

Prime Minister's Special Envoy: importance of the international Freedom of Religion or Belief conference in London

Introduction from the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief

Greetings from the UK Parliament. I'm delighted to be speaking to you as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief. And I'm equally delighted to be able to talk to you about an international ministerial conference which the UK is hosting on 5 and 6 July this year. It's a conference about freedom of religion or belief or 'FoRB' for short.

Why is this conference so important? Well, it's important because all around the world today, even in the 21st century, millions of people are being deprived an education or a job or a home or access to justice or liberty, even to life itself, simply on account of what they believe. And so we're hosting this conference here in the UK so that we can bring together people from around the world to look at how we can address this situation.

We're inviting government ministers. We're inviting faith leaders and representatives. We're inviting civil society activists from around 50 countries from across the globe to come together and not only to discuss the issue of freedom of religion or belief, but also to look at how we can agree some practical solutions to address it.

And I'm pleased to say, too, that we've not just got an official government organised conference with about 500 delegates and will be based in the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre in the QEII in Parliament Square, but we're also involving civil society grassroots organisations, charities and NGOs concerned about freedom of religion or belief, and they'll be given their own space in the conference centre where they'll be able to host exhibitions and hold their own meetings and sessions.

And so what will the conference involve? Well, we've got sessions across the 2 days looking at, for example, freedom of religion and belief and education. How can we introduce it into education syllabi? So that young people can begin to understand what freedom of religion or belief is and how important it is? We've seen how, for example, they've got hold of the importance of climate change and addressing that. Can we do that in the same way for freedom of religion or belief to help the millions of people around the world who are suffering. Can we see young ambassadors develop so that young people will use social media to champion freedom of religion or belief?

And then we'll have another session on looking at women and girls and how they have a double jeopardy. Often they they are abused because they are

women and girls, but also on account of what their beliefs are, and they're vulnerable. How can we better help them in countries where this is happening?

And then we're going to look at early warning signs. There are early warning signs that happen often when that's the beginning of tension in communities because of differences in views and beliefs, which can then lead to friction, violence, even at worst case. Well, how can countries how can communities start to recognise these early warning signs and address them? And of course, we're bringing people here from across the world because we recognise that no one country, not least the UK, has all the answers.

Only by working together, by collaborating will we be able to begin to start to solve this this growing issue. We're looking at not just governments working together either, but governments working with civil society with organisations going forward, taking forward some really practical suggestions, which we hope will be brought out during those 2 days, and which we can then build on over the months, weeks, years to come.

And in addition to the official 2-day conference there's a lot else going on here in the UK around 5 and 6 July, so that anyone who's not invited to the conference will still be able to join in. We've got dozens and dozens of events focusing on freedom of religion or belief organised by charities, by non-government organisations (NGOs), by civil society activists, not just in London, but around the country.

And to the ministerial conference itself will be livestreamed so that anyone from anywhere in the world will be able to join in and watch and will actually be able to interact, because that will be an opportunity not just for delegates in the conference centre to interact with the sessions and make their contributions and their suggestions known, but also for people to comment virtually from right around the world.

So do join us on 5 and 6 July here in London, the lots of information on the website and by a lot more information coming on over the next few days. And I'm particularly delighted that the UK is hosting this conference this year in 2022 because this year to the UK is the Chair of the International Religious Freedom of Belief Alliance.

What is that Alliance, you may ask? Well, it's an alliance of countries committed to promoting and protecting freedom of religion or belief and to preventing its abuses, to working together to do so. It was founded not long ago, in February 2020 with just a handful of countries. It's now grown to 36 countries and more are coming on board.

And I'm pleased that the ministerial is proving a springboard for more interest in the Alliance day by day. And so we hope to see the Alliance grow so that they'll really will be a strong collective global voice of countries who together can have more impact than our individual voices alone.

So I'm looking forward to greeting many of my alliance contacts from around the world who up to date because of the pandemic I've only ever met virtually. This will be an exciting conference. It's exciting for everyone

and there'll be something for everyone. Please do join us on 5 and 6 of July here in London.

No restoration for twice-lost repute

Press release

In a long-running saga, Carmel Coaches Ltd have been refused a standard international PSV operator's licence by Traffic Commissioner Nick Denton.



The application was made on the 11 May 2021 but due to an appeal to the Upper Tribunal on a related case, and a further appeal, it is only now that the decision can be made public.

The commissioner found a complex and troubling history to the case, including two previous revoked licences and the applicant, Anthony Hazell having lost his good repute twice as a transport manager.

At previous public inquiries, Traffic Commissioner Nick Jones found, in his written decision dated 19 December 2019, the applicant "... is a danger to the PSV industry as he is so grossly incompetent. It is deeply worrying that he is both a director and he is a transport manager for other entities. I am unable to make any order in relation to his position as a transport manager or make any finding under section 28 of the Transport Act 1985 as no notice was served on him that these were considerations. Nevertheless, it is clear to me that he should retire from the industry at the first opportunity." In her written decision of 5 June 2014, Traffic Commissioner Sarah Bell expressed "grave doubts as to Mr Tony [Anthony] Hazell's judgement and integrity". She found him "wanting to such an unacceptable degree, even after copious amounts of advice and support from DVSA, a warning from me and help from the commercial sector". Anthony Hazell was "not capable or competent to operate the necessary systems to ensure vehicles remain roadworthy when in service and in a lawful manner".

