

OSCE group of friends on safety of journalists: Joint statement to the OSCE

This statement is delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists, which consists of the following member States: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We thank the Representative for her report and the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) for good cooperation in the past year.

We fully support the autonomous mandate of the Representative and Ms Ribeiro in her execution of that mandate. We appreciate her clear stance regarding Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine. We also support her attention to the rest of our region – no country is immune to shortcomings. This is clearly demonstrated by the interventions in a total of 53 OSCE participating States reported by the RFoM so far this year.

As participating States, we have reaffirmed that freedom of expression and media freedom are cornerstones of our common security. The RFoM is a vital instrument for the promotion of this fundamental principle, and we encourage all States to make good use of the toolbox created within the Representative's mandate.

Mr. Chair,

2022 truly has been a dark year for the safety of journalists in our region. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has put a spotlight on the importance of the protection of journalists and media actors in conflict and war. Despite enormous risks, they strive to provide unbiased, trustworthy, and fact-based information from zones of conflict. We urgently call on the Russian Federation to immediately end its attacks on independent media at home and abroad and to respect the rights of journalists and media actors in accordance with international human rights law, international humanitarian law and OSCE commitments.

The 2nd of November marks the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. While killings are the most extreme form of media censorship, journalists are also subjected to countless other threats – ranging from kidnapping, torture, and other physical attacks to harassment, particularly in the digital sphere. Furthermore, journalists also face intimidation from public authorities and political leaders in their own and other countries, such as illegitimate state surveillance, the use of SLAPPS or the denial of visa to travel for work.

Threats of violence and attacks against journalists create a climate of fear for media actors, impeding the free circulation of information, opinions, and

ideas for all. The disproportionate targeting of women journalists and other women media actors through structural sexual and gender-based violence, harassment and abuse is of deep concern and runs the risk of silencing women's voices.

All OSCE participating States have committed to protect journalists. Proper investigation and prosecution of perpetrators should go hand in hand with the positive obligations for participating States to promote a safe and enabling environment for independent media.

Threats against media freedom, safety of journalists and freedom of expression is part of the backsliding of democracy that we are witnessing around the world. The right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the ability to access to reliable information are corner stones of a democratic society. There is indeed no security without media freedom.

Dear Representative Ribeiro,

We congratulate you, past Representatives and all your colleagues in the Office of the RFoM with the 25th anniversary. You can trust in the continued support of all participating States in the OSCE Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists.

I thank you.

[HMRC late payment interest rates to be revised after Bank of England increases base rate](#)

News story

HMRC interest rates for late payments will be revised following the Bank of England interest rate rise to 3%.



The Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee voted on 3 November 2022 to increase the Bank of England base rate to 3% from 2.25%.

HMRC interest rates are linked to the Bank of England base rate.

As a consequence of the change in the base rate, HMRC interest rates for late payment and repayment will increase.

These changes will come into effect on:

- 14 November 2022 for quarterly instalment payments
- 22 November 2022 for non-quarterly instalments payments

[Information on the interest rates for payments](#) will be updated shortly.

HMRC interest rates are set in legislation and are linked to the Bank of England base rate.

Late payment interest is set at base rate plus 2.5%. Repayment interest is set at base rate minus 1%, with a lower limit – or ‘minimum floor’ – of 0.5%.

The differential between late payment interest and repayment interest is in line with the policy of other tax authorities worldwide and compares favourably with commercial practice for interest charged on loans or overdrafts and interest paid on deposits.

The rate of late payment interest encourages prompt payment and ensures fairness for those who pay their tax on time, while the rate of repayment interest fairly compensates taxpayers for loss of use of their money when they overpay or pay early.

Published 3 November 2022

[Insolvency Service continues to deliver outstanding customer service](#)

News story

The Insolvency Service has delivered excellent customer service to people in financial difficulty and non-institutional creditors according to independent research.



The Insolvency Service has published its [Customer Satisfaction Survey 2022](#) with the agency receiving an overall satisfaction score of 84%, an increase of one percentage point compared to 2020/21.

