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Is the UK still a soft power superpower?

On 21 September we held our first joint event with the FCDO Association – a webinar on soft power. At its peak 90 people took part, including about 30 DFID Alumni, plus a few British Council Association members. The event took the form of a panel discussion comprising Mark Lowcock, Stephen Twigg, former Chair of the International Development Committee and now Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and Kate Ewart-Biggs, Deputy CEO of the British Council. The webinar took place just after Queen Elizabeth II's death generated soft power in abundance.

The debate revolved around whether soft power mattered and was worth investing in - and whether the UK was still a soft power superpower. Mark defined soft power as “the power of example” so that “people want to be more like you”. The UK's soft power had eroded in recent years: people were bemused by Brexit, unconvinced by ‘Global Britain’ and now worried that the UK would break international treaties.

The UK's retreat from international development work, for so long a soft power strength, had damaged its reputation. Yet despite these setbacks the UK still had plenty of soft power assets. Restoring the aid budget and an independent DFID would help to rebuild the UK's position. But it needed a stronger FCO too and all government departments working closely together.

Stephen Twigg highlighted the need for soft power to adapt in a changing and uncertain world. He identified some key success ingredients, for example showing humility and being sensitive to the diversity of the



world, operating within multilateral institutions rather than trying to go it alone, connecting with young people and learning from the less glorious bits of Britain's history.

Kate Ewart-Biggs highlighted surveys suggesting Britain was still highly regarded for soft power. The UK needed a long term approach to soft power and relationship building. The Council's work over many years had contributed to the UK's positive international reputation.

Key messages during the Q and A session were the need to “show not tell” to achieve effective soft power (the Queen was a role model) – but this was a challenge for many politicians whose instinct was to tell first. Promoting ideas needed subtlety in multilateral settings (resist flag flying), while effective influencing required strong self-awareness, particularly among decision makers.

In addition, phrases like “British values” should be avoided as most values were international. Doing things because they were morally right usually earned respect – this argument should be sold better domestically to gain wider support and funding.

Pam Jenkins has already sent all members a link to a recording of the event. We hope to arrange more webinars over the coming year and would welcome ideas on topics and potential speakers.

What happens to Staff Appointed In Country when a DFID programme ends?

Nguyen Thi Hue and Alan Johnson

We were both recruited by DFID South East Asia (regional office in Bangkok) in 1999 to help open an office in Hanoi to support the fast growing programme in Vietnam. DFID Vietnam became a fully-fledged country programme in 2003, continued to grow and peaked at 32 staff in 2008.

As is now well known, Vietnam quickly became one of international development's stand out success stories. A combination of factors laid the foundations for a period of unprecedented economic growth and poverty reduction: the "Doi Moi" (renovation) reforms in 1986; the Foreign Investment law in 1987; the lifting of the US trade embargo in 2000; WTO accession in 2007; and Vietnam's well executed public investments in human capital and infrastructure.

In the 1990s economic growth averaged 7% per year. The poverty headcount fell from 58 percent in the early 1990s to around 10 percent by 2010 - equivalent to over 40 million people moving out of poverty. Between 2002 and 2021, GDP per capita increased 3.6 times, reaching almost US\$3,700. Vietnam was classified as a middle-income country in 2010 and graduated from the World Bank International Development Association (IDA) - a grouping of the world's poorest countries - in 2017.

In this context it became clear that a DFID programme in Vietnam would only have a limited life span. The DFID office closed in March 2016 after 16 years of operation. When an office closes what happens to the national staff who were so critical to the success of the programme? Are there DFID spill-over effects? Is social capital eroded? We did an

1. Nguyen Thi Hue: (1995-2015, SPO, HR Manager, Sector Manager, including 2002-2003 in HQ). Now Country Director of WUSC Vietnam, a Canadian NGO.
2. Quach Thu Huong: (1996-2013, Admin Officer, PSU, Head of Management, including 7 months at DFID Bangkok and 3 years at DFID Myanmar). Now Executive Coach and Founder of Coach for Life.
3. Dang Quang Hung: (1999-2013, Driver). Now a driver at the British Embassy, Hanoi.
4. Tran My Hanh: (1999-2010, Admin officer, Account Manager). Now Deputy Director of self-owned Suntex Co Ltd, manufacturing fashion garment hangers for export.
5. Nguyen Minh Tra: (2002-2016, Admin Officer). Now Senior Admin Officer at PATH, a US NGO.
6. Nguyen Thi Hai Yen: (2002- 2013, records management, IT Manager). Now a Barrister and Director of

