

[Recovered appeal: Land at Mitchelswood Farm, Allington Road, Newick, East Sussex \(ref: 3119171 – 16 February 2021\)](#)

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[Bringing the benefits of clean growth and resilient economies to countries around the world](#)

Thank you so much.

Friends, ladies, gentlemen, honourable guests.

Good afternoon from Nigeria. I've been here over the past twenty-four hours and I've had a range of productive meetings with the Vice President, other government ministers, and civil society on our shared need to act urgently to tackle climate change.

And it is an absolute pleasure to be joining you today and a very great thanks to my friend Dr Mathur for inviting me to participate in this very important summit.

And I'm also very delighted to be speaking alongside Mr Frans Timmermans and Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu, who we know are great champions for climate action.

May I first start by expressing my deepest condolences for the situation in Uttarakhand. Our thoughts and prayers are for all of those who have been sadly affected by this tragedy.

As we've heard, today marks the conclusion of the 20th annual World Sustainable Development Summit. Over those past two decades, the world has experienced its hottest ten years on record.

We have seen what the UN calls a “staggering” rise in climate disasters.

Affecting more than four billion people across the world.

And causing almost \$3 trillion of losses to the global economy.

It is overwhelmingly clear that the climate crisis is impacting all our lives. And that crisis is unfortunately accelerating.

And to avoid it getting unimaginably worse, we must act now.

And we must act together.

As an international community we have agreed what we need to do.

In 2015 the world came together and signed up to the Paris Agreement, which established the framework for a clean, resilient global economy.

But although progress has been made, we are not on track to meet its goals.

If we do not change course, the climate impacts that we are already experiencing will grow into a tragedy of epic proportions.

We will end up seeing entire communities destroyed.

We’ll see many millions more pushed into poverty.

So, our aim as the COP26 Presidency is to get the world on track to make the Paris Agreement a reality.

This requires countries to act and to act now.

By making robust adaptation plans and policies.

By investing in green recoveries.

And by committing to net zero.

And of course, by announcing aligned Nationally Determined Contributions, and policies and plans to get there.

Plans like Prime Minister Modi’s commitment to generate 450 gigawatts of renewable power by 2030.

And NDC’s like the UK’s – which puts us on track to meet our 2050 net zero target.

But we also need action from across society.

And we need to work together.

Because making the Paris Agreement a reality requires us all to act in concert.

The UK COP Presidency aims to unite countries, and groups across society,

behind the aims of the Paris Agreement. And, importantly to place inclusivity at the heart COP26.

We are urging businesses, investors, cities and regions to join the Race to Zero campaign for example, by committing to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest.

And we've seen many companies come forward. Companies like Dalmia Cement and Mahindra group have done so. We've seen cities like Delhi and Kolkata have signed up to this too.

And we are bringing the voices, of civil society, women, young people, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalised groups, into COP26.

These communities are some of the most affected by climate impacts.

Their knowledge, leadership, and expertise are absolutely essential to developing effective solutions.

Over the past two weeks I have met personally with youth and civil society climate activists in Ethiopia, in Gabon in Egypt, and here in Nigeria.

And I will continue to prioritise these interactions in all my country visits on the road to COP26.

The UK's COP26 Presidency has established the Civil Society and Youth Advisory Council to help shape the Summit.

And this group includes brilliant young climate leaders from countries such as India and Kenya.

Our Friends of COP Advisory Group includes Indigenous leaders.

And the UK Government is supporting a mentoring initiative to encourage women from a diverse range of backgrounds to participate in climate negotiations.

And I also want to welcome and thank the work that has been done by TERI and WSDS to bring the voices of youth and women to the forefront.

The UK COP Presidency is also working to enhance international collaboration. Between countries and across society.

Bringing together governments, business, civil society and financial institutions around five critical climate issues: finance, adaptation, nature, clean energy and clean transport.

Because we know that if we all focus on specific challenges and sectors, we can make progress faster.

By sharing solutions, bringing down costs, and driving innovation.

Together, we can accelerate the transition to clean growth.

Creating those jobs and prosperity and spurring development, which we all want to see.

And I very much recognise India's leadership in this area. With pioneering initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

I look forward to working with both organisations over the coming year. And to showcasing them at COP.

And we are delighted that India is participating in the new forums for collaboration that the UK COP Presidency has created. Like the Energy Transition Council and Zero Emissions Vehicles Transitions Council.

With its vision and its flair and its leadership, India will be absolutely vital to the success of COP26.

As we approach Glasgow, I am pleased to say that the partnership between our two countries on climate change has never been stronger.

And I very much look forward to visiting in person next week and hearing first-hand about India's ambitions.

The UK COP Presidency is committed to working in partnership with those countries most vulnerable to climate change.