The 2022 survey was conducted by [IFF Research](#), an independent market research company, and the results have helped the Insolvency Service understand how its customers view the agency's performance and services and identify where improvements are needed.

The Insolvency Service received a 93% approval rating from people who had applied for a debt relief order, and satisfaction levels among non-institutional creditors increased from 71% to 82%, which have historically been the least satisfied group.

Positive feedback was also received from people claiming redundancy payments, who said that decisions had been clearly explained to them. While people in debt were positive about the professionalism of customer service representatives and the accuracy of the information provided.

John Wheatle, Director of Business Services Division for the Insolvency Service, said:

Providing excellent service to our customers, who are often in financial difficulties, is at the heart of everything we do. We are extremely proud of the high satisfaction scores we received this year, and it is testament to the exemplary levels of service provided by our colleagues.

We also recognise that there is more we can do to provide exceptional service to our customers. Going forward we will continue to improve our communications and deliver new customer-centric initiatives, such as the new online holiday claim accrued amendment form.

IFF Research carried out 684 interviews between January and February 2022 with key customer groups, including people in debt, redundancy payment claimants, and non-institutional creditors.

Customer satisfaction in 2022 was reported using a single score and a derived

measure aligned to the three core areas that affect every Insolvency Service customer: contact, process, and quality. This provided a more rounded understanding of the expectations and perceptions of key customer groups.

Published 3 November 2022

[Construction begins on new Single Living Accommodation at Imjin Barracks](#)

Due for completion in Summer 2023, the £13m project at Imjin Barracks, procured by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) on behalf of the British Army, will deliver 69 new single ensuite bedrooms, with re-designed living and kitchen/diner facilities that will enhance the communal living experience for soldiers.

The Imjin project is the first of a new wave of carbon net-zero constructions that will see major improvements to the standard of Single Living Accommodation (SLA) provided to Service people. The buildings are designed to enhance and support the needs of the military personnel that call them home.

Director Basing and Infrastructure, Major General Richard Clements CBE was joined by Rob Vining from DIO and members of the project's appointed contractor, REDS10, and technical service provider, Arcadis, to mark the beginning of construction of a new Single Living Accommodation (SLA) block at Imjin Barracks, Gloucester.

Major General Richard Clements CBE, Director Basing & Infrastructure said:

To be present at the start of construction activity at Imjin Barracks is a moment to be celebrated. Imjin is the first site to benefit under the Army's Single Living Accommodation Programme which will invest £1.2bn and deliver 8,500 SLA bedspaces over the next 10 years. This is in addition to the 8,000 SLA bedspaces being delivered by the Defence Estate Optimisation, Army Programme. Investing in accommodation and the lived experience for our Service personnel is an immediate priority. We have listened to our soldiers and taken on board feedback to ensure a better lived experience for our people.

The SLA Programme will prioritise the modernisation of under-invested, core sites that are to be retained across the Army estate. It will focus on removing the last of the multi-occupancy rooms whilst continuing to renew the oldest accommodation on the estate, raising the average Single Living

Accommodation condition from 'fair' to 'good'.

Rob Vining, DIO, Deputy Head of Major Programmes and Projects (Army) said:

I'm extremely proud to be able to mark this key milestone with the British Army, REDS10 and our technical service provider, Arcadis, as we break ground on the first of many new modern, carbon net-zero Single Living Accommodation blocks.

Not only will the new blocks mean a massive improvement in the lived experience for our Service personnel, they also continue to demonstrate Defence's commitment to carbon net-zero by 2050.

I have been so impressed with the work my DIO colleagues and our Industry Partners have done so far and look forward to being here when we handover to the Army in Summer 2023.

The block will be built by the appointed contractor Redsl0 using modern methods of construction (MMC). This means 90% of the work can be completed off site for substantially faster delivery. The accommodation is designed to achieve very low energy usage intensity. The building will have solar panels, air source heat pumps for heating and hot water and a SMART building management system that learns how the building is used through a multitude of sensor data, ensuring that the building runs as efficiently as possible.

