

# Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe: UK response

Ambassador Chiveri, thank you for your report and your presentation to the Permanent Council today. Please extend our thanks to your team for their work over the last year.

COVID-19 has presented operational challenges to us all and we appreciate the Programme Office's effective response to this challenge and your delivery during this period, especially the continuing operations at the Border Management Staff College.

Tajikistan is an important partner to the UK and we will continue to support the country's development through our own Central Asia programme, including on policy innovation, economic development and migrant reintegration. I was pleased to read the frequent references in your report to promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming, including providing support to the sixteen Gender-Sensitive Police Units; combatting domestic violence through working with the fourteen Women's Resource Centres; and furthering women's participation by contributing to the draft law on gender quotas.

Peace, security and prosperity are all strengthened by drawing on the talents of all members of society, so it is vitally important that women are included in this effort. We particularly welcome the focus on gender in the work of the Border Management Staff College, who have continued to promote women within the traditionally male-dominated border management profession.

I would like to highlight three areas of work that I think deserve special attention.

First, the support your Programme Office provides to Tajik officials on border security via regional conferences and tactical training with officials from neighbouring countries. This is essential for increasing capacity and building trust and expertise in an area vitally important for Tajikistan and its partners.

Second, your work to promote socio-economic development, improving the investment climate, and support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. As a country committed to free trade, we believe passionately in the power of enterprise to guarantee prosperity, safety and security. A more vibrant private sector also encourages Tajikistan's brightest and best to explore opportunities at home and help contribute to their country's future success.

We recognise how difficult this work has been during the pandemic, which is why the UK has reoriented our Enterprise and Innovation Programme to support start-ups and small businesses in Tajikistan to overcome the challenges of COVID-19 and protect existing jobs; whilst also delivering more of our support online. COVID-19 presents an opportunity to 'build back better', and

so we welcome your Office's support to the Tajik government on transitioning to a green economy. As COP President one of our main campaigns is to accelerate transitions in the global economy. We are asking all parties to show ambition when it comes to climate action and we encourage Tajikistan in its development of enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions and commitment to net zero by 2050.

Finally, on media freedom. We welcome the Office's work on supporting the media regulatory body to improve professional journalistic standards in Tajikistan. A vibrant and skilled media is the essential ingredient for any healthy democracy. It empowers citizens by holding their government to account, and a transparent government builds trust amongst its people. We hope that the Government of Tajikistan will show further commitment to strengthening its democracy by engaging with ODIHR's recent recommendations on enhancing the conduct of elections.

More generally, we appreciate the information your report provides on the outcomes achieved as a result of the Office's activities, and we would welcome even greater focus on impact in your reporting. The OSCE's field missions implement much good work, as evidenced today, and it is essential for the strength of the organisation that we can also clearly point to the real world impact that this work has. The UK – here in Vienna and through our Embassy in Dushanbe – extends its cooperation and support to the Office's work.

Ambassador, thanks to you and your team for progressing the OSCE's mandate in Tajikistan across all three dimensions of the OSCE.

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## **Royal Navy and RAF combine efforts to deliver vaccines to world's most remote Overseas Territory**

For the first time, the Royal Navy assisted the RAF and Strategic Command in a 6-day operation this month to the isolated South Atlantic island community.

An RAF Voyager aircraft made the 8,000 mile trip from RAF Brize Norton to the Falkland Islands, via Dakar in Senegal to refuel, before HMS Forth sailed the 2,000 mile voyage to Tristan da Cunha.

Delivered on behalf of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Crown Agents, enough doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine have now been delivered to the island to cover the entire adult population.

**Minister for the Armed Forces, James Heapey said:**

This operation to transport vaccines to one of the most remote parts of the world, reaffirms our commitment to the people of our Overseas Territories.

The Armed Forces take great pride in supporting our people, at home or abroad, whenever and wherever needed. I am immensely proud of all Royal Navy and RAF personnel involved in this mission and the role they have played in helping to deliver vaccines to the people of Tristan da Cunha safely and quickly.

**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Minister, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon said:**

I am proud of the support the UK has given its Overseas Territories during a horrendous year.

