vehicles.

As well as bringing new opportunities to Scottish farmers who produce globally sought after produce, the deal also lays the foundations for access to the fast-growing Asian market through accession to CPTPP – a huge free trade area of 11 Pacific nations with a GDP of £9 trillion in 2019.

I know our New Zealand trade envoy, David Mundell, will be banging the drum for Scottish exports as this great deal takes effect.

[Stammering: what it is and how an employee network is helping](#)

As active members (and in Michael and Paul's case, founder members) of the Nuclear Stammering Network, there are probably no better people to help us understand the impact of stammering than Michael Wright, Paul Martin and

David Adams.

Or better people to provide support.

For up to 3% of all adults, stammering will be a lifelong condition. That's one of the reasons why days like today's International Stammering Awareness Day is so important.

For those who stammer, the hardest thing to say is often their own name

When he isn't working as an outage planning engineer at Sellafield, Michael dedicates his time to helping those who stammer, and educating those who don't.

He said:

At a basic level, someone who stammers will repeat, prolong or get stuck on sounds or words.

There are two types of stammers, an overt stammer and a covert one.

With an overt stammer you will clearly see the struggles that the person is having with the repetitive sounds they may make.

Then there is covert where the person is always analysing what they are saying, switching and swapping words around to words that they can say without stammering.

Paul Martin, a project manager at Sellafield, added:

Both types are mentally and physically draining.

But there is so much more to it. It's a bit like an iceberg, there are parts that you can see like the person stammering, shaking their head or making rapid eye movements.

But what you don't see is the self-doubt, shame, fear, anxiety, loneliness, depression and feelings of incompetence that the person is also dealing with.

You might assume that complicated words or sentences are the biggest challenge for someone with a stammer, but actually the hardest thing for them to say is their own name".

The pandemic brought new challenges

Michael and Paul helped to set up the Nuclear Stammering Network back in 2016. Their mission is to champion the needs of people who stammer and to

encourage the nuclear industry to provide support throughout people's careers, regardless of their role or area of work.

They work with people across Sellafield Ltd but also within our local communities of Copeland and Allerdale in West Cumbria.

Covid and the subsequent national lockdowns were challenging for everyone as people adapted to working from home, but for those with a stammer it was a struggle.

Michael said:

In the early days of the pandemic, before our IT teams were able to roll out video conferencing to everyone, there was a reliance on telephone conference calls in place of face-to-face meetings.

People who stammer will try and avoid the use of telephones at all costs, even when they are in the office. They cause anxiety and stress because they may be overheard and judged on their speech when making calls.

And you can't see the other people on the call or their reactions, and the call might include people you've never met before.

So, in those early days people were faced with their biggest nemesis – making telephone calls – on a daily basis, sometimes several times a day”.

When Sellafield Ltd introduced Microsoft Teams for holding meetings, Michael and members of the stammering network were relieved.

Paul explained:

Teams brings back the face-to-face element of meetings, and our members have told us that the platform is really helping their confidence to grow as they embrace this new way of communicating”.

Covid also brought opportunities

The use of video conferencing platforms meant that Michael, Paul and others were able to support the network members and people in the local community throughout lockdown.

Michael said:

Some people really struggled during lockdown, not only with their speech but with the sense of isolation. We were able to set up support sessions using Zoom and these were really well received.

There are numerous tools and techniques that help people with a stammer gain control of their speech. A residential session with The Starfish Project helped me to learn costal breathing. It's what opera singers use when signing".

Paul added:

Having a remote platform to share awareness of these tools, techniques and courses available, as well as a safe space for people to practice their speech, has been so important.

The network is going global

In July 2020 Michael and fellow Starfish Project member, Chloe Powell, set up a Facebook group to take the support available global.

'Stand Up To Stammering' now has almost 700 members from all around the world and has received recognition from the British Stammering Association for the good work they are doing.

Senior project inspector David Adams helps to run the Facebook group on a day-to-day basis.

David explains how the group works:

Me, Michael, or another of the admin team will go live in the group and ask a stammer related question for members to reply to. It is completely up to each member whether they reply with a pre-recorded video of their own or whether they too go live in the group.

It is a safe environment for members to practice their speech without being judged, somewhere to go if they are experiencing difficult times and a place to celebrate their achievements.

We also have fortnightly support groups via zoom".

Michael added:

It's amazing to watch a member join the group with little confidence as well as a sheer difficulty in speaking, and watch them progress by engaging in the daily challenges you can clearly see their confidence grow and their speech improve. That's why we do what we do.

Understanding stammering is one way we can all help

What three things do they wish people without a stammer knew about stammering?

