

Hammersmith Bridge taskforce meeting, 15 October 2020

News story

Joint statement on progress made by the taskforce at their meeting on Thursday 15 October 2020.



The fifth meeting of the Hammersmith Bridge taskforce was held today, 15 October 2020. It was chaired by Transport Minister Baroness Vere and attendees included Project Director Dana Skelley, Professor Norman Fleck, plus representatives from the London Boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham and Richmond upon Thames, the Greater London Authority, TfL, and the Port of London Authority.

Dana Skelley, speaking on behalf of the Hammersmith Bridge taskforce, said:

The taskforce held another productive meeting today as we continue to urgently develop plans to get a temporary solution up and running for Londoners. In addition to the temporary ferry service, the group also discussed alternative options for a temporary footbridge across the river. These would be dependent on further feasibility studies and technical approvals, but there may be a more easily-constructed temporary footbridge than has previously been proposed.

The taskforce spent time discussing the overall project plan and discussed the assurances government would expect to see from members of the taskforce in order to unlock the next steps and press ahead.

In addition, we are glad to report that from Monday 2 November, the first day back after half term, the 533 bus route will run a fifth bus per hour in the weekday peaks.

We also look forward to the upcoming virtual meeting with residents and other members of the public which will allow them to put their

questions directly to senior members of the taskforce. Further communications on this will follow shortly.

The Hammersmith Bridge taskforce was set up by the Department for Transport in September 2020 to work towards safely reopening the Hammersmith Bridge. The taskforce is chaired by Baroness Vere and includes representatives from TfL, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority and the Port of London Authority.

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[Moving toward a ceasefire and preventing famine in Yemen](#)

Thank you, Mr President. Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for his briefing, as well as Special Envoy Martin Griffiths.

Mr President, it is not often that we start Yemen discussions with reasons to hope. So let me begin by welcoming the prisoner release news. The first flights happened today following the agreement on 27 September by the parties to release 1,081 prisoners. And I want particularly to applaud the efforts of the International Committee for the Red Cross in this regard.

It's not just about this specific confidence-building measure; today's news also demonstrates that dialogue can lead to positive outcomes. That momentum now needs to be carried into the political tracks. The parties must agree urgently to the United Nations Joint Declaration. On the Riyadh agreement, I welcome the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's leadership to achieve a resolution and urge the parties to form a government rapidly.

I want to echo what Martin Griffiths said about the importance in this anniversary month of Resolution 1325 of the inclusion of women in political processes, including in Yemen.

Now I want to also welcome Martin Griffiths's assessment that the violence in Marib has decreased recently whilst echoing his call for it to stop completely. It has passed into its sixth month and has caused untold cost in the lives of many Yemenis – young and old, men and women. And the fighting that has now opened up in Hodeidah is not only in clear breach of the Hodeidah Agreement, but it is needless and it will only lead to further instability in a country which is staring down the barrel of disease and famine. So I want to call today for renewed and urgent engagement with UNMHA and the UN Special Envoy in order to reach a ceasefire. And I stress that the

Yemeni parties – which means the Government of Yemen just as much as it means the Houthis – should cooperate with the Special Envoy to agree to this Joint Declaration proposals as soon as possible. I want to reiterate the United Kingdom's full confidence in the UN-led process and the UNSE Griffiths.

Mr President, on 22 September, the Spokesman of the Iranian Armed Forces, General Shekarchi, admitted that Iran had provided technical assistance and training to the Houthis. This represents an apparent breach of the arms embargo. This is deeply concerning and reaffirms our concerns about destabilising Iranian activity in Yemen and the wider region. We call on Iran to cease such activity, which risks escalating the conflict, and to support a political solution to the conflict in Yemen.

Mr President, we must prevent Yemen tipping into famine. We welcome the recent positive steps by some donors to provide humanitarian funding, including new commitments from the United States, Kuwait and some EU Member States, as well as seeing Saudi Arabia sign agreements with UN agencies. The United Kingdom itself recently announced over \$65 million dollars in additional funding, taking us to over \$250 million dollars for this year and building on nearly \$300 million dollars last year. Globally though, funding levels for Yemen remain alarmingly low at 42 percent, with less than half the level of funding from this time last year.

