

Government reform and the Government Science and Engineering (GSE) Profession Strategy refresh

When I took up the role of government Chief Scientific Adviser and Head of the Government Science and Engineering profession in 2017, I could not have predicted the events of the last 14 months. Scientists and engineers have found themselves thrust into the limelight, while the world battled COVID-19 and a race started to find vaccines and treatments. Thankfully, we are now in a position where we have several safe and effective vaccines as well as plans in place to prepare for a future pandemic. In large part, this has been down to the hard work of scientists and engineers across academia, industry, and government both in the UK and around the world.

However, the impact of the pandemic on the UK and government needs little explanation. We have all had to work differently, to adapt, to work across departments and bring in expertise from industry and academia. We must now work together to learn lessons from the pandemic and to grasp this opportunity for change.

The [Declaration on Government Reform](#) had input from ministers and permanent secretaries across government and highlighted key areas in which the Civil Service must improve in light of the pandemic. It highlights the need to build expertise in science, engineering, data, and technology across government. This builds on the recommendations made in the [Science Capability Review](#) where we called for greater science and engineering skills and capability to be developed within departments. I know that the GSE profession has superb people at every level, working across a wide range of science and engineering disciplines. We must now act together to build an enduring science and engineering capability within government that is equipped to face the challenges of the future.

The Declaration on Government Reform also calls on us to champion innovation, science, and technology and to continue to forge close bonds with colleagues in industry and academia. Over the last 14 months we have all innovated and learnt from each other by providing challenging and creative solutions to problems. When dealing with problems and supporting our colleague with policy we should continue to ask ourselves “how can science and technology help?”. The success of the vaccine rollout has shown the value of partnering with academia and industry to deliver government objectives. We will continue to work with institutions outside of government by drawing on their knowledge and collaborating where possible. This will be essential as we emerge from the pandemic and refocus on complex, cross-cutting global issues such as climate change.

Going forward, we will publish a refreshed GSE Profession Strategy ([see the 2016 version](#)). Building on the opportunities highlighted in the Government Reform Declaration and the recommendations in the Science Capability Review,

the strategy will lay out my ambitions for the GSE profession. It will focus on 6 key areas of action illustrating how the GSE profession can build on our knowledge, talent, and networks to achieve these objectives. We are already a diverse and knowledgeable profession and during the pandemic we have provided an unprecedented level of scientific support and guidance. This strategy will support the GSE profession by capitalising on our work so far and positioning us as the first port of call for scientific knowledge and expertise.

These objectives are challenging but reflect my ambition for the GSE profession and science and engineering capability across government. With your support, we will continue to build on the hard work and lessons learnt over the past year and act together to put science and engineering at the heart of government decision making.

New UK funding to boost education for children in conflict zones

- UK aid money will help provide better schooling in countries suffering long-term crises
- Research will focus on six countries which are home to 3 million refugee and displaced children
- Pledge comes ahead of UK-Kenya hosted Global Education Summit in London later this month

The Foreign Secretary today announced new UK aid funding to find the most effective ways to give the world's most vulnerable children an education.

It will address a chronic lack of research into the best methods to provide schooling in conflicts and long-term crises around the world.

The £15.8 million research project will focus on northern Nigeria, South Sudan, Myanmar, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. These areas are all affected by conflict and are currently home to an estimated 3 million children who are either refugees or internally displaced.

Children whose lives have been impacted by wars, political unrest and natural disasters often suffer a severe disruption to their learning, with life-long consequences.

This is most acute at the primary and lower secondary level, where vital reading and writing skills are taught. Girls are disproportionately affected. Even before the pandemic, only half of refugee girls were in school. Girls living in conflicts are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school. Now, due to the impact of Covid-19, 20 million girls are at risk of permanently dropping out of school in the next year.

The new UK-backed research comes ahead of the Global Education Summit, hosted by the Prime Minister in London in late July. It will raise money for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), an organisation which aims to transform education for children worldwide give 175 million children the opportunity to learn.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

We believe that every girl and every boy should receive a quality education, no matter where they live.

This research will find better ways to teach the world's most vulnerable children who are caught up in conflict and long term crisis to receive a better education.

Without access to schooling and effective teaching, many children are at risk of falling behind and dropping out of education permanently. A staggering 20 million girls globally are at risk of permanently dropping out of school in the next year, leaving them more vulnerable to child marriage, gender-based violence, human trafficking and sexual abuse.

The research, which will launch in September, will inform education programmes and policies worldwide.

Previous research in this field has helped shape schooling in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where two in every three children who start school leave by the age of 11 or 12. The research has helped keep some of the country's most traumatised children in school, by creating a secure and nurturing environment.

[Consultation open around CNC role](#)

News story

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy launches consultation on the role and remit of the Civil Nuclear Constabulary



The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has recently launched a consultation on the role and remit of the Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC), giving interested parties the chance to have their say on the issue.

The CNC is the armed police force in charge of protecting civil nuclear sites and nuclear materials in England, Scotland and Wales. The consultation seeks views on whether legislation should be introduced to amend the remit and powers of the Civil Nuclear Constabulary.

Chief Constable Simon Chesterman said: “As a part of the wider policing family, our core role at the CNC remains the security and protection of the nation’s civil nuclear infrastructure and failure to deliver this is not an option. The CNC and CNPAs core objective in the project is to maintain our core Mission and to remain effective, efficient and relevant through a period of change in the civil nuclear sector.

“Our Ambition is to be recognised nationally and internationally as the United Kingdom’s leading organisation for the provision of protective policing for the civil nuclear industry and other critical national infrastructure.