Doubts were shown around the applicant's ability to learn lessons and

improve. One of Carmel's vehicles was involved in a fatal incident in May 2014 when two passengers were killed and seven injured. The driver was subsequently convicted of causing death by dangerous driving and causing serious injury by dangerous driving and sentenced to five and two years respectively in prison (to run concurrently). A major contributory factor was said by the police to have been a number of hands-free mobile phone calls the driver made during the journey, one of which had lasted for eight minutes at the time of the crash. The new company's proposed mobile phone policy did not prohibit such use until pointed out by the commissioner.

The Mr. Denton said "I consider that, Carmel Coaches Ltd and Anthony Hazell having failed so catastrophically to run a compliant operation in the past, and with Mr Hazell having now lost his good reputation as a transport manager and been disqualified twice, the onus is heavily on the applicant to convince me that it deserves a third opportunity. I am unable to conclude he does."

Further details can be found [here](#).

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[HS2 Crewe to Manchester: supplement to the update on the strategic outline business case](#)

As set out in a written ministerial statement to Parliament on 6 June 2022, the government is today (20 June 2022) publishing a Supplement to the January 2022 update to the High Speed 2 (HS2) Crewe to Manchester Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). This Supplement to the SOBC sets out the implications of removing the Golborne Link from the High Speed (Crewe to Manchester) Bill scheme.

The January 2022 update to the SOBC set out the importance of the proposed scheme in linking Manchester to the high-speed network, reducing journey times between the UK's biggest economic regions (the South East, Midlands, and North West) and generating much-needed passenger and network capacity on the West Coast Mainline (WCML), the UK's busiest mixed rail use corridor.

It also outlined the scheme's central role in rebalancing the UK economy by providing the platform for economic growth and regeneration in Manchester and the North West, and its importance as the strategic enabler for Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and the wider [Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands \(IRP\)](#).

This scheme also included the Golborne Link, a proposed connection from the

HS2 network near Hoo Green to the WCML just south of Wigan, aimed at increasing the number of HS2 services between England and Scotland.

As announced on 6 June 2022, subject to the will of Parliament, the government no longer intends to seek powers to construct the Golborne Link as part of this Bill. As Sir Peter Hendy's Union Connectivity Review made clear the Golborne link might not resolve all the rail capacity constraints on the West Coast Mainline between Crewe and Preston.

The government will, therefore, take time to consider alternatives that deliver similar benefits to Scotland as the Golborne link, so long as these deliver for the taxpayer within the £96 billion envelope allocated for the Integrated Rail Plan, and to understand the deliverability of the alternatives.

HS2 is an essential factor in achieving the transformative impact of the government's £96 billion Integrated Rail Plan, connecting our major cities, including connections between the North and Midlands.

With other elements of the IRP, it will encourage businesses to invest beyond London while retaining ready access to the capital. It will make it easier for people to find high-wage, high-skilled jobs without having to travel south. This will help drive productivity and growth, benefitting the whole country.

A copy of the [Supplement to the Strategic Outline Business Case](#) will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and made publicly accessible online.

[Restoring Your Railway update](#)

Today (20 June 2022), I am pleased to announce further development funding for 9 rail schemes under the Restoring Your Railway Fund. This brings communities in Yorkshire, Staffordshire, County Durham and beyond one step closer to being reconnected to the rail network, with the transformational levelling-up opportunities for jobs, homes and education that public transport provides.

The Restoring Your Railway Fund is making substantial progress to restore previously closed rail lines: the £500 million commitment is supporting the development or delivery of over 45 schemes across England and Wales, and we have already reintroduced services to the Dartmoor Line between Okehampton and Exeter.

I am today announcing further funding for schemes that entered Restoring Your Railway as early-stage ideas, which have already been supported through the fund to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case and will now be progressing further. I am also announcing funding for proposals at more advanced stages.

The 9 schemes receiving further funding with the potential to level up and reconnect communities are: the Barrow Hill line between Sheffield and Chesterfield; the Ivanhoe Line between Leicester and Burton on Trent; new stations at Meir in Staffordshire, Haxby in Yorkshire, Devizes in Wiltshire, Ferryhill in County Durham; Aldridge station and line upgrade in Walsall; reinstating the Fleetwood line; and the Mid Cornwall Metro scheme for services between Newquay and Falmouth.

More than 50 years since the railways were radically reshaped during the infamous Beeching cuts of the 1960s when thousands of miles of both track and stations were closed, the Restoring Your Railway Fund is now focused on developing and delivering the benefits of the schemes within its portfolio.

If delivered, these lines and stations will make a real contribution to levelling up the country, reinvigorating high streets and breathing new life into previously cut-off areas.

Alongside this announcement, we are publishing a [Restoring Your Railway fund update](#), which sets out progress on all schemes that have received funding, and will be placed in the libraries of both Houses, as well as being publicly accessible online through the GOV.UK website.

[British nationals released from Afghanistan](#)

Press release

UK welcomes the release of 5 British men detained in Afghanistan.



A Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office spokesperson said:

We welcome and appreciate the release by the current administration of Afghanistan of 5 British nationals who were detained in

Afghanistan.

These British nationals had no role in the UK Government's work in Afghanistan and travelled to Afghanistan against the UK Government's travel advice. This was a mistake.

On behalf of the families of the British nationals, we express their apologies for any breach of Afghan culture, customs or laws, and offer their assurance of future good conduct.

The UK Government regrets this episode.

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