

Defence Secretary reaffirms UK commitment to Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific region is vital to our strategic interests. The UK is deepening and expanding our defence relationships with key partners in the region to tackle changing global threats.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace MP said:

My visit this week to the Indo-Pacific region was a fantastic opportunity to engage with our Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese partners and deepen our enduring defence relationships.

Exemplified by the deployment of the Carrier Strike Group, Global Britain continues to step forward with our partners in the Indo-Pacific to address shared security challenges and changing global threats.

The Defence Secretary has also confirmed that two Offshore Patrol Vessels – HMS Tamar and HMS Spey – will be deployed permanently to the Indo-Pacific to support maritime security in the region.

The Carrier Strike Group will shortly arrive off Singapore and operate in the Indo-Pacific region over the coming months.

This deployment is the embodiment of Global Britain in action. The strike group boosts our links with key partners and helps address global security challenges such as terrorism, regional instability, and hostile state and non-state actors. Countering these threats alongside our partners in the Indo-Pacific is vital for the UK's own security.

As the Integrated Review announced in March, the Carrier Strike group deployment marks the start of a more persistent presence by UK Defence in the Indo-Pacific region over the coming years, re-affirming long standing defence and security partnerships and forging new ones with like-minded partners.

In Japan, the Defence Secretary met with Japanese Prime Minister Suga and Defence Minister Kishi. Our bi-lateral relationship with Japan is the closest it has been in the last century. Both the UK and Japan have a long-standing commitment to upholding regional security and promoting a unified approach to global challenges. They also agreed to accelerate discussions between the UK and Japan on developing sub-systems for a future combat air system.

Our three-year defence engagement plan with Japan will allow the UK Armed Forces to work in a much more integrated way with the Japan Self-Defense Forces. This will turn our strategic ambitions with Japan into a tangible

reality.

The Defence Secretary then travelled to the Republic of Korea, where he laid a wreath at the national war memorial alongside Defence Minister Suh Wook, and visited the Joint Security Area within the Demilitarized Zone between the Republic of Korea and North Korea. The visit was a stark reminder of the Korean War and the need to continue to work towards peace on the Korean peninsula.

The UK and the Republic of Korea continue to collaborate on challenging regional security threats, including conducting joint exercises and military training together. The two countries also work closely around the world on peacekeeping missions and addressing global humanitarian issues, such as the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan.

Next month, the Republic of Korea will also host the Pacific Future Forum. Held onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth while alongside in the Republic of Korea, the three day event is an opportunity for policy makers and industry leaders to discuss issues around defence, security, technology and to promote free trade.

Finally, the Defence Secretary visited Vietnam where he laid a wreath at the Hanoi War Memorial and paid respects at the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum. He then met with Minister of National Defence, Snr Lt Gen Phan Van Giang, President of State Nguyễn Xuân Phúc and Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính to discuss expanding the defence engagement between our two countries.

He also had the opportunity to meet with the Vietnamese UN peacekeepers to whom UK personnel on Op TRENTON handed over to in South Sudan in 2019, following their construction of a Level 2 hospital.

[New UK Government Covid testing site opens in Aberdeen](#)

The UK Government has today, Friday 23 July, opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen.

The test centre is located at Car Park 4, Garthdee Campus, Robert Gordon University, AB10 7AQ. It is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises of eight drive through sites, more than 50 walk-through sites, 42 mobile units, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

In Scotland, the UK Government is providing all COVID testing and test processing outside of the NHS.

PCR tests must be booked in advance at: [NHS Inform](#) or by calling 119. People should only book a test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) or have been instructed to do so by a clinician or NHS contact tracer.

Lateral flow test kits are also now available for pick up without an appointment at the majority of our local walk-in or drive-through test sites from 3.30pm each day. Tests can also be ordered online or by phone by calling 119. For more information and to order a test kit online, go to: Coronavirus (COVID-19): getting tested in Scotland – [gov.scot](#)

Health Minister, Lord Bethell, said:

We have built the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities in British history to ensure that everyone can get tested for covid-19 regularly. As a result, the UK is now a testing juggernaut, performing more tests than any comparable European country, which is helping to break chains of transmission, save lives and detect variants of concern.

New walk-in sites like this one make it even easier to get a test no matter where you live. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, I urge you to book a test today and follow the advice of NHS Test and Trace if you are contacted, to protect others and stop the spread of the virus.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of testing in Scotland, a programme which is vital to our recovery from this pandemic. Alongside the roll-out of UK Government-funded vaccines, testing is helping us to manage the virus, slow down the rate of transmission and protect communities.