“This consultation will investigate whether changing the legislation will allow us to utilise our expertise in deterrence and armed response, either to support other critical infrastructure sites or to assist other police forces in an emergency. I would urge anyone who lives in an area with a site we protect, or who works in either the policing or nuclear sector to have a read and see what we hope to achieve with the support of BEIS as our sponsoring government department.”

[Read the BEIS Consultation](#)

Published 12 July 2021

Nigeria and UK's joint candidate for the International Law Commission visits Abuja

Professor Akande held a series of meetings, including with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. His unprecedented joint nomination by Nigeria, Kenya, Japan, Slovenia and the UK, underscores the breadth of experience that he offers.

As well as being one of the UK's finest legal minds, we have formally nominated him together alongside Nigeria. Professor Akande was born in Nigeria where he first qualified as a barrister. For a Western European and Others Group (WEOG) candidate he has a unique breadth of perspective and expertise in Africa that will make a significant contribution to the work of the International Legal Commission.

Professor Akande has shaped views on international law in Africa, as a member of editorial or advisory boards such as of the African Association of International Law, and the Nigerian and Ethiopian Yearbooks of International Law, and through his work as a consultant to the African Union, and the Commonwealth.

Professor Akande has acted as a counsel/advocate for several African states at the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, as well as advising their national governments. He has also organised legal training for the Nigerian Army and Public Prosecutor's Office, and for government officials/judges in Sudan.

During the visit, Professor Akande said:

I am very grateful for the enthusiastic support I have received since I announced my candidacy and I welcome backing from all countries. Given the important role the ILC plays in the development of international law, it will be a great privilege to be able to offer my perspective, experience and expertise to make what I hope will be a significant contribution to the work of the International Law Commission.

British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Catriona Laing said:

It is an honour and privilege to host Professor Dapo Akande in Abuja today. He is an outstanding scholar and lawyer and it is wonderful that the UK and Nigeria are jointly nominating him for a position on the International Law Commission. This further demonstrates the strength of our partnership and our people-people ties.

Ambassador Adamu Onoze Shuaibu on behalf of Nigeria's Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Geoffrey Onyeamea, said:

It is pertinent to disclose that the Nigerian Government is working assiduously and has embarked on a rigorous campaign for the support of our co-nominee, Professor Dapo Akande, through our diplomatic missions across the globe. I also extend Nigeria's appreciation to the British Government for its altruism in availing a veritable platform to co-nominate an eminent academic and astute legal practitioner.

Further information

Professor Dapo Akande

- as well as being one of the UK's finest legal minds, Professor Akande was born and first qualified as a barrister in Nigeria. Nigeria has formally nominated him alongside the UK, Kenya, Slovenia and Japan. He has a unique breadth of perspective and expertise in Africa that will make a significant contribution to the work of the ILC
- Professor Akande has acted as a counsel/advocate for several African states at the ICJ and ITLOS, as well as advising their national governments. He has also organised legal training for the Nigerian Army and Public Prosecutor's Office, and for government officials/judges in Sudan

The International Law Commission

- the ILC considers areas of international law and suggests clarification, codification or improvement
- the ILC consists of 34 members, drawn from the UN regional groups. It shapes international law through its influential reports and proposals, and its recommendations often relate to issues of importance to the development of the law

Government to boost support for Northern Ireland agri-food traders

Traders moving agri-food from Great Britain to Northern Ireland will benefit from increased Government support until the end of 2023, Defra has announced today (Monday 12 July 2021).

The Movement Assistance Scheme helps traders by covering certain certification costs incurred when moving agri-food products.

Since it was launched in December 2020, the scheme has helped more than 140 businesses, with the cost of more than 11,400 certificates and 1,300 inspection hours covered. The announcement of further support today demonstrates the efforts the Government has made to operationalise the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Alongside the extension to the end of December 2023, the scheme will also be expanded to cover costs related to:

- scrapies testing for sheep exports
- sample testing and certification required for individual seed lots
- the Plant Health Exports Audited Trader Scheme (PHEATS) (from 1 August)
- exporters in Great Britain who move organics solely to Northern Ireland, and Northern Irish importers who face new costs to receive these goods from Great Britain (from 1 August)

Farming, Fisheries and Food Minister Victoria Prentis said

The Movement Assistance Scheme provides essential support to agri-food traders moving goods under the Protocol.

Extending and expanding the scheme means that we can offer further help to businesses affected by new rules, and it demonstrates the efforts the Government has made to operationalise the Protocol.

Despite this extra support, we know that the Protocol is causing disruption for many businesses. That is why we are working with the EU to try and resolve the issues. If solutions cannot be found, we will consider all options available to us. We will present our approach to Parliament before the summer recess.

Since 1 January 2021, there have been new requirements for inspection and certification when moving agri-food and similar goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Authorised traders, such as supermarkets and their trusted suppliers, currently benefit from a grace period from certification requirements for products of animal origin, composite products, food and feed of non-animal origin and plants and plant products as well as organic products.

The Government has proposed a trusted trader scheme to the EU so that traders could benefit from streamlined certification requirements, without any compromise to existing high biosecurity standards on the island of Ireland.

Background

[Guidance on the scheme and moving agri-food goods to and from Northern Ireland](#) is available on gov.uk.

If you would like further information on moving agri-food goods from GB to NI, please contact the Movement Assistance Scheme (MAS) helpline on 0330 0416 580. MAS can help you by offering support and advice, and information around GB to NI processes and policy. The helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (excluding bank holidays).

Last week, Lord Frost announced that the Government is considering its next steps and will set out its approach on the Protocol to Parliament before summer recess. More information available here: [Government to set out way forward on the Northern Ireland Protocol to Parliament](#).