

British Ambassador meets Guatemalan Minister of Economy

World news story

The British Ambassador to Guatemala, Nick Whittingham, met today with the Minister of Economy, Antonio Malouf.



The Ambassador congratulated the Minister for Guatemala's role in advancing economic recovery and stability in the current challenges of the pandemic.

They also discussed their shared commitment to bolstering the UK-Guatemala bilateral economic partnership through the Association Agreement between the UK and Central America, due to enter in force next year.

The Ambassador also presented the case of the [UK's candidate to lead the World Trade Organization \(WTO\), Liam Fox](#), as an opportunity to keep working together at important global issues of a post-pandemic world.

They were joined by the Vice Ministers of Economy, and agreed to keep working on key topics that would advance prosperity in Guatemala and Central America.

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Peace Agreement – Sudan Armed Opposition Groups: Troika Statement

The United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway (the Troika) welcome the peace agreement between the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) and the Civilian-led Transitional Government of Sudan, initialled on 31 August 2020 as the

first step in a long process to rebuild hope and stability for conflict-affected communities in Sudan.

The peace agreement lays a foundation for sustainable peace and stability in Darfur and other conflict-affected areas that is critical for Sudan's democratic transition.

We recognise the concessions all have made to conclude these negotiations and call on all parties to implement the agreement in good faith, with the same spirit of partnership and compromise, and in a way that complements the ongoing talks with other groups.

The agreement demonstrates the commitment of the parties to prioritise peace as called for in the August 2019 Constitutional Decree. It is an important step in restoring security, dignity, and development to the population of Sudan's conflict-affected and marginalised areas.

We believe the formal agreement must be followed up with local peace and reconciliation efforts in the conflict affected areas.

The Troika urges the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North-Abdalaziz al-Hilu and the Sudan Liberation Movement-Abdulwahid Al Nur to build on this achievement and to engage in serious negotiations with the Government of Sudan in order to achieve the promise of a comprehensive peace called for by the Sudanese people in the revolution of December 2018. All Sudanese have the right to live in peace and enjoy the same privileges and responsibilities. Only a fully inclusive national process can address fundamental questions relating to the identity of the state.

The non-violent December 2018 Revolution provided a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform Sudan into an inclusive, peaceful, and just state. The recent increase in violence in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, and Port Sudan highlights the challenges to achieving sustainable peace. We urge the government and its partners to establish the Peace Commission and the Transitional Legislative Council and begin to bring accountable administration and justice to all of Sudan.

A just Sudan requires neutral and professional security services that protect and safeguard all Sudanese equally. We urge the SRF, other opposition groups, and political parties to put aside differences and personal ambitions for the good of their entire country. The Troika urges Sudan's diverse communities to overcome old enmities and to unite to support this singular opportunity for lasting peace.

We commend the Government of South Sudan for its role in mediating the peace negotiations, and recognise the valuable support provided by the United Nations and regional and bilateral partners that helped make the peace agreement possible.

The Troika will continue to support the Sudanese people in their quest for freedom, peace, and justice.

ENDS

Defence ecologists boost rare heathland habitats

Some of the UK's rarest reptiles have been given a safe haven on a military site in the heart of Dorset as part of the MOD's drive to create a sustainable estate where wildlife can flourish.

Volunteers and staff from the West Moors Defence Fuels site teamed up with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) charity and Dorset County Council to remove self-seeded pine trees from the two-hectare area of wet and dry heathland.

The petroleum storage depot is set within the Holt and West Moors Heaths Site of Special Scientific Interest, where the lack of human disturbance has made the area a haven for some of the UK's rarest reptiles including sand lizards, adders and smooth snakes.

Without proper management, heathland will develop into scrub and woodland, losing the huge diversity of plants, invertebrates, birds and reptiles who call it home.

With the invasive trees now removed, ecologists can better support a wide range of heathland species including heathers, reptiles and invertebrates such as the silver-studded blue butterfly.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

Defence has a key role to play in the Government's green agenda and are proud to be the custodians of 169 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, covering over 80,000 hectares.

This project is another fantastic example of how wildlife and the environment can thrive under our stewardship.

Ecologists from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), who run the depot, worked with ARC over five weeks to remove the pine trees.

Every effort was made to ensure the project was cost-effective, as well as environmentally friendly. The only cost to the MOD was a chipper to chip and remove the pine trees. The chipping company who chipped and removed the pine trees on site were based in the local area, thus limiting the carbon footprint.

DIO ecologists previously worked with ARC at other MOD sites and as a result of their strong relationship, ARC undertook this project voluntarily.

Lt Gen Richard Nugee said:

The DIO ecologists who volunteered their time and efforts to the West Moors heathland represent the best of defence. Their ability to build relationships with local industry and organisations helped make this project a success.

As we continue to look to enhance bio-diversity across the Defence estate, projects like this will encourage a step-change toward a culture of sustainability.

Based on the value of the contribution, the West Moors project has been nominated for an MOD Sanctuary Award, which has recognised outstanding conservation and sustainability efforts across the MOD estate since 1991.

This year the award categories have been revised to reflect the MOD Sustainability Strategy and to encourage more entries from teams involved in broader aspects of sustainability, such as equipment procurement.

Ensuring the defence estate is sustainable is part of the MOD's strategy to reduce its contributions to carbon and greenhouse gas emissions.

Measures like this will be reflected in the department's ongoing Climate Change and Sustainability Review, led by Lt Gen Richard Nugee.

The review will focus on a range of initiatives from the MOD's NZ50 strategy to setting the right baseline for defence's emissions and carbon footprint, and enhancing its biodiversity, with findings set to be published in December 2020.

