

FCO Minister arrives in Vietnam for two day visit

FCO Minister Heather Wheeler will begin her two day visit to Vietnam on Thursday (16 January) to mark 10 years of the UK-Vietnam Strategic Partnership.

Speaking ahead of her visit, UK Minister for Asia and the Pacific, Heather Wheeler MP, said:

We are committed to maintaining and strengthening our relationships with ASEAN and Vietnam in particular.

The best way to mark the 10 year anniversary of UK-Vietnam Strategic Partnership is to commit to making it even broader and deeper with new cooperation on health, education, sustainable cities, technology and innovation.

Minister Wheeler will travel to the central province of Nghe An on Thursday, one of the localities most affected during the Essex lorry tragedy that claimed the lives of 39 Vietnamese people. She will meet with Nghe An authorities and observe a UK-funded training session on human trafficking investigation skills for Vietnamese law enforcement. She will also visit a UK-supported local shelter for victims of human trafficking.

With the aim of promoting UK qualifications and education in Vietnam, Minister Wheeler will also speak at an event to promote collaboration between Vinh University, one of the most prominent institutions in the central region of Vietnam, and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. Later in the capital city of Hanoi, the Minister will visit a British Council teaching centre.

While in Vietnam the Minister will meet her counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister To Anh Dung at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hanoi, to endorse the 10-year bilateral strategic partnership.

With Vietnam Chairing ASEAN in 2020, and with both countries being on the UN Security Council and with the UK hosting COP 26 this year, the Minister will touch on opportunities for the bilateral partnership to drive international responses to the great global challenges the two countries face. These discussions will highlight UK and Vietnam's shared interests in promoting the Rules Based International System.

In Hanoi, the Minister will also visit the National Assembly, where she is due to meet with a Standing member of the Foreign Affairs Committee to discuss a wide range of mutual interests including gender equality and environmental protection.

With the hope of boosting bilateral partnership on sustainable energy transition, the Minister will later preside over a signing of the UK-Vietnam MoU on Energy with the Ministry of Industry and Trade, which will open up new opportunities for UK companies to bolster trade with Vietnam in the energy sector.

Planetary issues including climate change, environmental sustainability and combating illegal wildlife trade are a key part of the Minister's visit. She will meet with NGOs, development partners and civil societies working on these issues in Vietnam at a British Embassy-hosted reception.

Further information

UK Government commits £2bn to support new Northern Ireland Executive

The UK Government will provide a £2bn injection of financial support to the new Northern Ireland Executive which will end the nurses' pay dispute, transform public services, turbocharge infrastructure investment and address Northern Ireland's unique circumstances.

The financial package will be accompanied by stringent conditions contained within the New Decade, New Approach deal to deliver a greater level of accountability for public spending and ensure the new Executive is building sustainable public services.

A new UK Government – Northern Ireland Executive joint board will be established, convened by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to oversee implementation.

Julian Smith, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said:

This £2bn injection will help transform public services in Northern Ireland, including ending the nurses' pay dispute. New Decade, New Approach is about putting Northern Ireland's Assembly on a sustainable footing.

This funding provides certainty to the Executive and ensures much-needed reforms across health, education and justice can be delivered.

NOTES TO EDITOR:

The Government's financial package includes:

- A £1bn Barnett-based investment guarantee from the UK Government, which will include significant new funding to turbocharge infrastructure investment. This guarantee will apply in all circumstances, and allow the Executive to plan new investment over a five year period.
- A rapid injection of £550m to put the Executive's finances on a sustainable footing, including £200 million to resolve the nurses' pay dispute immediately and deliver pay parity over the next two years.
- Alongside this, the UK Government will ringfence £60m of capital and resource funding to deliver a Northern Ireland Graduate Entry Medical School in Derry/Londonderry, subject to Executive approval, with £45m provided by the Inclusive Future Fund announced in May 2019.
- We will provide £50m over two years to support the rollout of ultra-low emission public transport.
- Around £245m will support the transformation of public services, including transformation across health, education and justice. Funding release will be tied to the delivery of reform.
- £140m to address Northern Ireland's unique circumstances.
- The deal includes strict financial conditions such as the establishment of a new independent Fiscal Council. But it does not include any conditions about the raising of revenue by the Executive – that will be a matter for the Executive to decide on if it wants to release extra funds.

[Liverpool engineers help African nations shift towards clean energy](#)

Liverpool engineering company [Clarke Energy](#) is helping African businesses reduce carbon emissions thanks to innovative hybrid engines.

During a visit to Merseyside today (15th January 2020), International Development Minister Andrew Murrison opened a new engine repair workshop at the company, which will make power plants across Africa more efficient and

support Africa's drive for clean energy.

Opening the workshop, Minister Murrison met the Overhaul and Repair Centre Manager, Dave Nicholls, to see first-hand how high efficiency gas engines are being repaired in Knowsley in Merseyside and sent back to African nations. Similar units being deployed across Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania and Cameroon improve the reliability of power to businesses and communities, helping to keep the lights on and power flowing in countries with unstable energy systems.