- NG.VIẾT. AN law company.
7. Vo Thanh Son: (SPO 2002-2005). Now Senior Agriculture Specialist at World Bank.
 8. Lam Chi Dung: (IT/Communications Manager 2002-2006). Now Deputy Director of Balance Life Agriculture.
 9. Dao Thanh Hong: (PA, 2003-2007). Now self-employed teacher of English.
 10. Do Thi Hong Hai: (2003 -2009, Programme Assistant, Accounts Manager, Deputy HR Manager). Now Senior Academic Support Coordinator, University of Melbourne, Australia.
 11. Le Thi Yen: (Senior Programme Officer 2003-2012). Now Trusts and Foundations Lead, The Smith Family, Australia.
 12. Nguyen Thu Linh: (2003-2009, Account/Management Assistant). Now Relationship Manager at Vietcombank.
 13. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Minh: (Economic Advisor 2003-2015). Now Socio Economic Specialist at Mekong River Commission Secretariat, Laos.
 14. Than Thi Thien Huong: (SDA 2003-



The DFID office opening ceremony in Hanoi, attended by the Vice Minister of Education H.E Le Vu Hung

informal tracer study seven years after the office closure to find out.



The good news is that all 27 respondents are gainfully employed (see box) and many are in senior positions. Most (17) have continued in the development space with 11 working for Government, donor, UN or academic programmes. Six work for NGOs. Two are "expats" working outside Vietnam. And 10 work in the private sector.

- 2015). Now a gender specialist at DFAT, Australian Embassy, Hanoi.
15. Nguyen Huu Hieu: (Governance Adviser 2004-2008). Now Driver of Change, FiinGroup.
16. Nguyen Thu Trang: (2004-2016, Programme Officer, Head of PSU). Now Finance Controller at CARE International, Vietnam.
17. Ngo Quynh Hoa: (Evaluation adviser 2004-2016). Now Chief of research, planning, monitoring and evaluation, UNICEF Vietnam.
18. Tu Thu Hien: (Private Sector Development Advisor 2006-2014). Now CEO - founder WISE- Women's Initiative for Startups and Entrepreneurship.
19. Nguyen Van Kien: (Climate and Environment Adviser 2009-2014). Now New South Wales Trade and Investment Director, Vietnam.
20. Nguyen Linh Van: (2010 – 2015, PO, Account Manager). Now at Save the Children, Vietnam.
21. Nguyen Hoang Ha: (Communications Officer 2007-2015).

- Now Program Manager (Innovation), Australian Embassy, Vietnam.
22. Nguyen Thi Kim Que: (Programme/ admin Assistant 2007-2009). Now Director - Global Exchange Programme, Centre for Sustainable Development Studies.
23. Nguyen Kieu Anh: (Receptionist 2007- 2008). Now Programme Assistant at IFC, Vietnam.
24. Nguyen Kim Lien: (Government Adviser 2008-2015). Now Vietnam Lead, Government Affairs and Public Policy, Google Asia Pacific.
25. Phung Minh Thu: (Programme Assistant 2011- 2012). Now Skills Training Specialist for USAID project - Improving Private Sector Competitiveness.
26. Tran Thu Hang: (Programme Officer 2012-2014). Now Gender Specialist for USAID Project - Improving Private Sector Competitiveness.
27. Nguyen Thi Dinh: (Assistant/ Receptionist 2013- 2015). Now market research Manager, Asia Plus, Vietnam.



DFID Vietnam Alumni gathering in Hanoi, August 2022

Social capital remains strong. The DFID Vietnam alumni continue to meet socially as Alan found out on his return to Hanoi. If you had links with DFID Vietnam over its 16-year life please get in touch - the alumni would love to hear from you.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Pauline Hayes

Greetings again. Since the last newsletter so much has happened in the UK, beginning with the resignation of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister in July, the eventual appointment of Liz Truss as his successor in September and then the sudden death of the Queen. As we go to print the new government's economic policy announcements continue to cause mayhem. Meanwhile, there is still uncertainty over the UK aid programme - Jim Drummond reports on latest developments within FCDO.

This edition of the newsletter has a strong "what are they doing now" flavour. Gavin McGillivray has produced a fascinating article on his valiant efforts to cycle across Central Asia following his retirement from FCDO. David Hallam reflects on his move from DFID to another government department (DEFRA) and adjusting to a different organisational culture – or is it? Ian Johnston and Nguyen Thi Hue's report on how so many former DFID Vietnam national staff have progressed career wise since the closure of the programme in 2016 is really heartening.

