

Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Afghanistan: Laurie Bristow

Press release

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Sir Laurie Bristow KCMG has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in succession to Ms Alison Blake CMG. Sir Laurie will take up his appointment during June 2021.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Laurence Bristow

Married to: Fiona Bristow

Children: Two

Date	Role
2020	Cabinet Office/FCDO: COP26 Regional Ambassador for China, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa
2016 to 2020	Moscow, Her Majesty's Ambassador
2012 to 2015	FCO, Director, National Security
2010 to 2012	FCO, Director, Eastern Europe and Central Asia
2007 to 2010	Moscow, Minister and Deputy Head of Mission
2004 to 2007	Baku, Her Majesty's Ambassador
2003	FCO, Deputy Director, Iraq Planning Unit/Iraq Policy Unit
2002 to 2003	NATO Defence College, Rome (Senior Officers' course)
1999 to 2002	Ankara, Head of Political Section
1996 to 1998	FCO, Private Secretary to the Minister of State for Europe
1995 to 1996	FCO, Head of Trade Policy Section, Europe Union Department
1995	FCO, Gibraltar Desk, Southern European Department
1992 to 1995	Bucharest, Second Secretary

Date	Role
1990 to 1991	FCO, Taiwan Desk Officer, Far Eastern Department
1990	Joined FCO

Further information

All the latest news is available on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office page of the gov.uk website at: www.gov.uk/fcdo

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[Footage shows driver on phone narrowly avoid hitting police in HGV 'supercab'](#)

But what he didn't realise was the vehicle he almost hit was a Highways England unmarked 'supercab.' – and there were two police officers inside.

[Near-miss as driver on phone at the wheel](#)

The recent footage, taken on the M40 by Warwickshire Police, captures one of over 21,000 offences recorded by officers in the Operation Tramline HGV cabs since the national safety initiative was launched by Highways England.

In another clip captured by the force, a lorry driver is seen looking down and texting on his phone as he travels along the motorway. When he spots the police officers in the next lane he simply shrugs and puts his thumb up.

[Driver sending texts is caught on camera](#)

While a car driver, oblivious to the police officers in the HGV cab alongside him, has a mobile phone in his right hand in this incident – until he hears the police siren sound behind and puts the phone down.

[Caught on camera – car driver using mobile phone](#)

The Highways England HGV cabs are now being used as part of a multi-agency Week of Action on the M6, taking place from Monday 24 May to Sunday 30 May, which aims to reduce the number of incidents on the motorway and highlight the risks of dangerous driving.

Under the banner of Operation Vertebrae, the campaign takes place along the length of the M6, the longest motorway in the country. Highways England deals with around 180 reported incidents on the M6 every day. These include a large number of traffic collisions with 4,222 reported on the M6 in 2019.

Since the launch of Operation Tramline in 2015, more than 21,600 offences have been recorded. The most common offences have included:

- Using a mobile phone – 6,073
- Not wearing a seatbelt – 6,253
- Not in proper control of vehicle – 1,501
- Speeding – 1,199

In total, 19,564 vehicles were stopped in Operation Tramline between July 2015 and April 2021.

Highways England Head of Road Safety Jeremy Phillips said:

The Operation Tramline cabs are an important part of our commitment to tackling dangerous driving and those who take unnecessary risks with their own safety and that of others on the road.

The number of people found using their mobile phone while driving is quite alarming. You are four times more likely to be in a crash if you use your phone and, if caught, face a £200 fine and six points on your licence.

Through this week of action on the M6 we want to make all of our roads safer by raising awareness and encouraging motorists to consider their driving behaviour.

The Operation Tramline 'supercab' which patrols motorways and major A roads

From their elevated viewpoint in the unmarked HGV cabs, police officers are able to spot people driving dangerously – whatever vehicle they may be in.

Among the incidents witnessed during Operation Tramline was a driver steering a lorry with his knees while eating lunch on his lap and also using his phone in the East Midlands. While in West Mercia, officers saw a driver eating lasagne with a knife and fork while driving along a motorway.

Surrey Police spotted a HGV driver boiling a kettle on the dashboard and another eating pickled gherkins from a jar with his elbows on the steering wheel.

One driver was caught twice in one day – in the morning and afternoon – using their mobile phone while driving along the A38 in Derbyshire.