Paul Ruddick, Chairman REDS10 added:

It's marvellous to be part of another project working with DIO and the British Army on improving the lived experience of our Armed Forces personnel. The triple-storey building at Imjin Barracks will not only harness MMC for faster delivery but also for a lower carbon, more energy efficient and higher quality product. Perhaps most crucially though, the design and construction are being driven by how the space will be used by Service personnel.

[Foreign Secretary visits Glasgow a year after COP26 to meet Scottish experts behind "the revolutionary new batteries of the future"](#)

- Foreign Secretary James Cleverly visited Scotland one year on from COP26

in Glasgow. He went to the University of Strathclyde to meet scientists and engineers developing lower cost, recyclable battery tech

- UK Government funded research aims to improve clean energy access for 25 million of world's poorest people and save nearly 2.5million tonnes of carbon emissions
- Foreign Secretary also visited the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office's joint HQ in East Kilbride, which employs almost 1,000 staff in Scotland

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly met with scientists and engineers developing revolutionary battery technologies in Glasgow – a year on from world leaders gathering in the city for the COP26 climate summit.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) is supporting the Faraday Institution and researchers from the University of Strathclyde and the University of St Andrews, through its [Transforming Energy Access \(TEA\) programme](#) to help offer lower cost, more recyclable battery technology to developing countries.

The UK Government announced £126million of new scale-up funding for TEA during Energy Day at COP26 – focused on reducing carbon emissions by 2.5 million tonnes and securing better access to clean energy for 25 million people.

Since TEA was launched in 2015, it has provided 16 million of the world's poorest people with improved access to clean energy and generated 96,000 green jobs.

The Foreign Secretary also visited the FCDO's joint HQ at Abercrombie House, in East Kilbride, where almost 1,000 staff are at the heart of shaping and delivering UK foreign policy on issues such as climate change, including through the TEA programme.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

Today's visit is hugely important for me, to see first-hand how people in Scotland are building on the legacy of the UK's COP Presidency in Glasgow to make progress in the fight against climate change.

Scotland is famous as an innovation superpower. It has given the world the television, telephone and penicillin, so it was wonderful to learn how Scottish scientists are continuing this rich tradition to develop the revolutionary new batteries of the future fuelled by cleaner energy.

The UK Government is proud to support vital work at the

universities of Strathclyde and St Andrews which will help developing countries to access battery technologies to drive green growth and give millions a ladder out of poverty.

Nearly a tenth of the world's population – 733 million people – do not have access to the electricity they need to light their homes, refrigerate their food, or keep cool in rising temperatures. Around 2.4 billion people rely on dirty biomass fuels such as charcoal, firewood, or animal waste for cooking.

The Foreign Secretary used his COP26 anniversary visit to witness the start of refurbishment work at the FCDO's joint HQ in East Kilbride.

The Foreign Secretary was shown a research project led by the University of Strathclyde, which is developing a low-cost battery which is expected to last longer and be more easily recycled.

St Andrews demonstrated battery technology made from common salt, which could enable a move away from materials such as lithium and cobalt which are more expensive, rarer and harder on the environment to source.

Both technologies are expected to be ready to test this year.

Notes to Editors:

- Images of the Foreign Secretary's visit can be found [here](#).
- More information on Transforming Energy Access (TEA) programme can be found [here](#).
- The UK Government announced [£126 million of new scale-up funding for TEA](#) during Energy Day at COP26, increasing the programme's budget to £225 million, with the aim of improving clean energy access for 25 million people in developing countries and saving 2.5 million tonnes of carbon emissions.
- According to the World Bank's ['Tracking SDG 7 – The Energy Progress Report 2022'](#), nearly a tenth of the world's population – 733 million people – do not have access to the electricity grid. Around 2.4 billion people rely on dirty biomass fuels such as charcoal, firewood, or animal waste for cooking.