In total the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has delivered over three million items of medical equipment to the Overseas Territories since March last year. They have organised delivery of lifesaving vaccines to all of the inhabited Overseas Territories. This has been no small logistical, physical or diplomatic feat and I have been incredibly impressed by the work of local administrations in rolling out our world-leading vaccination programmes. In these difficult times we have seen the very best of our people.

The remote volcanic island has fortunately had no confirmed cases of Covid-19. However, with a population of just over 200 and with its nearest neighbour over 1,500 miles away, the island would have faced a variety of challenges should Covid-19 have hit.

The delivery, which arrived on 21 April, will ensure the island's entire adult population who wish to can be immunised against coronavirus.

**Bryan Richmond, Covid Response Lead at Crown Agents, said:**

We are immensely proud to have been part of the team to have made this mission possible. Delivering Covid vaccines is a delicate matter: They have to be stored at specific temperatures throughout their journey- remote destinations are especially difficult since the vaccines travel 10000 miles by air, ship and road and are exposed to significant climatic temperature changes. The team has

achieved this, and it is Crown Agents' mission to continue to ensure that isolated communities such as TDC are not left behind in the fight against Covid-19.

The operation was a huge logistical challenge, made more complex by the need to store and transport the vaccine at an ambient temperature so that the vaccines remained at between 2°C and 8°C throughout its transfer.

Vaccines were stored in specialised fridges on board HMS Forth, with the temperature checked regularly by the crew. They were then moved from ship-to-shore inside a temperature controlled container, before being safely stored in the fridges at Tristan da Cunha hospital.

This is the first time the Royal Navy has assisted with the transportation of vaccines, ensuring the vital doses were onboard the ship within 90 minutes of the RAF aircraft touching down in the Falklands.

**Commander British Forces South Atlantic Islands, Commodore Jonathan Lett said:**

The entire operation has been a great team effort from start to finish. I am hugely proud of every member of the BFSAI team involved in all elements of this epic journey”.

HMS Forth is currently deployed in the South Atlantic, and has patrolled the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and Tristan da Cunha during the course of the last month.

Earlier this year, the RAF transported vaccines to Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands, Ascension Island in support of the FCDO's vaccine rollout to the Overseas Territories.

Tristan da Cunha belongs to the most remote groups of inhabited islands in the world. The island itself has a long-standing connection with the UK Armed Forces dating back to World War Two, when the whole island was commissioned by the Royal Navy as a U-Boat monitoring outpost and a signals intelligence station named HMS ATLANTIC ISLE.

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**[AAIB Report: G-AWYI, Loss of control in the air at Sywell Aerodrome,](#)**

# [Northamptonshire](#)

News story

A Replica Royal Aircraft Factory BE2c aircraft (G-AWYI) was performing a flying display when it entered a descending right turn. The aircraft did not recover from the descent and struck the ground in a steep nose-down attitude, 2 September 2020.



The aircraft, a Replica Royal Aircraft Factory BE2c, was performing a flying display with several other vintage aircraft when it was seen entering a descending right turn. The aircraft did not recover from the descent and struck the ground in a steep nose-down attitude. The pilot suffered serious injuries.

It is likely that the aircraft entered a spin, although the possibility that the initial departure was a spiral dive could not be eliminated. The reason for the departure from controlled flight could not be determined. No pre-existing mechanical defects were found with the aircraft or engine.

[Read the report.](#)

Media enquiries call: 01932 440015 or 07814 812293

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## [AAIB Report, G-CFST, Fatal accident, near Cheltenham, Gloucestershire](#)

News story

While soaring along the Cotswold Ridge, a Schleicher ASH 25 E (G-CFST) became too low and collided with the top of a line of trees while the pilot was attempting to start the glider's sustainer engine and trying to find a place to land. The glider struck the ground nose-first, 26 Aug 2020.



A glider, a Schleicher ASH 25 E (G-CFST) launched behind an aerotow tug from Aston Down Airfield with the intention of soaring along the Cotswold Ridge between Dursley and Broadway. The soaring conditions proved challenging and the glider became too low as it followed the ridge to the east of Cheltenham, an area with few options for a successful field landing. The glider collided with the top of a line of trees while the pilot was attempting to start the glider's sustainer engine and trying to find a suitable place to land. After colliding with the trees, the glider struck the ground nose-first fatally injuring the pilot. The rear seat passenger received minor injuries.