Which for so many years have led the world's attempts to tackle it.

We saw this in 2015 when Prime Minister Modi played a decisive role in getting the Paris Agreement over the line. And Small Island Developing States touched the conscience of the world, persuading it to pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees.

And we see this today too.

As Barbados and the Maldives announce their aim to reach carbon neutrality by 2030.

And we see countries like India and Bangladesh use early warning systems to save thousands of lives.

And Ethiopia – where I've just been – plans to plant 20 billion trees by 2024.

The UK COP Presidency wants to amplify the leadership of those countries vulnerable to climate change. And to work together to make progress on critical issues like finance and adaptation.

So, we're very pleased to be co-chairing the next meeting of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure in March, alongside our friends and partners in India.

And, last month, Prime Minister Boris Johnson launched the Adaptation Action

Coalition.

Which the UK has developed with Egypt, Bangladesh, Malawi, the Netherlands, St Lucia, and the UN.

This Coalition is a chance for developed and developing countries to share knowledge and best practice on adaptation and resilience at every level: local, regional and global.

And next month the UK COP Presidency will hold a Climate and Development Ministerial.

This will bring Ministers together to look at four key issues: access to finance; quantity and quality of climate finance; response to impacts; and fiscal space and debt.

And civil society organisations will be part of this conversation.

Together, we will look for ways to move forward on these key issues. And plan how we can make progress through events like the G7, the UN General Assembly, and COP26 itself.

Friends, in conclusion, we all share one precious life-giving but fragile planet.

And we all have a stake in its future.

Through partnership, collaboration, and with all of us on board, we can bring the benefits of clean growth and resilient economies to countries around the world.

And thereby protecting our people and our planet.

Thank you.

New legislation to address the plant health threat posed by Xylella

The Government has today (16 February) announced plans to address the plant health threat posed by Xylella, a key step for setting plant health legislation tailored to risks in Great Britain.

A new Statutory Instrument will come into force next month to introduce stricter measures against Xylella fastidiosa (“Xylella”) – a bacterium which causes disease in a wide range of woody commercially grown plants such as grapevine, citrus, olive and several species of broadleaf trees widely grown in the Great Britain, as well as many shrubs and herbaceous plants.

The new changes have been identified as priorities for improving our plant biosecurity in response to known threats, protecting businesses, society and the environment in the short term, as well as in the future.

New requirements will apply to those countries where Xylella is known to be present and will include:

- Only allow imports of Polygala and Coffea from countries where Xylella is known not to occur.
- More stringent requirements for the import of Olive, Almond, Lavender, Rosemary and Nerium oleander from countries where Xylella is known to occur.
- Allow imports under certain conditions including inspections of the place of production and the surrounding area, testing, pre-export inspections and a one-year quarantine period prior to import.

The existing requirements for high-risk plants from countries where Xylella is not known to occur will be retained, which include annual official inspection, with sampling and testing of the plants concerned.

Biosecurity minister Lord Gardiner of Kimble said:

We take the nation's biosecurity very seriously. That is why we are increasing restrictions and requirements for the import of high-risk Xylella host plants to reduce the chances that Xylella is introduced into Great Britain.

These measures will enhance the level of protection against this devastating disease and are necessary to protect our country.

Chief Plant Health Officer Nicola Spence said:

Xylella is not currently in Great Britain and it is essential that all of us with an interest in a healthy, thriving plant and horticulture industry do all we can to keep it that way and protect our environment and businesses.

To keep our country protected, it is vital that all plant importers and traders welcome these new measures and continue to make careful decisions on sourcing plants, particularly those from countries where Xylella is present.

Xylella is continuing to spread in Europe with outbreaks of the disease occurring in Italy, France, Spain, Germany and Portugal.

The pathogen is not known to be present in Great Britain, but the possibility remains of Xylella arriving on high-risk hosts, such as olive, and those plant species commonly associated with outbreaks in the EU. The long latency period of Xylella means that, without additional requirements, it could be

carried into non-infected countries via imports of plants, long before the infection is identified.

These new measures will cover Great Britain. Following a consultation process with the Plant Health Advisory Forum and individual businesses, the new measures give a high level of assurance that imports are from areas where Xylella is not present, while also providing the desired level of protection for plants imported from countries and areas where Xylella is present.

New legislation is due to come into force on 4 March 2021. [A copy of the regulations is available here.](#)

BuildForce: shaping military skills for a career in construction

For 10 years [BuildForce](#) has been championing the armed forces community within the construction industry. Through a bespoke programme, backed by industry leaders, BuildForce matches skilled service leavers and veterans with meaningful careers in construction and the built environment.