Meanwhile, severe access constraints – some in the south, but mainly in Houthi areas – continue to prevent the delivery of lifesaving assistance. This is recklessly driving up the risk of famine. As of 27 September, 94 NGO projects with a cumulative budget of \$218 million dollars, remained unimplemented, largely due to Houthi restrictions. All barriers, wherever they are in the country, to humanitarian access must immediately be removed, and the Houthis must give the United Nations and NGOs the permissions they need to operate and save lives across the north.

Mark Lowcock welcomed the reopening of Sanaa Airport for humanitarian cases. And I want to agree with him and say that it is essential that Sanaa Airport and Hodeidah port are kept open and that both parties come to an immediate agreement on fuel imports, as Martin Griffiths laid out.

If we're to avoid famine, it's essential as well that the Central Bank of Yemen is swiftly provided with external financial assistance so it has sufficient hard currency to sustain food imports and stabilise prices. Food affordability, rather than availability, seems to be the main driver of hunger at present. The exchange rate in the south has reached its lowest level since the conflict began. And food security is rapidly deteriorating. The proportion of people unable to find sufficient amounts of food increased from 28 percent in May to 43 percent in August. The Government of Yemen has a critical role to play here, too. They urgently need to develop a credible and transparent economic plan that reassures donors of their ability to implement economic reform.

Finally, Mr President, I want to welcome the tentative news that UNOPS and the Houthis appear to have agreed in principle to a mission to conduct an assessment and subsequent light repairs on the Safer oil tanker. I understand

that it could take well over a month for the experts' work to be completed. And so any unnecessary delay must be avoided. I look forward to next month's briefing and hope that we will have news then that the mission is underway. And I also want to thank Germany, the Netherlands and France for joining the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia in providing funding for the initial mission.

Thank you, Mr President.

[The United Kingdom and Côte d'Ivoire sign Economic Partnership Agreement](#)

Press release

An agreement has been signed between the United Kingdom and the Côte d'Ivoire to secure our trade arrangements.



Today, the United Kingdom and Côte d'Ivoire signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), maintaining existing trade arrangements.

Minister for International Trade, Ranil Jayawardena MP signed the agreement with Her Excellency Sara Affoué Amani, Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Kingdom, in London.

The agreement allows businesses to trade as freely as they do now, without any additional barriers or tariffs – and provides a firm foundation from which both sides can further deepen our trading relationship and pursue common interests.

Total UK trade with Côte d'Ivoire was £401 million in 2019. Top imports to UK from Côte d'Ivoire were in cocoa beans and cocoa preparations (£192 million), and edible fruit and nuts, mostly bananas (£22 million). The UK market accounts for 23% of total exports of cocoa butter from Côte d'Ivoire, as well as 6% of bananas.

Minister for International Trade, Ranil Jayawardena said:

“The preferential trading terms, secured by this agreement are part of HM Government’s commitment to supporting developing countries by reducing poverty through trade. Through providing tariff free market access to Britain, this agreement supports jobs and economic development in Côte d’Ivoire. It will underpin trade in processed cocoa and bananas, supporting the livelihoods of Ivorians working in these sectors and guaranteeing access for British consumers.”

Background

- Statistics sources: ONS UK total trade: all countries, non-seasonally adjusted January to March 2020; HMRC Overseas Trade Statistics August 2020; UN COMTRADE (extracted October 2020).
- The agreement covers trade in goods, including provisions on rules of origin, and preferential tariffs and quotas.
- The agreement will now be subject to the domestic parliamentary procedures in both the UK and Côte d’Ivoire.
- The agreement is designed to take effect at the end of the transition period.
- The UK has now signed or agreed in principle trade agreements with 51 countries. This includes the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement which was agreed in principle on 11 September 2020. Total UK trade with these countries was worth £144 billion in 2019.

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[Italy removed from travel corridor list and Crete added to list for England](#)

- Italy, San Marino and Vatican City State removed from the travel corridor list this week
- Greek island of Crete added to list for England, having been assessed by the Joint Biosecurity Centre as posing a lower infection risk
- travellers urged to check the latest advice from the FCDO before travelling and will be required to fill in a [passenger locator form](#) before returning home

People arriving in England from Italy, San Marino and Vatican City State from 4am on Sunday 18 October will need to self-isolate for 2 weeks as the countries are removed from the [travel corridor list](#).

Data has indicated the weekly cases and test positivity are increasing in Italy and so ministers have taken the decision to remove the destinations.

The Greek island of Crete has been added to the government's [travel corridor list](#) following a decrease in confirmed cases of coronavirus.