Michael started the list:

I'd like everyone to know that stammering is not caused by anxiety or stress, but people may stammer more when stressed or anxious.

David added:

For people to know that there is no link between stammering and intellectual capacity. And it has nothing to do with flaws in someone's character".

Their final thought was unanimous:

For people to know that you can help someone with a stammer. Give them time to speak, and maintain eye contact with them, and let them know that our support network doors are open to them".

[UK funds £3 M to Malagasy families facing drought and food crisis](#)

Press release

UK aid helping people in southern Madagascar to face food crisis due to severe droughts and failed rains.



people in southern Madagascar

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomes a contribution of £3 million (US\$4.1 million, equivalent to 15 trillion Malagasy ariary) from the United Kingdom towards its assistance to people in the regions of Androy, Anosy and Atsimo Andrefana, in southern Madagascar. This funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) will support some of the 1.3 million people affected by the worst drought in a decade in the South of the country.

British Ambassador David Ashley said: "I am pleased that the UK is able to contribute further to the humanitarian response in the south of Madagascar, following our grant to UNICEF earlier in the year. Our new grant to WFP will enable 100,000 people to access sufficient food over a period of five months. The desperate situation in southern Madagascar only reinforces the importance of the world taking concerted action against climate change and in support of climate vulnerable countries at COP26 next month in Glasgow."

The contribution through FCDO will enable WFP to support 100,000 people with cash-based assistance as part of the drought responses in the South of Madagascar. Each household will receive MGA 100,000 per month. "We are extremely grateful for the support of the United Kingdom, at this critical time, of WFP's emergency response to support vulnerable people in southern Madagascar. Their food and nutritional situation remains alarming while we are only at the beginning of the lean season," said WFP Representative in Madagascar, Pasqualina Disirio.

At least 1.3 million people need emergency food and nutrition assistance in southern Madagascar, the only place in the world right now where "famine-like conditions" have been driven by climate not conflict. An almost total disappearance of food sources has pushed people to desperate survival measures such as eating locusts, raw red cactus fruits or wild leaves and tubers.

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Government seeks views on the management of sandeels and Norway pout

News story

UK is seeking views on the management of sandeel stocks and Norway pout to address stock declines.



UK to use freedoms as an independent coastal state to explore new measures to address sandeel stock declines.

Today (22 October 2021), the government is launching a call for evidence seeking views on potential measures to manage stocks of sandeel and Norway pout in UK waters.

Sandeels and Norway pout are highly sensitive to changing environmental conditions and the increased effects of climate change, alongside industrial fishing methods, are negatively impacting stocks in the North Sea.

Commercial fish stocks and marine mammals such as seabirds, cetaceans and seals rely on sandeels and Norway pout as a food source and the decline in stocks is affecting the resilience of seabird populations and their ability to respond to climate change. Kittiwakes, an iconic seabird species, are already in decline due to a lack of prey during the breeding season.

Without the constraints of the Common Fisheries Policy, as an independent coastal state the UK Government has the power to look at potential new measures to better protect sandeels. The call for evidence will assess the increasing pressures which could result in further declines of these fish and the marine wildlife reliant on them.

Fisheries Minister, Victoria Prentis said:

As an independent coastal state, we can now manage our waters in a way that protects and encourages the recovery of our marine environment and supports the long-term health of our fisheries.

We are committed to having a world-class, sustainable fishing industry and this call for evidence is an important step to address pressures facing sandeels and vulnerable seabird species.

Kirsten Carter, Marine Principle Policy Officer at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) said:

We greatly welcome this review, and urge a fundamental overhaul of how the industrial fishery for forage species is managed.

With compelling evidence that the sandeel fishery is compounding climate-induced declines in sandeels and the UK seabirds they support, much stronger curbs on these fisheries and their catch limits are needed to guarantee enough of the stock for seabirds and other marine wildlife, including struggling cod stocks.

The call for evidence opens on 22nd October and will last for four weeks. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to share their views on the following areas:

- The value of sandeels and Norway pout to the marine ecosystem
- The ecological, economic and social impact of the sandeel and Norway pout fisheries in UK waters
- Change of management approaches for sandeel and Norway pout stocks
- The Ecological, Economic and Social impact of introduction of restrictions in these fisheries.

Managing fishing activities to promote biodiversity growth contributes to the government's commitment to achieving a healthy, sustainable and economically viable marine environment.

More information can be found here: [Future management of Sandeel and Norway pout in UK waters: call for evidence – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-management-of-sandeel-and-norway-pout-in-uk-waters-call-for-evidence)

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