I'd like to thank the public for continuing to do the right thing by coming forward to be tested.

This new walk-through facility in Aberdeen is the latest in our extensive network of testing centres supporting people in all parts of the UK.

Vicki Nairn, Vice Principal Corporate Operations at Robert Gordon University said:

Robert Gordon University welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the local COVID-19 testing programme by offering our campus as a testing site.

This will not only benefit the wider community in this area but our own staff and students as they look to return to campus to begin the new term in September.

We will continue to support the UK and Scottish governments and the NHS in their wider efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Simon Venn, Mitie Chief Government & Strategy Officer, said:

Our priority during the pandemic is to support the nation's efforts to fight COVID-19 and help keep the country running. Testing is a critical part of the UK's strategy to combat coronavirus and we're proud to support the UK Government with this vital task. A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline heroes in Aberdeen who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.

[One week left to renew for 300,000 tax credits customers](#)

More than 300,000 tax credits customers have just over one week to renew their claims before the 31 July 2021 deadline, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has warned.

As the deadline approaches, customers are being urged not to leave their renewal until the last minute and risk their payments being stopped. The quickest and easiest way to complete a renewal is via GOV.UK.

Once tax credits customers have completed their renewal, they can use their online account to check its progress and find out when they will hear back from HMRC.

This year, about 28,000 customers have used the [official HMRC app](#) on their smartphone to renew their tax credits. The app allows customers to:

- report any tax credits changes and complete their renewal
- check their tax credits payments schedule
- find out how much they have earned for the year

Myrtle Lloyd, HMRC's Director General for Customer Services, said:

Tax credits payments can provide our customers with vital financial support. There is just one week left to renew your claim – don't delay and do it online by searching 'tax credits' on GOV.UK.

Customers do not need to report any temporary falls in their working hours as a result of coronavirus. Unless their hours have permanently changed, they will continue to be treated as if they are working their normal hours for up to eight weeks after the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme closes. Any self-employed individuals who have claimed a Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant will need to declare the grant payments. Search 'working out your income for tax credit/self-employment' on GOV.UK.

But if there is a change in a customer's circumstances that could affect their tax credits, they must [report the changes to HMRC](#). These include changes to:

- living arrangements
- childcare
- working hours, or
- income (increase or decrease)

Post Office card accounts are closing. From 30 November 2021, HMRC will stop making payments of Child Benefit, Guardians Allowance and tax credits, into Post Office card accounts. HMRC is reminding any tax credits and Child Benefit customers who use this account to receive their payments, that they will need to notify HMRC of their new bank account details. HMRC is encouraging customers to act now so they do not miss any payments once their Post Office account closes. They can contact HMRC's helpline (0345 300 3900), update their details while renewing tax credits or use their Personal Tax Account. To find out how to open a bank account, visit [Citizens Advice](#).

HMRC is also urging customers to be careful if they are contacted out of the blue by someone asking for money or personal information. The department sees a high number of fraudsters calling, texting or emailing people claiming to be from HMRC. If in doubt, HMRC advises customers not to reply directly to anything suspicious, but to contact HMRC straight away and to [search GOV.UK for 'HMRC scams'](#).

Visit GOV.UK for more [information on renewing your tax credits](#).

Contact HMRC straight away if you disagree with any of the information in the letter or need to tell us about any changes.

Tax credits is being replaced by [Universal Credit](#). Customers cannot receive tax credits and Universal Credit at the same time.

Tax credits and Child Benefit customers, who use a [Post Office card account](#) to receive their payments, must notify HMRC of their new bank account details before 30 November 2021. If they miss the deadline, their payments will be suspended until a valid bank account is provided.

Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Myanmar

Press release

Mr Pete Vowles has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in succession to Mr Dan Chugg who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment.



Mr Pete Vowles has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in succession to Mr Dan Chugg who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Vowles will take up his appointment in August 2021.

Full name: Pete Vowles

Married to: Hannah Vowles

Children: Two

2018 to present	FCDO, Director, Asia, Caribbean and Overseas Territories (former Department for International Development [DFID] role)
2016 to 2018	Kenya, DFID Country Director, British High Commission Nairobi
2013 to 2016	DFID, Head of Programme Delivery
2010 to 2013	Democratic Republic of Congo, Deputy DFID Country Director, British Embassy Kinshasa
2007 to 2010	India, Head of Global Partnerships, British High Commission New Delhi
2006 to 2007	Afghanistan, Governance and Security Team Leader, British Embassy Kabul
2005 to 2006	Mott MacDonald, Health and Development Consultant
2003 to 2005	Bangladesh, Population & Health Programme Director, British High Commission Dhaka
2002 to 2003	Bangladesh, World Bank Health Adviser

