

Solicitor General meets government lawyers in Bristol

News story

The Solicitor thanked them for their vital contributions.



Solicitor General Michael Tomlinson visited the GLD hub in Bristol on Monday to meet lawyers working on some of government's most important legal work. The Solicitor was joined by Mel Nebhrajani CB, Director General of GLD's Employment with Economic Recovery and UK Governance directorate who is a champion for the office at GLD.

Government lawyers work on some of the most high-profile and demanding legal issues of the day. Their work touches on all aspects of everyday life from transport to education. GLD is committed to providing opportunities across the UK as more jobs are now being moved outside of Westminster.

The Solicitor thanked Bristol colleagues for their hard work supporting the government's legislative agenda and for helping the government to govern well, within the rule of law. As a former barrister on the Western Circuit, he stressed that the vital work taking place in Bristol demonstrates that you don't need to be based in London to have a fulfilling and demanding career in the Civil Service.

Reflecting on the visit, Solicitor General Michael Tomlinson said:

I was thrilled to meet so many of the dedicated government lawyers in Bristol today and to be able to thank them for their work which ensures the government can deliver for UK citizens.

As a barrister who practiced on the western circuit for years before becoming an MP, I know first-hand the incredible work and dedication of lawyers who work outside of London.

The growth of GLD's presence in Bristol is testament to the fact you no longer need to be based in London to have a demanding and

fulfilling career in the Civil Service.

Quote from Mel Nebhrajani CB, Director General, Employment with Economic Recovery and UK Governance Directorate:

I was delighted to welcome the Solicitor General on his visit to the Government Legal Department in Bristol. The Solicitor's enthusiasm for colleagues, our work and our growth in Bristol is deeply appreciated and it was so inspiring to connect with our dedicated and talented Bristol-based colleagues.

They work seamlessly with GLD colleagues and clients all across the country on fascinating and diverse work. With the growth of Bristol and Leeds, in addition to London, there has never been a more exciting time to be working in the Government Legal Department.

Quote from Robert Wardell, Deputy Director based in Bristol

It's a really exciting time to be at GLD in Bristol. We have so many new and established colleagues here in three busy and growing offices, doing a very diverse range of vital GLD work. It's also great to have visitors and really pleasing for the teams based here to meet the Solicitor General in person.

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[Wales Freeport bidding process closes](#)

Press release

Applications close from bidders interested in setting up a new Freeport in Wales.

Applications have closed from bidders interested in setting up a new Freeport in Wales.

Backed by £26 million in UK Government funding, the Freeport Programme in Wales aims to create jobs, boost the local economy and regenerate surrounding areas.

Three bids have been received from ports around the country. They will be jointly assessed by officials from the UK and Welsh governments and it is expected that the successful site will be announced in early 2023 before becoming operational later in the year.

Secretary of State for Wales David TC Davies said:

It is fantastic to take the next step in delivering a Freeport for Wales. It will bring jobs and prosperity to its surrounding region and provide a huge boost to the Welsh economy.

The UK Government has long been committed to bringing a Freeport to Wales and is delivering on that pledge. The Freeports programme is already returning benefits for businesses and communities elsewhere in the UK and I look forward to seeing similar results for Wales.

Wales has already received more than £165m in levelling up funding from UK Government with more to follow in the coming months. This has gone towards projects such as transforming Haverfordwest Castle into an attraction ready for all seasons, a facelift for the Queen's Ballroom in Tredegar and giving Llandrindod Wells a new lease of life in the form of affordable, energy efficient homes.

Freeports are special areas within the UK's borders where different economic and customs regulations apply. Freeports are sites centred around one or a combination of air, rail, or seaport, within an encompassing outer boundary. [See more information on Freeports.](#)

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12th Conference of the Pacific Community – Minister of State (Indo-Pacific) remarks

Chair, Director General, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be able to join you a year into the UK's resumed membership of The Pacific Community.

Three months ago my predecessor formally opened the British High Commission in Port Vila.