[Leader of the House of Commons launches 'Why Parliament Works' podcast](#)

Press release

Leader of the House of Commons Jacob Rees-Mogg has launched a podcast series of interviews with academics and parliamentary insiders.



Leader of the House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg

- Leader of the House of Commons Jacob Rees-Mogg launches podcast series of interviews with academics and parliamentary insiders
- Episodes exploring lawmaking process and how parliament delivers for voters to be released Monday 31st August 2020
- Guests include Professor Vernon Bogdanor, Minister for the Constitution and Devolution Chloe Smith, former Commons clerk Lord Lisvane and Professor Philip Lord Norton of Louth

A new government podcast exploring Parliament's place at the heart of the UK's constitution is being launched today.

Initial episodes of 'Why Parliament Works', hosted by the Leader of the House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg, are being made available across podcasting platforms.

The podcast will help listeners explore Westminster's inner workings from a number of different perspectives, including those of backbencher, peer, officials and ministers.

It comes at the start of an intensive period of delivery for Parliament, which will consider a wide range of government bills throughout the autumn.

Leader of the House of Commons Jacob Rees-Mogg said:

Our parliamentary democracy only works when it delivers for voters, which is why it is so important that this government is getting on with legislating to level up every part of the United Kingdom.

I have been fortunate to be able to spend time exploring the lawmaking process with some of the UK's leading academics and parliamentary insiders, who have helped shine light on some of the less-appreciated aspects of the UK Parliament's work. I hope all

those who are fascinated by parliament will find their insights as interesting as I did.

The podcast's first four episodes are being released together, with further episodes featuring First Parliamentary Counsel Elizabeth Gardiner QC, former Commons Clerk Robert Rogers, Lord Lisvane and others to follow this autumn.

The first four episodes feature the Leader of the House in conversation with the following interviewees:

- Professor Vernon Bogdanor, Research Professor at King's College London's Centre for British Politics and Government
- Natascha Engel, former MP and Deputy Speaker
- Professor Philip Lord Norton of Louth, Professor of Government and Director of the Centre for Legislative Studies at the University of Hull
- [Chloe Smith MP](#), Minister for the Constitution and Devolution

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[Transport Secretary announces plans to make pavements accessible for all](#)

- new plans set out to boost safety and make journeys more accessible for disabled people and parents
- review found third of people with visual impairments and almost half of wheelchair users were not as willing to go out because of antisocial pavement parking
- consultation will set out proposals to make transport more accessible and help more people to choose active travel as part of UK's green recovery from COVID-19

Pavements could be made safer for people with disabilities, and families, under new proposals to ban antisocial parking unveiled by the government today (31 August 2020).

Parking on pavements disproportionately affects people with visual or mobility impairments, those assisted by guide dogs, and wheelchair and mobility scooter users. More than 95% of wheelchair users and people with visual impairments say they had problems with vehicles parked on pavements.

Three options are proposed in the [consultation launched today](#) – improving the traffic regulation order process to make it easier for councils to prohibit pavement parking in their areas, giving councils powers to fine drivers who park on paths, and a London-style nationwide ban on pavement parking.

However, there is still a major role for cars and other private vehicles, so any future plans will need to take this into consideration.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Parking on pavements means wheelchair users, visually impaired people and parents with pushchairs can be forced into the road, which is not only dangerous but discourages people from making journeys.

A key part of our green, post-COVID recovery will be encouraging more people to choose active travel, such as walking, so it is vital that we make the nation's pavements accessible for everyone.

Pavement parking presents a clear safety risk when parked cars occupy the pavement and force vulnerable pedestrians to move into the road.

Disabled people say pavement parking is a significant barrier to carrying out daily journeys. Recent research from the charity Guide Dogs shows that 32% of people with vision impairments and 48% of wheelchair users were less willing to go out on their own because of pavement parking, decreasing independence and contributing towards isolation.

As many streets were built decades and centuries before the high levels of vehicles currently on roads, any measures will need to ensure the free flow of traffic and access for the emergency services.

The consultation is the government's latest step to deliver on commitments to make transport equally accessible for all users by 2030, as set out in the [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#).

Stephen Edwards, Director of Policy and Communications at Living Streets, said:

We're regularly contacted by disabled and older people who feel trapped in their homes because there is not enough room on the pavement for wheelchairs or mobility scooters.

This has impacted more people during the pandemic with blocked pavements affecting everyone's ability to physically distance.

Blanche Shackleton, Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Campaigns at Guide Dogs, said:

For many people with sight loss, cars and vans parked on the pavement make our streets stressful and dangerous to navigate. At any time, you might be forced out into the road with traffic that you cannot see.

When every journey is an ordeal, simply going out independently can become daunting.

Justine Roberts, Founder and CEO of Mumsnet, said:

Lots of us have occasionally parked a couple of wheels up on the pavement to leave space on the road without really thinking about how it might inconvenience people.

It's a topic that comes up regularly on Mumsnet, where wheelchair users and people with buggies share stories about being forced into the road or having to double back long distances.

The consultation comes as Transport Secretary Grant Shapps steps up efforts to encourage active travel – such as walking – as part of a green, post-COVID-19 recovery, and level up road quality across the country.

The government announced £2 billion in May to get more people walking and cycling, and £2.5 billion in the Budget towards repairing potholes as part of the biggest nationwide programme ever announced.

On top of this, the government is also investing more than £27 billion to improve roads across the country and boost connectivity between our towns and cities.

It is currently an offence to cause an unnecessary obstruction on the highway, which is enforceable by the police.