2000 to 2002 National Health Service, Management Training Scheme
1999 to 2000 Raleigh International, Project Manager
1996 to 1999 Restless Development, Project Officer

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[Dr Jane Goodall named as a COP26 Advocate with 100 days to go until crucial UN climate change summit](#)

- Environmentalist and expert in the study of animal behaviour Dr Jane Goodall joins COP26 as an Advocate
- Over her 60 year research career, Dr Goodall has redefined the relationship between humans and animals
- For COP26, she will speak about forests, biodiversity and nature-based solutions in the run up to the climate change summit in Glasgow

World-renowned environmentalist Dr Jane Goodall has today been announced as a COP26 Advocate, marking 100 days to go until the crucial climate change summit in Glasgow.

As COP26 Advocate, Dr Goodall will help bring the world's attention to the importance of tackling climate change and COP26 – the most important international climate meeting since the signing of the Paris Agreement.

Dr Goodall will help raise awareness of climate change to audiences about the importance for climate action globally, highlighting the work that needs to be done to protect the planet for future generations.

She will do this by speaking to leaders and groups around the world in the run up to COP26 on this vital relationship between nature and climate.

Protecting and restoring natural habitats and ecosystems is a key focus for the UK as COP26 hosts and will be crucial to preserve the planet's biodiversity, absorb emissions, and improve our health and wellbeing.

One of the world's leading voices in conservation, Dr Goodall's writings and public speeches emphasise the connection of all living things and the

collective power of individual action.

Dr Goodall has developed a breakthrough approach to species conservation that improves the lives of people, animals and the environment, by highlighting how they are connected to each other.

COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma said:

It is a great pleasure to welcome Dr Jane Goodall as a COP26 Advocate.

At the heart of Dr Goodall's incredible career is showing why the protection of the natural environment and species matters to people and the planet.

This focus on protecting communities and natural habitats is a key goal for COP26 and so I am delighted Dr Goodall will be working with us and sharing her expertise as we head into the crucial 100 days before Glasgow.

COP26 Advocate Dr Jane Goodall said:

I am honoured to be given the title of COP26 Advocate. We have come to a turning point in our relationship with the natural world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that we must change our ways.

In my 87 years, I have seen the ice melting in Greenland and the glaciers vanishing on Mount Kilimanjaro and around the world. Forests are disappearing – deforestation means we are losing one of the lungs of the world.

In 100 days, it is crucial that world leaders come together at COP26 to take urgent action to protect our planet.

- A video message from Dr Jane Goodall is available [here](#)
- Dr Goodall has also pioneered educational initiatives, founding her youth programme Roots & Shoots in 1991 with a group of Tanzanian students. The programme now reaches young people of all ages in more than 60 countries.
- This year, the UK will host the UN climate change conference COP26, in Glasgow with our partners, Italy. This will provide an opportunity for the world to come together and commit to urgent action.
- As hosts of COP26, the UK is leading by example during this unprecedented time. Guided by science, we are investing in a green recovery which creates sustainable jobs and addresses the urgent and linked challenges of public health, climate change, and biodiversity loss.
- The UK is committed to working with all countries and joining forces

with civil society, companies and people on the frontline of climate change to inspire action ahead of COP26.

About Dr. Jane Goodall

- Dr Jane Goodall, DBE, Founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and UN Messenger of Peace is a world renowned ethologist and activist inspiring greater understanding and action on behalf of the natural world every single day.
- Dr Goodall is best known for groundbreaking studies of wild chimpanzees in Gombe Stream National Park, Tanzania, transformative research that continues to this day as the longest running wild chimpanzee study in the world.
- Dr Goodall is the founder of the Jane Goodall Institute, a global conservation, advocacy, animal welfare, research, and youth empowerment organisation, including her global Roots & Shoots programme.
- Jane has worked extensively on climate action, human rights, conservation and animal welfare issues for decades, and continues to be a central voice in the work to advance environmental progress.

About the Jane Goodall Institute

- The Jane Goodall Institute is a global community-centered conservation organisation that advances the vision and work of Dr. Jane Goodall.
- By protecting chimpanzees and other great apes through collaboration with local communities, best in class animal welfare standards and the innovative use of science and technology, we improve the lives of people, other animals and the natural world we all share.
- Founded in 1977 by Dr. Goodall, JGI inspires hope through collective action, and is growing the next generation of compassionate changemakers through its Roots & Shoots youth programme, now active in over 60 countries around the world.
- Find our more about [Dr Jane Goodall's work](#) and the [Roots & Shoots youth programme](#).