It is one of 3 new High Commissions we have opened in Pacific Island countries over the last 3 years.

It is concrete evidence of our commitment to enhancing our engagement with the region, and a demonstration of the importance we attach to the whole of the Indo-Pacific.

Our Foreign Secretary recently used his first major overseas speech to reaffirm our 'Tilt' towards the Indo Pacific.

We are expanding our trade and investment relationships, our growing defence partnerships, and our work together to transition to net zero, and continuing our commitment to uphold the international rules-based order.

International solidarity and development are a central pillar of the post-World War II world order.

Which is why the UK supported the WHO COVID-19 Pacific response.

It is why we stand ready to support the Pacific Island Forum's '2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent'.

And why we are working with you as part of the new 'Partners in the Blue Pacific' alliance, to ensure greater coordination behind your priorities.

There is no greater priority for many Pacific Islands than climate change.

You were key allies in delivering the Glasgow Climate Pact at COP26.

And we want to continue working with you to ensure that the world's big economies deliver on their climate pledges.

The UK is taking a lead with our emission reductions and our International Climate Finance commitment.

We are driving global action to tackle barriers that vulnerable small island developing states face in accessing essential finance. The international community must work better together to support your resilience building. For example, we are launching the new jointly developed Principles for Improved Aid Impact in SIDS next month at the Effective Development Cooperation Summit in Geneva.

It is important that the UK and the Pacific also continue to support shared values of human rights, democracy, rule of law and territorial integrity.

Vladimir Putin's attack on Ukraine has pushed up energy and food costs around the globe, and is a direct challenge to the international rules based order that protects us all.

We welcome the condemnation of Putin by countries across the Pacific.

It is right that we all do all that we can to stand against Putin's illegal war and stand with the people of Ukraine.

The Pacific Community does important work for human rights, development, maritime governance, and the environment.

The UK will continue to support that work where we can, and help deliver the Vision for a Blue Pacific Continent.

Together we can help the people and nations of the Pacific respond to the challenges they face.

And secure a resilient, sustainable and prosperous future for all. Thank you.

Statement to the twenty-seventh session of the conference of the States Parties

Director-General, Mr Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to thank Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat for all their work in preparing for this Conference. Many thanks as well to our Chairperson, Ambassador Madonsela.

I am very sorry not to be with you in person, but I am required to be in London for important business in Parliament.

In April, we marked the 25th anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention coming into force. During its first quarter century, the OPCW has made enormous strides in ridding the world of chemical weapons.

There is more to come. The UK is a proud contributor to the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology and we are looking forward to its inauguration next year.

With the completion of destruction of declared stockpiles in sight, next year's Review Conference is particularly timely. And there is much still to discuss in order to prepare the ground for the Review Conference.

Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom is not complacent about the challenges ahead. This Organisation remains as relevant as ever and there is much still to do.

The OPCW has an important role to play in helping States Parties build capacity to implement the Convention. The UK is proud to provide a further voluntary contribution of seven hundred thousand pounds this year in support of this aim.

And we call on all States Parties to support the proposed modest budget revision. Whilst recognising the global economic headwinds, we encourage all States Parties to pay their assessed contributions on time and in full. Late payments have a direct and material impact on whether the Technical Secretariat can deliver its planned activities.

Mr Chair,

Despite progress on destruction, serious verification challenges remain.

Unfortunately, a small number of States Parties have broken the rules of the Convention in a blatant and outrageous manner.

Russia's use of Novichok in the United Kingdom in 2018 was horrific. A public inquiry is on-going into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' tragic death. Three Russian nationals have been charged with chemical weapons offences.

The Russian state has also used chemical weapons within their own borders. Alexey Navalny's poisoning with a nerve agent in 2020 was appalling, as was Russia's subsequent attempted cover-up. I call on Russia to provide substantive answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties under Article IX of the Convention. Russia must account for and give up its chemical weapons programme.

Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom condemns Russia's unjustifiable and illegal invasion of Ukraine.

