

Minister for the Americas attends inauguration of Uruguayan President

Wendy Morton will become the first Foreign Office Minister to visit Uruguay in six years as she attends the Presidential inauguration of Luis Lacalle Pou in Montevideo today (Sunday 1st March).

The Minister will also travel to Buenos Aires on Monday for discussions with key members of the new Argentine Government, who came to power in December 2019.

Ahead of the visit, Minister Morton said:

On my first visit to the region as Minister, I am honoured to represent the UK at the inauguration of the new Uruguayan President, and have the opportunity to visit Argentina.

This trip emphasises the UK's commitment to working with governments across Latin America, broadening our relations across trade, climate change and global security.

While in Montevideo, the Minister will open the new wing of the British Hospital. Founded by British immigrants to Uruguay over 140 years ago, the hospital continues to serve the British community and also treats emergency medical evacuees from the Falklands, South Georgia and British Antarctic Territory.

The Minister will cross the border to Argentina for a series of meetings with the new Government of Alberto Fernández. She will meet new Deputy Foreign Minister Pablo Tettamanti to discuss the strengthening of UK-Argentina ties and working together on climate change and human rights, while she will discuss boosting trade with Production Minister Matías Kulfas.

Further information

UK welcomes US deal with the Taliban and calls for Afghan leaders to seize

opportunity to end decades of conflict



The UK has today welcomed the United States' Joint Declaration with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and the United States' agreement with the Taliban, which paves the way for a meaningful peace process and an end to decades of conflict in Afghanistan.

Thanks to the efforts of UK and coalition forces, Afghanistan is no longer a safe haven for international terrorists and Britain's streets are safer. But all sides recognise that only a political solution can ensure stability and build a lasting peace in Afghanistan. The UK urges the Taliban to engage now with Afghan leaders in meaningful and inclusive negotiations.

NATO's Resolute Support Mission will make modest initial reductions whilst continuing to deliver on its commitments in Afghanistan. Further troop reductions will be based on progress in peace talks and conditions on the ground.

The people of Afghanistan want and deserve hope after four decades of war, which has left the country one of the poorest and most fragile in the world.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

These agreements mark a significant moment in the pursuit of peace in Afghanistan. The current reduction in violence is welcome and I hope it will be maintained, but meaningful negotiations between the Afghan leadership and the Taliban are the real prize and I hope this opportunity will be seized.

The only way to achieve lasting peace in Afghanistan is through a political solution.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- The UK combat mission in Afghanistan began in 2001, when Al Qaeda used the country as a safe haven from which to launch terrorist attacks, most

notably the 9/11 atrocities, and incite hatred. That combat mission ended in 2014 but the UK continues to work closely with NATO on Afghanistan in a number of areas.

- The UK, as part of NATO's non-combat mission, have played an important role in developing the Afghan Security Forces and Institutions. As the frame work nation for the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA), the UK has helped train the next generation of military leaders.
- Almost 40 years of conflict has left Afghanistan one of the poorest and most fragile countries in the world. UK Aid is creating a more stable environment that will help reduce poverty and make progress towards the Global Goals. It will also reduce threats to the UK from violence and extremism, and discourage illegal migration.
- The UK remains committed to supporting Afghanistan's development. At the Brussels Conference in 2016, the UK pledged up to £750 million for the period 2017-2020.
- During President Ghani's visit to the UK in June last year, we pledged £170 million in humanitarian aid over the next five years. This new support will provide emergency life-saving UK aid to more than five million people, including urgent food, water and medical help, and polio vaccinations for children.

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[Statement on resignation of Sir Philip Rutnam](#)



Sir Mark Sedwill, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, said:

“I have received and accepted with great regret the resignation of Sir Philip Rutnam.

“I thank him for his long and dedicated career of public service. Shona Dunn, the Second Permanent Secretary at the Home Office responsible for borders, immigration and citizenship, will become Acting Permanent Secretary with immediate effect.

“The Home Office’s vital work to keep our citizens safe and our country secure continues uninterrupted.”