From 4am on Sunday 18 October, passengers arriving in England from Crete will no longer need to self-isolate, provided they haven't been in or transited through any other non-exempt countries in the 14 days preceding their arrival.

The JBC's latest risk assessment for Crete indicates that the risks to UK public health from travellers returning from there has decreased to an acceptable level.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has updated its [travel advice](#) to advise against all but essential travel to Italy and San Marino. The island of Crete is now exempt from the FCDO's global advisory against non-essential travel.

The government has made consistently clear it will take decisive action if necessary to contain the virus, including removing countries from the travel corridors list rapidly if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

Covid-19 has profoundly changed the nature of international travel. Travellers should always [check the latest advice from the FCDO](#) to keep up to date with the latest information on the risks associated with travel to another country, as well as the entry rules and measures introduced by local authorities that may affect British travellers.

All travellers, including those from exempt destinations, will still be required to show a [completed passenger locator form](#) on arrival in the UK unless they fall into a small group of exemptions.

Penalties for those breaching the [self-isolation rules](#) when returning from non-exempt countries have increased from £1,000 for first offence up to £10,000 for subsequent offences, mirroring penalties for those breaching self-isolation following a positive COVID test or contact from Test & Trace.

[Dstl's new counter-terrorism facility opened by The Queen](#)

The UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) has been given a rare Royal visit during the COVID-19 pandemic to showcase the science inside defence and security when Her Majesty The Queen, accompanied by The Duke of

Cambridge visited its site near Salisbury.

The Queen and The Duke officially opened Dstl's new £30 million Energetics Analysis Centre. They also met staff who have been providing specialist scientific advice and support to the COVID-19 pandemic and those involved in providing a rapid operational response to the Novichok incident in 2018.

The Energetics Analysis Centre is a state-of-the-art building from which hundreds of scientists conduct world-class research and analysis to give the UK military and security advantage, protecting against terrorist and criminal threats. The expert team's impact extends across Government, reaching the Ministry of Defence, Home Office, Department for Transport and other agencies.

Hosted by Dstl's Chief Executive, Gary Aitkenhead, The Queen and The Duke viewed interactive displays and met a number of scientists at a social distance who explained how Dstl's science and technology keeps the public safe by detecting explosives, helping to identify terrorist networks and analysing vital forensic evidence to help bring those involved in terrorism to justice.

Mr Aitkenhead said:

There is no greater accolade than to have The Queen and The Duke of Cambridge open this extraordinary building, particular during a global pandemic. This is testament to Dstl and our people as a proven national asset, not just in forensic science and explosives detection, but across a wide range of scientific fields, including artificial intelligence, cyber and quantum and in doing so providing an advantage to our military and security services. It's great for us to showcase our work, which benefits us all in the UK, and to be recognised in this way is a great honour.

A highlight of the visit was a simulation of a forensic explosives investigation by scientists from the Forensic Explosives Laboratory (FEL), which is one of several world-leading capabilities found in the Energetics Analysis Centre. FEL provides evidence and expert witness statements to support the British Criminal Justice System on explosives-related cases. This support has been crucial in providing evidence to the courts for numerous terrorist cases including the attacks at Manchester Arena and Parsons Green.

Other elements of the visit included meeting police search dog Max, who is trained using Dstl's state-of-the-art canine explosives training aids. The Queen and The Duke also saw Dstl's Linear Accelerator (Linac), an incredibly powerful X-ray machine used for inspecting weapons and munitions. It is the only one of its kind in the UK for use on items containing explosives. The Linac allows the engineers and scientists to see inside explosive objects without disturbing them or taking them apart. It can produce an image through 250mm of steel, with a level of detail smaller than the thickness of a human hair.

During the visit, The Queen and The Duke made a special presentation of the Firmin Sword of Peace to the Army's Headquarters South West in recognition of its exceptional contribution in support of the city of Salisbury and its communities following the Novichok nerve agent attack in March 2018.

The Headquarters was appointed as the Joint Military Command headquarters responsible for the Defence contribution to the decontamination of multiple sites across the city during the twelve-month operation. During this time they worked exceptionally closely with the Dstl scientists whose scientific expertise was pivotal to the success of the decontamination operation.

Colonel Mike Duff, the Deputy Joint Military Commander for the decontamination operation, who received the Sword on behalf of the headquarters said:

It is a huge honour to receive the Firmin Sword of Peace in recognition of the work done by Headquarters South West. This was a true team effort that would not have been possible without contributions from across Defence, including Dstl, and the local authorities.