Consequences for the drivers range from warnings to fixed penalty notices, court summons or even arrest. In addition to the supercab patrols, partners taking part in the M6 week of action will be present at motorway services offering advice to drivers such as what to do in a breakdown and ensuring load safety.

Vehicle checks will also be carried out involving the DVSA, Health and Safety

Executive and the Home Office. Six forces are taking part in Operation Vertebrae – Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire, Warwickshire Police and Central Motorway Police Group, as well as the North West Commercial Vehicle Unit.

Police forces across the country have been patrolling in the supercabs since 2015

National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Roads Policing Chief Constable Anthony Bangham said:

Operation Tramline is a successful collaboration between the police and Highways England.

We remain committed to tackling those who take unnecessary risks with their own safety and the safety of others on our roads by allowing themselves to be distracted while driving. The consequences of these actions are often devastating. We will continue to work alongside Highways England on Operation Tramline and will prosecute drivers who ignore the risks.

Marian Kitson, DVSA's Director of Enforcement, said:

DVSA's priority is protecting everyone from unsafe vehicles and drivers. We're delighted to be a part of this key road safety exercise. During the week, DVSA will be carrying out safety checks on caravans and small trailers as well as our normal commercial vehicle and driver inspections.

Many caravans and small trailers have been parked up over winter, so we're urging drivers who are new to towing or haven't towed for a while to carry out some simple checks

The DVSA caravan and small trailer checks, that we'll carry out as part of Operation Vertebrae, should take around 20 minutes each. We'll check safety features including lights, tyres, breakaway cable and brakes. If a caravan or small trailer isn't safe, the driver will be unable to continue their journey until the defect is fixed.

HSE Transport Sector spokesperson Nina Day said:

Employers must ensure that drivers, other workers, and members of the public are kept safe when vehicles are used for work. There are legal requirements for employers to have robust procedures in place to manage vehicle safety, including ensuring suitable procedures are in place, providing workers with appropriate training and

equipment, maintaining equipment and vehicles, and supporting drivers when they raise concerns.

HSE works closely with our partner agencies to help vehicle operators and load consignors understand their legal responsibilities.

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.

[Survey of explosives contamination in the environment](#)

News story

Dstl scientists will be conducting a routine survey, which is not connected to any specific threat.



Scientists from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) will shortly conduct an environmental survey across a number of different locations to detect and identify traces of explosives that are present in the general environment. The data is used to understand the level of explosive traces in our environment and can be used to interpret evidence gathered at potential crime scenes to aid the criminal justice system and maintain the security of the UK.

Surveys such as this are routine and this work is not connected to any specific threat.

The location types to be sampled are:

- taxis
- buses
- trains and underground trains
- train and underground stations
- airports
- passenger aircraft
- stadia
- shopping centres
- hotels
- town and city centres

To prevent contamination of the sample locations, personnel undertaking the survey will be fully suited in protective clothing. The sampling techniques used are non-invasive, non-toxic and leave no residue.

The collected samples will be analysed at the Dstl [Forensic Explosives Laboratory \(FEL\)](#), an internationally recognised leading authority in the detection and identification of explosive traces.

FEL staff attend scenes of crime relating to explosives, and painstakingly analyse evidence using advanced analytical techniques to identify minute traces of explosives. These traces are as small as a billionth of a gram, approximately 100,000x smaller than a single grain of sugar and present no explosive risk to the general public.

FEL is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to ISO 17025:2017 and is in compliance with the Forensic Science Regulator's Codes of Practice and Conduct (FSR CoPC).

The environmental background sampling will ensure that the UK continues to keep pace with the ever-evolving threat. The programme is funded by the Home Office.

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[Boost for housebuilders as Homes England prepares to launch new dynamic](#)

[purchasing system](#)

Housebuilders will soon find it easier than ever to access Homes England land, following a revamp in the Government's delivery agency's approach to land disposals.

On 1 September Homes England will launch its new Delivery Partner Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), marking a significant shift in the way the agency procures housebuilders, as well as increasing flexibility and accessibility.

For the first time, housebuilders will be able to join the agency's list of preferred developers whenever they choose. The Delivery Partner DPS is replacing the existing Delivery Partner Panel (DPP3), which housebuilders and developers are currently only able to join when it is renewed, once every four years.

The Delivery Partner DPS will also be available to our public sector partners to help them procure a developer or contractor to build homes on sites they own.