The link articles we have gathered together this time focus mainly on the recent UK political changes. They also feature the Global Fund, another major success story as evidenced by a recent ICAI report. The UK has been a leading player in the Global Fund from the outset – a great example of soft power - but is currently dragging its feet on new funding

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pledges, much to the frustration of its partners. Watch this space.

Thank you as ever to everyone who has contributed articles and items to this edition, we really do appreciate them and know that members do too. Please do think about penning an article to help keep our network thriving.

You may like to know that since our decision in June to expand the membership criteria, around 60 former DFID staff now working for FCDO have applied to join the Alumni network. Do continue to let your FCDO contacts know that they can now become members and refer them to Pam for application forms. We have recently approached this new group directly to seek their ideas on how we might further strengthen FCDO cooperation in future and will keep you posted on developments.

Last but not least, I would like to welcome two new committee members – Caroline Rickatson and Bill Kilby. In line with our constitution, the committee has appointed them as interim members for the time being. They will be required to step down ahead of the 2023 AGM and can then seek re election for a full term in the usual way. Caroline was nominated by Jackie Charlton and seconded by Alistair Wray. Bill was proposed by Wendy Phillips and seconded by Jim Drummond. It is great to have them both on board.

Best wishes,

Pauline

DFID: Past and Future

Mark Lowcock

Ranil Dissanayake (also an alum) and I are just starting a project on the lessons from DFID's 23 year life. The work is being funded through the Center for Global Development, where I now work part-time, with money from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Open Society Foundation (whose President is now Mark Malloch-Brown).

The project will probably take a couple of years and is intended to lead to a book, which Ranil and I will co-author, telling the story of DFID and the people who worked there. Our hope is that this will help inform future decisions, not just in the UK, important though that is, but elsewhere too.

As a first step, we are currently looking at why Labour decided to create the Department in 1997. We have talked to Clare Short, John Vereker and a range of others who were involved at the time, not just in the Department but also in Number 10 and elsewhere.

The story is more interesting than I had remembered! If any of you have memories or insights from the mid-1990s up to the summer of 1997, we would love to hear from you now.

We will be moving on to the later years and will very much welcome your input on those too. Will keep you in touch.

Please email me at m_lowcock@cgdev.org

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FCDO Developments



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Jim Drummond

For anyone out of range of UK news, the last three months have been dominated by governmental inactivity between the resignation under pressure of Boris Johnson and the election by a minority of Conservative Party MPs - but a majority of the 180,000 party membership - of Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, as Prime Minister.

In the ensuing reshuffle former FCDO Minister of State James Cleverly was promoted to Foreign Secretary and Vicky Ford became Minister for Development in FCDO with the opportunity to attend relevant cabinet meetings. The government had faced criticism for having no minister below the Foreign Secretary with clear responsibility for international development, so this appears a positive step.

And the Second Permanent Secretary role at the FCDO is still vacant following Tim Barrow's move to become National Security Adviser, though the National Security Council has just been abolished. An opportunity to give international development the leadership it needs?

It's always good to 'follow the money' and here the story is less optimistic. The commitment to 0.5% of GDP remains but the recent collapse of the pound against the dollar, following the new Chancellor's budget, will likely squeeze the value of UK aid particularly to multilaterals. And the rising claims of Ukraine-linked expenditure will probably mean further cuts for the poor elsewhere.

For the first time the UK did not make a pledge at a Global Fund replenishment meeting though one may follow before the final deadline in October. This amid signs that other countries, notably the US, are losing patience with backfilling gaps left by the UK. The brain drain from FCDO continues.

With the next general election due within two years, the Labour Party has promised to resurrect 0.7% and DFID as a separate department if it wins power. What exactly it will look like remains to be seen. Mark Lowcock and Peter Ricketts offered wise words about this in Prospect recently.

<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/politics/the-merge-of-the-foreign-office-and-department-for-international-development-has-damaged-britains-soft-power-its-time-to-reverse-it>

Development articles

Here are some articles and links that may be of interest.