A Community Interest Company, BuildForce was established in 2011 as a collaborative industry led programme. The hugely successful pilot programme involved six major construction organisations (Carillion, Crossrail, Ernst & Young, Lendlease, Morgan Sindall and Wilson James) and was funded by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). 10 years on, with the weight of the construction industry behind them, they are the industry's largest nationwide military programme.

Achieving their Silver MOD Employer recognition Scheme award in 2020, BuildForce are proud advocates of the Armed Forces Community and regularly encourage industry employers to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

BuildForce offers a wraparound service with industry specialists who map out a unique journey to support each service leaver and veteran in to their chosen career. Support includes training, mentoring, site visits and work placements, all preparing the prospective candidates for interviews and securing roles. The service is underpinned with mental health support, on-hand to offer guidance and advice as the service leavers make their transition.

Caroline Logan, BuildForce Programme Director said:

BuildForce is simply matching military skills to construction demands. The broad spectrum of roles that the industry is seeking compliments the skillset the military train for. We talk about the

parallel lines of a military posting and a construction site; working outside in arduous conditions which are often dangerous, being part of a team, the camaraderie, following orders, attention to detail; these are just a few of the transferable skills the military have in abundance.

A job in construction isn't just about being on the tools (hard hats & building sites), it is accessible to all ranks and skill sets, and offers real potential for career progression. Having a framework that engages with and understands the individual's needs and capabilities is what underpins the successful achievements of BuildForce to this day.

Richard Castell, Amey Operational Relationship Manager and BuildForce Champion has experienced first-hand the value BuildForce bring to the industry.

Richard said:

Our sector needs talented motivated and reliable staff and those with a service background invariably fit the bill. Buildforce takes a professional, systematic approach to supporting veterans, service leavers, service spouses and reservists. In the 14 months since our initial involvement we now have a network of 26 mentors across the business and a team of senior recruiters who now understand the broader transferable skills of service personnel and can advise on opportunities within the business.

Army veteran David Duncan began his journey with BuildForce in January 2020. Faced with the challenges of a career transition during COVID-19, BuildForce guided and equipped David with the tools to achieve successful employment within his chosen industry.

David Duncan (Army veteran, 2nd Battalion the Mercian Regiment) served two tours of Afghanistan during his career. During his second deployment, David was shot in the face which eventually lead to medical discharge in September 2012. After leaving the military he went on to travel the world and upon his return to the UK worked in the travel industry.

Whilst working full time in the travel industry and raising a young family, David also completed a number of Safety qualifications with the view of pursuing a career in the Health and Safety industry. In January 2020, David got in touch with Buildforce to support his career aspirations and transition into the construction industry. Not long after, Covid-19 meant that David was put on furlough by his employer in the travel industry, at which point he focussed on his career development, completing numerous professional safety qualifications.

Over the course of his furlough, BuildForce secured David a work placement with Wates Group, working closely with their Health and Safety Director, who

also served as David's mentor.

In a bid to gain further construction experience, BuildForce connected David with health and safety professionals in his area arranging an additional work placement, where David could better understand the role of a health and safety manager on site.

Through the combination of work placements, mentoring, David's determination and the BuildForce support network, David is now a health, safety and environmental advisor with major homebuilder, Vistry Group. Vistry Group has since highlighted David's adaptability, intuitiveness, and his ability to be comfortable in the uncomfortable, all military transferable skills.

Reflecting on the past 10 years, BuildForce Chief Executive Angela Forbes said:

We set out to formally connect our Service personnel with the construction industry. We've now established entry routes into industry with greater transparency on careers available. David is a great example of this. We want to serve those who have served our country and will continue to champion the employment of our service leavers and veterans throughout all areas of the construction industry.

Reflecting on his career transition David said:

I can say with absolute confidence that without the support, both in person and virtually from Buildforce, I would not have been able to gain employment in the construction industry as a Health and Safety Professional.

More information

[COP26 President Designate Alok Sharma and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi meeting](#)

Press release

Alok Sharma and Narendra Modi met today during the COP26 President's visit to India.



UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE UK 2021

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

COP26 President Designate Alok Sharma and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi met today in Delhi to discuss their countries' shared commitment to climate action in the lead up to the COP26 summit in Glasgow this year.

Mr Sharma congratulated PM Modi on his ambition to deliver a significant increase in renewable energy, set out at the Climate Ambition Summit the UK co-hosted in December 2020, and for his personal leadership on tackling climate change.

Mr Sharma outlined the UK's net zero commitment and said that, as hosts of COP26, the UK had sent a clear message to the world in setting an ambitious new Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

They agreed that progress on making sure the most vulnerable countries were able to adapt to the impacts of climate change was critical and that to do this governments must meet their climate finance commitments.

Mr Sharma and PM Modi also discussed the importance of governments, businesses and individuals working to tackle climate change and said they looked forward to continuing their close work ahead of COP26.

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