Stephen Kinsella, Chief Land and Development Officer at Homes England, said:

This new digital system marks a huge step forward, making it much easier for developers to bid for our land. I'd encourage our current partners, as well as those we haven't worked with before, to get their applications in so we can work together to create great places to live. We are one of the largest vendors of residential land with sites for tens of thousands of homes being disposed over the next 3 years being channeled through this new approach.

Applications are being sought from housebuilders who share Homes England's ambitions to build more sustainably, and for high-quality design and placemaking. By switching from a framework to a DPS, Homes England is also simplifying access for smaller developers and new entrants, helping to further diversify the market.

The application process will also take the size of the developer into account. For example, SMEs bidding to deliver smaller sites will benefit from simpler entry criteria whereas the entry criteria for developers bidding to deliver larger strategic sites will be proportionately more testing.

Today marks the opening of the application phase for this new Delivery Partner Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). This initial application phase will run from 24 May 2021 to 25 June 2021 and the official launch of the new system will follow shortly afterward on 1 September 2021.

Successful applicants will become members of the DPS when it launches on 1 September 2021 and applications will then re-open on an ongoing basis

enabling new market entrants to join at any time.

Information on how to apply to join the Delivery Partner DPS can be found on our [guidance page](#).

Notes to editors

Developers are encouraged to monitor Homes England's [Land Hub](#), its interactive tool to advertise sites that are coming to market, and apply to join the Delivery Partner DPS as and when they see sites that are of interest.

The Delivery Partner DPS will introduce different categories of membership to meet different partner needs – e.g. simpler criteria for SME developers.

Housebuilders will be able to tailor their membership to express interest in specific locations or types of development to give the agency the ability to more effectively target opportunities to interested parties.

The Delivery Partner DPS will also be available to other public sector bodies, including local authorities and Registered Providers, to procure a housebuilder or contractor to build homes on their land.

Other public sector bodies made very significant use of the Delivery Partner Panel and we will continue to encourage and support their use of the Delivery Partner DPS.

About Homes England

Homes England is the government's housing delivery body that has been created to adopt a more commercial approach to respond to the long-term housing challenges facing this country. As a housing agency Homes England invests in supply and intervenes in the market to help the Government achieve its target of delivering 300,000 homes a year.

Media contact

For any enquiries please contact Media@homesengland.gov.uk

[UK consults on new approach to US tariffs](#)

The UK is today (May 24th) launching a review of tariffs against the US in response to the ongoing trade conflict around steel and aluminium.

A public consultation has opened aimed at ensuring any future tariffs applied in response to the US' unjustified 'Section 232' duties on aluminium and

steel imports are shaped to UK interests.

The UK currently has measures in place on products like whiskey, motorcycles and tobacco in response to US tariffs. Originally brought in by the EU, these measures were rolled over by the UK at the start of the year.

Today's announcement will help ensure these measures are tailored to the needs of the UK economy and shaped to defend industries across the UK, including steel and aluminium manufacturers.

The International Trade Secretary Liz Truss has held positive discussions with the US about the issue, and is pressing for the removal of the tariffs and an agreement that will deescalate the dispute.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

We now have the power to shape these tariffs so they reflect UK interests, and are tailored to our economy.

The UK will do whatever is necessary to protect our steel industry against illegal tariffs that could undermine British industry and damage our businesses.

Ultimately, however, we want to deescalate these disputes so we can move forward and work closely with the US on issues like WTO reform and tackling unfair trade practices by non-market economies.

The consultation launch is part of the government's strategy to de-escalate trade tensions so the US and UK can move forward to the next phase of their trading relationship.

The consultation will now run for 6 weeks and UK businesses, industry leaders and stakeholders can input online [here](#).

The Government will publish its decision on the re-balancing measures alongside a summary of responses to the consultation once it has considered all the evidence.

Background

In 2018 the United States Government announced that under Section 232 of the US Trade Expansion Act of 1962 it would place tariffs on EU imports of steel and aluminium.

The ongoing tariffs are unjustified under WTO rules and unfairly target UK steel and aluminium manufacturers and should be removed. Any claim that UK steel and aluminium imports harm US national security is false and without foundation.

In response, the EU imposed counter-balancing measures on US products. The UK transitioned these measures and continued to apply them from 1 January 2021 when the UK became an independent trading nation once again.

The UK's preference is for the full removal of additional US duties, in which case there will no longer be a need to apply rebalancing measures.