We have all heard Russian-linked separatist figures making disturbing remarks in Ukraine about supporting chemical weapons use to support war aims. We have all seen Russia's irresponsible attacks near Ukraine's civil chemical facilities. And we have all experienced Russia's malicious disinformation campaigns about chemical weapons. We have seen this pattern of deceitful behaviour in Syria and now we are seeing it in Ukraine. In this context,

Russia's war is not something we can ignore here in the OPCW.

Mr Chair,

Syria is another State Party showing disregard for the rules.

The Syrian authorities have undeniably used chemical weapons against their own people on multiple occasions.

The Syrian authorities have not resolved all the glaring omissions in its initial declaration. Thousands of munitions are missing. Hundreds of tonnes of agent are missing.

In 2021, OPCW States signalled their concern and the Syrian regime's response was to limit its cooperation with the OPCW even further. It is a lamentable situation.

Syria must comply with UN Security Council Resolution 2118. Syria must live up to its obligations. Syria must immediately give up its chemical weapons programme in full.

Mr Chair,

In 1997 the convention came into force with the vow to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

25 years on and much has been achieved.

But we know we still have a long way to go.

And that is why we must continue to offer the OPCW our full support and make sure it has the resources it needs to deliver on the goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

Thank you Mr Chair.

[West Kent flood storage area expansion scheme](#)

The Environment Agency scheme to build a flood embankment and pumping station in Hildenborough has received planning permission from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

The works planned at Hildenborough include a new embankment, pumping station, kiosk and flood defence wall. This will form part of the larger flood protection scheme involving increasing the capacity of the Leigh flood storage area (Leigh FSA) by approximately 25 per cent. Once completed, the

overall scheme will reduce the risk of flooding for 1,430 properties.

At a cost of around £21.5m, construction is due to start at the Leigh FSA in spring 2023, and is expected to begin at Hildenborough in 2024. The full scheme is expected to be completed in autumn 2025.

Sally Harvey, Environment Agency area director for Kent, South London and East Sussex, said:

Securing planning approval for the Hildenborough embankment element of the scheme enables us to press ahead with construction works that will improve flood protection to more than 1,400 properties in Tonbridge and Hildenborough.

Tom Tugendhat, MP for Tonbridge and Malling, said:

Expansion of the Leigh flood storage area and the Hildenborough expansion scheme will help defend thousands of residents from flooding. I am pleased this crucial landmark has been passed and construction can start next year.

This project will help protect us from flooding caused on the River Medway and its tributaries, and I look forward to the works starting.

Cllr Robin Betts, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council cabinet member for environment and climate change, said:

Approval of these proposals is a crucial milestone in this major project, enabling work to start and the risk of flooding to homes and businesses to be significantly reduced. This is especially important as we confront the increase in extreme weather we are all experiencing due to climate change.

Tony Hills, Kent County Council deputy cabinet member for the environment, said:

Kent County Council is pleased that the Hildenborough embankment scheme has been approved. Together with the Leigh flood storage area, the two schemes will significantly reduce flood risk in Tonbridge and Hildenborough, helping the county to be resilient to climate change and reduce the disruption flooding causes to lives and livelihoods.

Christian Brodie, South East Local Enterprise Partnership chair, said:

We are delighted that work can begin to improve the Leigh flood storage area and local embankments in Hildenborough. This vitally important investment will help to further reduce the flood-risk for more than 1,400 homes and businesses.

It will also unlock new sites in the future, allowing Tonbridge and Hildenborough to attract new businesses and residents, creating a culture of growth that will benefit the whole local community.

The scheme is being delivered by the Environment Agency in partnership with:

- Kent County Council
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership

Funding is through the Government's Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid, with contributions from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Kent County Council and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

The investment is part of government plans to invest £5.2 billion in flood defence over the next 6 years.

More information – please visit GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leigh-expansion-and-hildenborough-embankments-scheme/leigh-expansion-and-hildenborough-embankments-scheme>

You can find out more about how the flood storage area works by watching our [YouTube animation](#).