

COP President Alok Sharma visits Mexico to promote global climate action and implementation of the Glasgow Climate Pact

- COP President Alok Sharma met representatives from the federal and state Mexican government, as well as representatives of civil society, indigenous peoples and youth
- He visited the state of Quintana Roo to hear about sustainable forestry management from communities and see coastal areas blighted by the brown algae sargassum
- The visit was made to follow up on the agreements made during COP26, held in Glasgow in November 2021

COP President Alok Sharma visited Mexico from April 24-27 to drive momentum on delivering commitments made in the Glasgow Climate Pact signed last November by 196 countries.

On his first visit to the country, the COP26 President participated in several bilateral meetings in Mexico City focused on climate action issues, including a push for greater ambition and a net zero commitment.

At the start of the visit, the COP President met representatives of civil society organisations, youth groups and indigenous peoples who highlighted their climate change concerns across sectors including forests, energy, and agriculture.

The COP President also held bilateral Government meetings with Rocío Nahle, Minister of Energy and Martha Delgado, Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs. He also met the Mexico City Mobility Secretary, Andres Lajous, during a visit to the Cablebus, the city's new low carbon transport system and the Quintana Roo Secretary of Ecology and Environment, Efrain Villanueva.

Throughout these meetings, Alok Sharma underlined the importance of greater ambition in Mexico's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the potential to achieve a net zero goal as well as the importance of decarbonising Mexico's energy mix. Mexico's perspectives post COP26 and in preparation for COP27 were also heard.

Mr Sharma participated in a business round table with members of the private sector in Mexico to discuss the important role business has to play in delivering the Glasgow Climate Pact and driving ambitious climate action in

the country.

While in Mexico, Mr Sharma also visited Muyil in the Yucatan peninsula to meet with indigenous representatives and hear views on nature-based solutions and community integration in projects in the region.

On his final day he witnessed coastal areas affected by the brown algae sargassum, considered by experts to be a consequence of rising ocean temperatures, fertiliser use and deforestation.

During this visit, the COP President took part in a dialogue with the leading local and federal authorities, including the Mexican Navy tasked with managing the sargassum crisis in the state.

COP26 President, Alok Sharma, said:

I came to Mexico to speak with my government counterparts, civil society groups and business who are all so important in turning climate change commitments into action.

State ministers, parliamentarians and business leaders all demonstrated their commitment to action in undertaking work to tackle climate change.

Many countries are already seeing the impact of climate change, including Mexico.

During my visit to Quintana Roo it was great to see how sustainable forest management and land restoration are being used to protect those most vulnerable to climate change.

Pledges made at COP26 in Glasgow must come to life this year. Mexico has a crucial role in helping to deliver this, both through net zero commitments and shorter-term emission reduction targets. I look forward to the UK and Mexico working closely together on this.

ENDS

Local Government Pension Scheme – Northern Ireland

News story

GAD completed its report into the actuarial valuation of the Local Government

Pension Scheme for Northern Ireland.



The Government Actuary's Department's (GAD) report [into the actuarial valuation](#) of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for Northern Ireland has concluded the scheme's in a strong financial position.

The Department of Communities appointed the Government Actuary to undertake the report under Section 13 of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. This covers the actuarial valuation of the LGPS NI as at 31 March 2019. Section 13 requires us to assess whether the scheme has achieved the following aims:

- compliance
- consistency
- solvency
- long term cost efficiency

Top level findings

GAD based its findings on the actuarial valuation of the LGPS NI, data from the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee and its actuary, Aon.

We found the funding position of the LGPS NI has improved since 31 March 2016 and the scheme appears to be in a strong financial position. Among our top-level findings are that the:

- total assets have grown in market value from £5.8 billion to £8.0 billion
- total liabilities disclosed in the 2019 local valuation report amounted to £7.2 billion (the local valuation is required to be completed using prudent assumptions)
- aggregate funding level on the prudent local basis has improved from 96% to 112% (at 2019)
- improved funding level is due in large part to strong asset returns over the 3-year period to 31 March 2019

Funding level

Although the funding level had improved due to change in the demographic assumptions, this was offset by changes in financial assumptions. Furthermore, the funding level on GAD's best estimate basis has reduced from 122% (at 2016) to 114% (at 2019).

One of the report's authors GAD actuary John Bayliss said: "Our report into this actuarial valuation of the LGPS NI showed the fund continues in good health. The scheme has grown significantly over the 3 years since we last examined it."

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[Foreign Secretary statement on the British Virgin Islands: 29 April 2022](#)

Press release

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss issues a statement ahead of the publication of the Commission of Inquiry report into governance in the British Virgin Islands.



Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

The arrest yesterday of the Premier of the British Virgin Islands on charges related to drugs trafficking and money undering is extremely concerning and underlines the need for urgent action.

In January 2021, we set out significant concerns about the deteriorating state of governance in the British Virgin Islands, as well as the potential vulnerability of the islands to serious

organised crime. The UK Government supported the then Governor's decision to launch an independent Inquiry into governance of the Territory.

The Inquiry report published today by the Governor shows clearly that substantial legislative and constitutional change is required to restore the standards of governance that the people of the British Virgin Islands are entitled to.

