

SIN Italy facilitates bilateral research agreement



In October 2017 SIN Italy organised the first ever high level UK-Italy Bilateral Research Meeting in Anacapri, in collaboration with the Italian Research Council (CNR) the largest public research institution in Italy, and the only one performing multidisciplinary activities under the Research Ministry.

[Case Study Italy](#) (ODT, 175KB)

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Major General James Swift appointed as Chief of Defence People

Her Majesty the Queen has approved the appointment of Major General James Swift as the next Chief of Defence People (CDP).

Since December 2018 Major General Swift has been General Officer Commanding of the British Army's high-readiness warfighting division, the 3rd Division. He has previous experience as the Assistant Chief of the General Staff (ACGS) leading on corporate strategy. Prior to this he was the Ministry of Defence's Head of Capability Strategy, for the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The Chief of Defence People is a vital role in Defence. In recent years we've made great progress to improve the working life of military and civilian personnel, and huge strides in our support for veterans and families.

Major General Swift brings broad experience and a rich perspective to the job, I know he will continue the excellent work of the department for all Defence People.

As CDP, he will sit on the Ministry of Defence's Executive Committee and set the strategy for developing a capable and motivated military and civilian workforce. Major General Swift will be responsible for all people in Defence,

covering 200,000 servicemen and women, 60,000 civil servants. He will be developing a military offer that increases the recruitment and retention of service personnel and overseeing the transition from military to civilian life for service leavers.

In late February, he will be taking over from Lieutenant General Richard Nugee, who is moving on after almost four years in the role of CDP, to lead a review into the Department's approach to climate change.

Major General Swift said:

Our people, civilians, service personnel, their families and veterans are the reason I continue to serve. They have always been the critical component of Defence capability and will continue to be in the 21st Century but we must transform to retain our edge.

I look forward to working with my team, building on the great work of the department, to help make a difference for people across Defence.

[Ramblers Walking for Health](#)

Summary

Run by The Ramblers and funded by Sport England, Walking for Health is an England-wide network of schemes that carry out free, regular, short group-walks that are open to all. Mainly targeting older people and those with long-term health conditions, the programme improves and maintains the health and wellbeing of people who may be currently inactive and who need support to remain physically active.

Dr William Bird MBE, CEO Intelligent Health, set up the first Health Walk scheme in 1996:

The benefit of walking in a group is that the social motivation is often the most important factor in getting people active. For some people it is their only contact with the outside. For those who are isolated, then physical activity is a means to an end with meeting others being the primary driver. Walking groups can have a huge impact on ensuring people make movement a part of their daily lives as people have to schedule them in regularly and encourage each other along.

How the service works

Walking for Health comprises of 361 schemes delivering an average of 1,800 walks every week to an audience of 80,000 walkers. Five thousand volunteer walk leaders support the service, and each scheme is led by local organisations such as local authorities, charities, leisure providers and NHS bodies.

Walking for Health is designed to be accessible to people who have done little or no activity before, or who need more support to stay active than they have had in the past. Each walking scheme is tailored to meet the needs of the local area. When there is a need for a new scheme, the Ramblers Walking for Health team is in place with dedicated officers who give the necessary support to establish the scheme.

Each new scheme must meet all 5 specific accreditation criteria, that each walk is:

- regular – consistent walks undertaken on a frequent basis
- short – not longer than 90 minutes and at least one 30-minute walk a week
- easy – accessible to all, particularly people who are currently inactive
- free – no membership or fees, not-for-profit only
- led by trained volunteers – all volunteer leaders must complete our walk leader training

Walking for Health targets older adults and those with long-term health conditions. Those who participate tend to reflect that target demographic, so that:

- 85% of walkers are over 55
- 33.6% of walkers have at least one serious health condition (excluding cancer)
- 4.3% of walkers have been diagnosed with cancer
- 7.3% of new walkers in the past year have been diagnosed with cancer

The programme encourages these participants to raise and then maintain their levels of weekly physical activity as a means of managing some of the symptoms that may be present.