The Guardian highlighted the failure of the UK to announce its latest financial commitment to the Global Fund at the recent pledging event

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/sep/22/uk-liz-truss-criticised-for-failing-to-boost-contribution-to-un-global-fund>

Devex also commented on the UK and the Global Fund

<https://www.devex.com/news/uk-pledges-nothing-during-global-fund-replenishment-event-104009>

ICAI's report on the UK's work with the Global Fund confirmed the effectiveness of the Fund

<https://icai.independent.gov.uk/review/the-uks-work-with-the-global-fund/information-note/>

Bond set out key challenges for the new Foreign and Development Secretary

<https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2022/09/a-daunting-to-do-list-for-new-foreign-secretary-james-cleverly-heres-where-to-start>

The Guardian reported on mistakes and lessons from the Afghanistan evacuation, one year on

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/29/foreign-office-admits-multiple-errors-in-uks-exit-from-afghanistan>

This is the FCDO's response to the Foreign Affairs Committee's report which heavily criticised the UK government's handling of the Afghanistan crisis in 2021

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/78/foreign-affairs-committee/news/172573/foreign-affairs-committee-publishes-government-response-to-afghanistan-report/>

ICAI reviewed the UK's humanitarian response to COVID-19

<https://icai.independent.gov.uk/review/the-uks-humanitarian-response-to-covid-19/review/>

Devex reported on Rory Stewart's new job at Givedirectly

<https://www.devex.com/news/givedirectly-taps-former-uk-global-development-minister-as-new-chief-103872>

The Foreign Secretary made statements at the Conservative Party conference on FCDO, cuts and development work

ICAI reported on transparency in UK aid

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PEOPLE

Cycling a Stretch of the Silk Road 2022

Gavin McGillivray

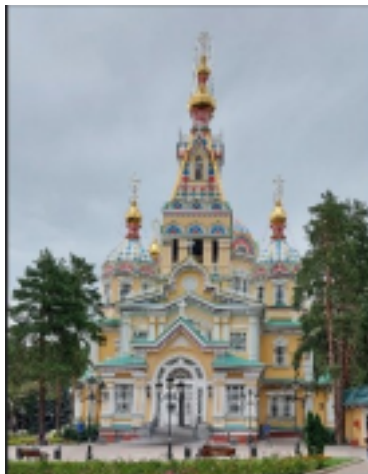
In 2019, mid-way through our four years in India, my wife Katie and I made two decisions. At the end of the posting I would leave the FCDO (disenchanted with HMG's vanishing interest in poverty reduction) and we would return to England to be near family and friends.

The idea struck that I could end my overseas career by cycling home. Hard to cycle out of India, so I planned to fly to Almaty in Kazakhstan, then roughly follow the medieval merchant routes now known as the Silk Road. A passage for goods, slaves, faiths, disease, know-how and treasure. Successive leaders – from Alexander through Genghis Khan and Timur to Tsarist then Bolshevik Russia - conquered the lands through which the routes passed. Rulers would leave their mark through mosques, madrassas, mausoleums, cathedrals, forts and palaces. I planned a route that would take in some of these remarkable buildings, taking 5-6 months to get home.

The time came to leave India in mid-2021. Covid had closed down frontiers and my ride. I resolved instead to do a shorter trial run in 2022.

I flew to Almaty mid-June with my bike. Tsarist Russia had built Almaty's Ascension Cathedral in the early 1900s.

After the Russian Revolution - the Bolsheviks closed it. And nearly all other churches, monasteries, mosques and synagogues – along with religious practices like wearing the burka. The Cathedral was restored and reopened in 1997.



Ascension Cathedral, Almaty

After two days in Almaty, the staff of my small hotel gathered to see me off. I wheeled the bike – replete with 19kg of panniers and 5 litres of water – to the top of the steep ramp to the street below. The bike



Shymkent - Tashkent Road

Thenceforward I would set off at 5am. Coolth and golden dawns a heartening start to days.

Far horizons, straight roads, head-down, pedal, pedal, pedal.

Scrunch – I'd scythed into a car drawn up on the roadside. Water bottles and bike paraphernalia flew off – but bike and car thankfully undamaged. The couple inside bewildered.

I'd reckoned to find accommodation about every 50 miles – and brought no tent. Poor reckoning. Places to stay proved few and far between. In the first week – on three days I needed to cycle 100 miles or so to the nearest hotel.

Which brought me quicker than expected to the Uzbek border. A small crowd surrounded me. "Change money? Best rates!" I opted for a kindly-looking woman and retrieved my wallet. In one fluent blur of movement, the woman plucked the Kazak Tenge notes from the wallet, counted them, plunged them deep in her bag, announced her rate, thrust several wads of Uzbek Sum into my hand, and walked off. I had little idea how much Tenge I had had, and none as to the rate or amount of Sum received in exchange. I was speechless in admiration at her professionalism.