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[Royal Marines travel to Belarus for winter warfare exercise](#)

Exercise Winter Partisan, which lasts until 14th March, will see the Green Berets from Devon train in integrated teams with members of the Belarusian Armed Forces, sharing experience and expertise.

Troops will train in winter survival skills such as camouflage and winter movement skills including abseiling and skiing, before putting them to the test in an exercise setting.

This represents the largest group of UK Armed Forces personnel to have trained in Belarus and forms part of a bilateral programme of training and education the two countries share with each other.

Last summer, Belarusian troops won a silver medal in Exercise Cambrian Patrol in Wales – the world’s toughest patrolling challenge – and participated with 2nd Battalion, the Royal Irish Regiment, on Exercise Urban Ranger.

Exercise Winter Partisan represents the return phase of this year’s bilateral exchange between the UK and Belarus and will help to build trust and mutual understanding.

As well as the military training, troops will engage in cultural activities looking at the two countries’ shared history – particularly both nations’ contribution in World War II in what is the 75th Anniversary year of VE Day. The Royal Marines will visit a World War II Museum in Minsk and participate in a Remembrance event.

Graduates enjoy £100k earnings bonus over lifetime

A degree from a UK university increases a person's net earnings by £100k or more on average over their lifetime, new landmark research has found today.

The research, carried out by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), demonstrates the benefits a degree can provide to students, the economy and society.

The findings will help students make more informed choices about higher education, and also underline the strength and value of the UK's world-class universities.

Key findings include:

- Women's earnings increase by £100k on average with a degree and £130k for men over the course of their working life – after student loan payments and taxes are factored in;
- Graduates will earn on average 20% more over their working life than those who did not go to university;
- The economy gains £240k per male graduate and £130k per female graduate on average over a lifetime.

While research shows that boosting job and salary prospects are important factors for students applying to university, the benefits of a degree stretch far beyond just these outcomes. For example, studying subjects such as nursing or education are essential for our public services.

The Government's manifesto has committed to continuing to support our leading universities to provide high quality education and generate benefits for graduates, the economy and wider society.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

This research underlines that our university sector is world leading by setting out the impact higher education can have on someone's life.

When you add the unquantifiable experiences and friendships that come with that, it is no surprise our universities attract students from all over the world.

However, that prestige is built on quality and my role is to work with the regulator to safeguard that, while ensuring students and

the taxpayer are getting the value they would expect for their investment.

The data, commissioned by the Department for Education, is part of the Government's drive to define the benefits of higher education, among other high-quality post-16 options.

It is one tool that will help students of all ages make smart choices about their future – whether that involves university, an apprenticeship or a high-quality technical course. This range of post-16 options form part of the Government's commitment to level up skills and opportunities across the country.

The data includes earnings for full-time students by subject, gender and university type, and also shows the wide variations in earnings potential. Studying medicine or economics generates lifetime earnings of more than £500k for men and £250k for women.

Dr Tim Bradshaw Chief Executive of the Russell Group said:

The economic value of quality higher education is clear, benefiting both the individual and the Exchequer. Alongside academic excellence, the overall university experience can have a transformative impact on people's lives.

Universities and Government have a responsibility to ensure that the opportunities of a world class education are open to all and the benefits are felt across the country.

The UK's world leading universities will be central in delivering the home-grown skills the UK needs to prosper in the years ahead.

Higher education benefits wider society in a number of ways, through industry, public sector work and community engagement. However, the Government created the new regulator for English higher education providers, the Office for Students (OfS), to act where courses are not delivering high quality teaching and value for money for students and taxpayers.

The Government has given the regulator a range of strong powers to take action where it finds universities are not acting in students' best interests. In September the Education Secretary issued guidance to the OfS stressing the importance of focussing on value for money for students and taxpayers, and gave his full backing to the regulator exercising its powers boldly.

The overall cost of higher education is evenly split between the Government and student contributions, reflecting the wider benefits to society a degree

brings and ensuring everyone with the potential can access the life-changing opportunities of university.

The Review of Post-18 Education and Funding published last year made recommendations on the balance of funding between universities, further education and apprenticeships and adult learning. The Government is considering these recommendations carefully and will respond at the spending review.