The investigation found that the accident occurred because the glider was flown over an area where the combination of the terrain and the glider's altitude meant a successful field landing could not be assured. While the pilot had been flying under an informal age-related 'dual-only' limitation imposed by his gliding club, the investigation was not able to determine to what degree age was a factor in the pilot's decision making on the accident flight.

Following this accident, the British Gliding Association (BGA) began a consultation process with their member clubs to develop policy and guidance for the management of pilots who, for any reason, might benefit from flying with a safety pilot.

[Read the report.](#)

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# Perceptions of qualifications in England: wave 19

News story

The results of Ofqual's annual survey on perceptions of AS, A levels, GCSEs and Applied General qualifications in England.



Ofqual has today (29 April 2021) published [wave 19 of the annual perceptions of AS, A levels, GCSEs and Applied General qualifications in England survey](#).

This information, published annually as official statistics, was carried out by the research organisation YouGov on our behalf.

These regular survey outputs allow us to understand changes and variations in general perceptions of qualifications among learners, parents, employers, teachers, headteachers, higher education institutions, and the general public.

This year to capture the extraordinary nature of the events and arrangements put in place in 2020 as a response to the pandemic, a separate set of questions specific to 2020 was also introduced.

A report outlining perceptions of vocational and technical qualifications will also be published prior to summer awarding.

## **Composite confidence in GCSE, AS, A level and Applied General qualifications in general**

1. There was an increase in overall composite confidence in GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Applied General qualifications in general between waves 18 and 19.
2. General, overall composite confidence was highest for AS and A level qualifications, followed by GCSEs and Applied General qualifications, in that order.

## **General perceptions of GCSEs**

1. In comparison with wave 18, there was an increase in the overall level of agreement that, in general, GCSEs are well understood by people (62% to 69%), while agreement that they are trusted qualifications remained broadly consistent (75%).
2. Overall levels of agreement that, in general, GCSE standards are maintained year-on-year increased (41% to 45%), as did the perception that, in general, the marking of these qualifications is accurate (39% to 46%) in comparison with wave 18.

## **General perceptions of AS and A levels**

1. Compared to wave 18, there was an increase in the overall level of agreement that, in general, AS and A levels are well understood by people (59% to 63%). There was also an increase in the level of agreement that, in general, the marking of AS and A levels is accurate (42% to 49%).
2. In most cases, however, levels of agreement with statements regarding AS and A levels in general have remained broadly consistent in comparison with wave 18. In wave 19, approximately eight in ten respondents (82%) agreed that, in general, AS and A levels are trusted qualifications and half (50%) agreed that, in general, AS and A level standards are maintained year-on-year.

## **General perceptions of Applied General qualifications**

1. Overall, 16% of respondents in wave 19 agreed that, in general, Applied General qualifications are well understood by people. This was an increase in comparison with wave 18.
2. In total, 38% of respondents in wave 19 agreed that, in general, Applied General qualifications are good preparation for further study. This was an increase compared with each of the previous waves
3. In wave 19, 45% of respondents agreed that, in general, Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work. This was an increase compared with each of the previous waves

## **Comparison of general perceptions of GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Applied Generals**

1. Comparable to previous waves, in general, respondents expressed the highest levels of trust in AS and A levels, followed by GCSEs and then Applied General qualifications.
2. Respondents indicated higher levels of agreement that, in general, standards are maintained year-on-year for AS and A levels, followed by GCSEs. Agreement levels for both of these were much higher than for Applied General qualifications.
3. Respondents were most likely to agree that, in general, Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work, with higher levels of agreement than for AS, A levels and GCSEs.



## **Perceptions of the qualifications system in 2020**

1. Asking respondents to think specifically about their perceptions of qualifications in 2020 rather than just their more general outlook exposed the impact that the changes in 2020 had on perceptions of qualifications in that year. In 2020, these qualifications appear to be perceived as less understood, trusted and consistent in standards.
2. Teachers and head teachers of Applied General qualifications were equally likely to say they were aware of the appeals against results process in place for Applied General qualifications in 2020 as they were of the normal process.
3. Respondents were less aware of the modified appeals against results process in place for GCSE, AS and A level results in 2020 than they were about the usual process
4. Teachers and head teachers who teach GCSEs, AS or A levels were less likely to agree that they had adequate information about what constituted malpractice in 2020 in comparison with their more general awareness of the system.

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