Dr Murrison also announced a new DFID-funded testing lab for solar products ensuring that solar panels and appliances meet global standards and households have access to good quality, reliable clean energy.

Following his visit, Minister Murrison said:

From powering hospitals in London to a mosque in Algeria, Clarke Energy is just one great example of how UK businesses – including those from Liverpool – are already leading the way in investing in Africa.

Clarke Energy's investment in Africa shows how UK expertise, technology and innovation are improving access to cleaner forms of energy, which can be replicated by businesses across the UK and Africa.

The UK-Africa Investment Summit will forge closer trading partnerships to deliver more investment, jobs and growth benefitting people and businesses across Africa and the UK.

Touring the engineering company, Minister Murrison learned more about the business's ambition to change the future of Africa's energy supplies and the use of green energy across the continent. He heard how Clarke Energy's new power generation projects in Kano, Northern Nigeria will provide energy to businesses, reduce emissions and benefit whole communities.

Alex Marshall, Director for Marketing and Compliance at Clarke Energy said:

The knowledge the UK Government has both locally in the North West of England and across Africa is outstanding and helped us to navigate what can be a tough market with political considerations, language and cultural differences.

Being part of what's set to be the world's third largest mosque is a key milestone in our exporting journey and our work with the UK government has been core to that success. If a business from Knowsley can export on such a large scale, with the right support and hard work, anyone can make a success of trading overseas.

The visit comes ahead of the [UK-Africa Investment Summit](#), held in London on 20 January 2020, which will bring together UK and African leaders, businesses, and entrepreneurs.

By 2050, more than 2 billion people will live in Africa and 1 in 4 global consumers will be African. Businesses like Clarke Energy are ensuring that the British economy is seizing this opportunity and are investing in the trading partners of the future today.

[Transport update: Flybe](#)

The Department for Transport, the Treasury and the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy have been in discussions with Europe's largest regional airline, Flybe, which plays an important role in the UK's connectivity by flying regional routes.

In a sign of the Prime Minister's commitment to levelling up all regions of the UK, the government has announced additional measures to support regional connectivity across the UK, to ensure all corners of the country drive the economy, and fully benefit from prosperity in years to come.

A [review of regional connectivity](#) will ensure all nations and regions of the UK have the domestic transport connections local communities rely on – including regional services from local airports. This review, led by DfT, will consider all options to ensure we continue to have good regional connectivity. The DfT will work closely with the aviation industry, local regions and devolved nations to identify how we can support connectivity.

As part of this work and ahead of the March Budget, the Treasury will also be reviewing Air Passenger Duty (APD) to ensure regional connectivity is supported while meeting the UK's climate change commitments to meet net zero by 2050.

The outcomes of these reviews will benefit the entire industry, passengers, communities, regions and nations across the UK.

These measures featured in discussions between the Department for Transport, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and HM Treasury and Europe's largest regional airline, Flybe, which plays an important role in the UK's connectivity.

HMG was notified about the difficulties of Flybe on 11 January, and since then we have worked intensively with the company to understand their financial position and explore options. In the light of these discussions the management and shareholders on 14 January took action to set Flybe on a recovery path.

GCA investigation into Co-operative Group Limited – progress towards following GCA recommendations



[GCA investigation into Co-operative Group Limited – progress towards following GCA recommendations](#) (PDF, 192KB, 2 pages)

Requirements of Co-operative Group Limited to enable me to monitor its compliance with my recommendations (paragraph 59 of the report of my investigation)

GCA view as of 9 December 2019

I required Co-operative Group Limited (Co-op) to provide a detailed implementation plan within four weeks of the publication of the report of my investigation setting out how it would comply with my recommendations.

I consider that Co-op has met this requirement.

I required a response from Co-op to the recommendations on a quarterly basis.

I moved monitoring of Co-op compliance with my recommendations to business as usual.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Co-op must have adequate governance to oversee and manage its compliance with the Code.

I consider that Co-op has an appropriate approach to following this recommendation.

Recommendation 2: Co-op legal, compliance and audit functions must have sufficient co-ordinated oversight of Co-op systems to ensure Code compliance.

I consider that Co-op has an appropriate approach to following this recommendation.

Recommendation 3: Co-op IT systems must support Code compliance.

I consider that Co-op has an appropriate approach to following this recommendation.

Recommendation 4: Co-op must adequately train on the Code all employees who make decisions which affect a Supplier's commercial arrangements with Co-op.

I consider that Co-op has an appropriate approach to following this recommendation.

Requirements of Co-operative Group Limited to enable me to monitor its compliance with my recommendations (paragraph 59 of the report of my investigation)

GCA view as of 9 December 2019

Recommendation 5: Co-op must in any potential De-listing situation communicate with affected Suppliers to enable Co-op to decide what is a significant reduction in volume and reasonable notice.

I consider that Co-op has an appropriate approach to following this recommendation.

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