I have instructed the Minister for Overseas Territories to travel to the Territory immediately to speak to the Governor and key stakeholders. We will then announce a clear path forward.

The Overseas Territories are a core part of the UK family. The UK Government is committed to the security and wellbeing of the people of the British Virgin Islands.

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[Blessing ceremony for WW2 airman, Arnold Hallas, in Italy.](#)

On Friday 29 April, 77 years after his final flight, a blessing ceremony was held for Flying Officer (Fg Off) Arnold George Raymond Hallas, RAF, at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Padua War Cemetery, Italy. Several members of the family attended the service that was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (MOD JCCC), also known as the 'MOD War Detectives'.

The ceremony took place to bless the additional remains of Fg Off Hallas, which were recovered by Aerei Perduti Polesine, an Italian aircraft recovery group in November 2020 and was conducted by the Reverend (Squadron Leader) Rebekah Cannon, Chaplain RAF Brize Norton.

Padre, RAF trumpeter and RAF NATO representatives. Crown copyright.

The RAF Air Historical Branch was able to review documents that confirmed Fg Off Hallas was given a burial by the Padre who attended the crash site straight after but observed only partial remains were recovered. The aircraft parts and artefacts found by the recovery group enabled an identification to be made by MOD JCCC without the need for DNA testing.

Tracey Bowers, JCCC said:

“This case has highlighted the difficult conditions that were faced 77 years ago and the sad reality of war in that sometimes it was not possible to recover all of a casualty.

“We are grateful to the recovery group for the dignity and care that was taken during the excavation of Spitfire NH231 and the understanding of the family in this sensitive case.”

On 30 April 1945, Spitfires of No. 601 Squadron took off from Bellaria, Italy, on a reconnaissance operation. Fg Off Hallas was flying as Mustard 4 in Spitfire NH 231. Whilst looking for enemy transport, the formation was fired upon by light, but intense, fire from enemy positions. As they turned back, Fg Off Hallas called up and reported that he had been hit in the engine. After flying through bad weather, he reported that the temperature was rising and at 4,000 feet he took the decision to bail out. His aircraft dived several times and was seen to roll, finally diving straight into the ground. Fg Off Hallas was 24 when his Spitfire crashed just months before the end of the Second World War and two days before it officially ended in Italy.

The service for Flying Officer Hallas Crown copyright.

Heather Garden, 93, Arnold’s only surviving sibling said;

“It is such a great pleasure to witness the return of the rest of Arnold’s body to his grave. My grateful thanks to all those who made this happen. Arnold’s sacrifice can now be fully recognised in perpetuity”

The Reverend Cannon said:

“Today’s service was emotive for all involved and particularly moving to have so many family present here today to see Arnold their relative laid to rest”

CWGC Horticultural Supervisor, Francesco Migliosi, said:

“Flying Officer Hallas lies at rest alongside his comrades from the Italian Campaign in the CWGC’s Padua War Cemetery. We are grateful that it has been possible to bring closure to the family and honoured to be able to care for his grave in perpetuity.”

[Cambridgeshire man fined £5,000 after burning toxic waste at home](#)

Adam Ivory, 38, of Magnolia Cottage, Tydd St Giles, stored and burnt waste without a permit between April 2019 and September 2020.

A neighbour reported that commercial waste was being burnt at the site every 3 to 5 weeks where it was being piled up with accelerants. Among the items set alight were plastics, pallets, polystyrene and plumbing waste.

Fires at the site were reported as lasting for hours on end, the air described as being "toxic" as a result. Concerns were reported about the impact of the blazes on a neighbour's health as well as that of their animals.

The Environment Agency wrote to Ivory on 2 occasions providing advice and requiring him to remove all the waste on the site. Ivory told officers in March 2020 that the waste had been removed. However, further fires then took place in April 2020 and continued after he was questioned in July 2020.

In mitigation, Ivory said in court that he had been running his business legitimately for the past 18 months. Ivory pled guilty to operating a regulated facility without being authorised by an environmental permit under regulation 12 of the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016.

He also pled guilty to keeping controlled waste on land in a manner likely to cause pollution of the environment or harm to human health. This is contrary to section 33(1)(c) of the Environmental Protection Act.

He appeared at Peterborough Magistrates Court on 27 April 2022 where he was fined £5,200. He was also told to pay a victim surcharge of £190 and costs totalling £4,302.

Sentencing, magistrates described the site as "unsuitable" and said it had been a serious risk to public health. They said Ivory had acted deliberately over a prolonged period and had continued to light fires, despite letters advising him to stop.

Peter Stark, Enforcement Team Leader, said:

Burning waste can have a serious impact on local communities and cause untold damage to the environment. Especially in the quantities and repeated waste fires in this case.

Ivory was given advice on a number of occasions and told to remove the waste legitimately from his property but failed to do so.

Anyone with suspicions of waste crime can call our incident hotline, 0800 807060, or Crimestoppers, on 0800 555111.

- In 2019 we stopped illegal waste activity at 940 sites, 3% more than the previous year. We found 775 new illegal waste sites, 14% less than we found the previous year.
- We continue to close illegal waste sites. At the end of March 2020, 544 known illegal waste sites were still active. 21% less than at the end of March 2019 and the lowest number on our records.

- More information about waste permits can be found here: [Waste:](#).