Working Well

Participants report improvement in several measures of wellbeing, such as improving or managing symptoms of long-term health conditions, alleviating social isolation and encouraging social interaction. Examples include:

- reduction of inhaler use
- weight loss
- addressing problems associated with high/low blood pressure
- reducing social isolation
- intervening to address mental health issues such as anxiety

Walking for Health prioritises sustained moderate-level physical activity among its participants. People tend to decrease the amount of activity as they get older, so the programme takes care to focus on encouraging participants to maintain their activity levels.

The evidence gathered to date demonstrates that participants in Walking for Health maintain their levels of weekly physical activity. Moreover, on average, participants were undertaking around 2.5 days of (at least 30 minutes) moderate physical activity at the baseline and final follow-up stages of the survey. More than half of the respondents reported that it was unlikely they would have found a similar scheme in the absence of Walking for Health.

Next steps

Walking for Health continues to grow, develop and welcome new walkers and schemes. The programme is focused on supporting existing schemes to attract new walkers and to transition regular walkers into local Ramblers groups where walks tend to be longer and more challenging.

Further information

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Secretary of State announces re-appointment of Independent Reviewer and Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee on Protection

The Secretary of State, Rt Hon Julian Smith CBE MP, has today announced the renewal of the appointment of His Honour Brian Barker CBE QC as the Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements and Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee on Protection (NICOP).

Mr Barker's appointment will be renewed for a further period of up to one year, from 1 February 2020.

Note to Editors

Background

NICOP was established in 2009 to determine the policy in relation to the provision of close armed protection to individuals living in Northern Ireland. It makes recommendations to the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, who has operational responsibility for the provision of close protection. The Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements in Northern Ireland reviews annually the operation of the arrangements for national security matters, further to Annex E of the St Andrews Agreement.

Terms of appointment

Length of Appointment: Up to one year from 1 February 2020

Remuneration: £848 per day

Pension: The position is not pensionable

Time Requirements: Approximately 3-4 days per month

Political Activity

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity in defined categories within the last five years to be made public. Mr Barker has not been engaged in any political activity in the last five years.

Regulation

This appointment is not regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

[UK and Australia join forces in simulated African swine fever exercise](#)

This week, the UK and the New South Wales government in Australia will collaborate on a joint, simulated exercise to practice biosecurity measures in the event of an African swine fever outbreak.

The joint exercise involving Defra, the Animal Plant and Health Agency (APHA) and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) in New South Wales will take place over three days from Wednesday 29 January and strengthen the two

nations' joint control strategies for the disease.

There has never been an outbreak of African swine fever (ASF) in the UK and there are robust measures in place to protect against it, including joint operations with Border Force and a policy to seize and destroy all illegal imports of meat and meat products.

However, ASF is a major risk to the pig industries of both Australia and the UK due to trade links with and proximity to affected regions in Asia and Europe. In the event of an outbreak, disease control measures will mean the governments will put in place movement controls for all pig-related businesses, potentially including feed delivery, slaughter houses, pig breeding units or movement of animals to sales.

The focus of the exercise will be to assess how the movement restrictions would be applied in practice to best manage an ASF outbreak.

Christine Middlemiss, Chief Veterinary Officer, said:

While there has never been an outbreak of African swine fever in the UK, we are in no way complacent and have robust measures in place to protect against it.

The UK has strong links with Australia and scientific cooperation is one of them so I welcome this initiative to share information and experience, helping us to maintain our high biosecurity standards.

The simulated exercise started on Wednesday 29th January and will conclude on Friday 31st, with experts in risk assessment, epidemiology, science and disease control policy from Australia and the UK collaborating to form plans for African swine fever control. It will contribute to the skills of specialised teams who make the rapid risk assessments which would be required in an ASF biosecurity emergency.

Taking place in the cities of Orange and Port Stephens in New South Wales, Australia, the NSW DPI staff will be working with Local Land Services, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Australian Animal Health Laboratory in Geelong. Whilst at the same time, Defra counterparts will be participating in the exercise in London, UK alongside the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

In June 2019 ASF was found in meat seized by port authorities in Northern Ireland before entering the country, the first time the ASF virus has been detected in the UK.

ASF has been reported in Belgium, Slovakia, Serbia, China, Mongolia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, North Korea, South Korea, the Philippines, Timor Leste and Indonesia.