In Tashkent I enjoyed a happy evening with long

time friend Roli Asthana, plummeted down, yanking me over into an ungainly heap. My shin gashed and dignity wounded, I waved ruefully at the troubled-looking staff – and set off.

Along the highways across the steppes. Kyrgyzstan and the Tian Shan mountains to the south. The roadside crickets loudening with the heat of the day – reaching 40°C by mid morning.

Resident Representative for Uzbekistan.

Before the Bolsheviks closed them, Tashkent had over 30 Russian Orthodox Churches. Only two have re-opened, but many mosques, madrassas and mausoleums have been lavishly restored.

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now impressively UN



Interior of Timur's mausoleum

Timur's mausoleum in Samarkand is fabulous beyond words. The Islam practised seems gentle and tolerant. The Muslim guide I hired for a day unhesitatingly showed me round churches and a synagogue as well as mosques.

Is craft a neglected area of development? Backing craft people to find more lucrative markets and design products that appeal to these can be a means of capitalising on the asset that all poor people have – their labour, while reinforcing identity and community. We need further thought and innovation on how to do so in non-patronising and cost-effective ways.

Increasingly feeling I do not want to return to the

relentless e-mails and back-to-back meetings of full-time employment – I wondered as I pedalled if I can find part time or non-executive roles in this field.

I couldn't cycle further west. The Uzbek President had just declared an emergency in Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan's westernmost and poorest state. The demonstrations and crack-down had left 20 dead and 240 injured. Earlier this year, 200 people had died in protests in Kazakhstan. Both countries are liberalising markets in a carefully-calibrated way following the reigns (repeatedly extended by "free and fair" elections) of Uzbek President Karimov (1991-



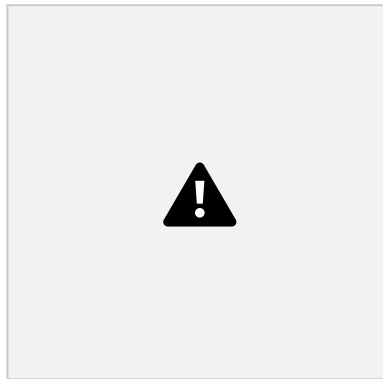
Mosque in Shahrissabz Bukhara Synagogue Bozori Kord hammam, Bukhara

In Shahrissabz, at dawn men congregated around the mosque to begin the Eid al-Adha festival to honour Abraham’s faith in God. It felt as much an act of community as faith.

The caretaker of the synagogue in Bukhara was glad to have a visitor. The synagogue had once served over 30 thousand Jews. Fewer than 200 remained. In a narrative paralleled throughout Central Asia, some Jews fled when the Bolsheviks closed their synagogues and most of the rest emigrated in the 1970s-90s.

Bukhara proved the end of my c.1,000-mile ride. It was good to be steamed, scrubbed and pummelled in the 16th Century hammam.

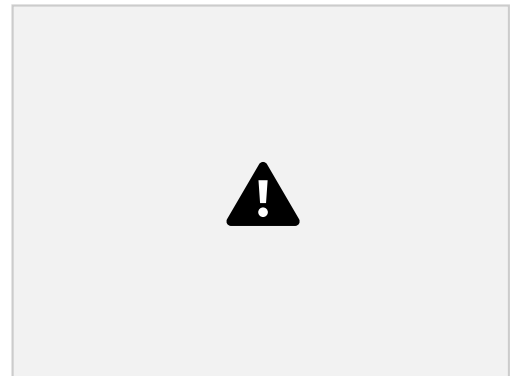
And very good to see the traditional crafts. I am ridiculously pleased with the Suzani embroidery I bought. 1.5m square, the Suzani is made of four panels. Each would have taken a woman some six weeks to embroider.



liberalisation obviously only goes so far.

I balked at the 280 miles desert ride from Bukhara to Khiva with nowhere to stay en route, so went by train. In 2019 the Uzbek government had moved the inhabitants out of Khiva’s medieval centre to make way for tourist accommodation. The city is full of wonders – but akin to a museum.

From Khiva I took trains back to Tashkent – and flew home. Next year I plan to take up the journey for a few months more...



Suzani embroidery, Bukhara Khiva at dusk

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internationally, working collaboratively, leading across multiple locations - was what Defra was looking for.

Defra is the government department most-affected by Brexit. Around 80% of our remit - environment, fisheries, food, agriculture - has been ‘repatriated’ from the EU and is now our responsibility. As a consequence Defra grew after Brexit, and one of our assets is all the young people who joined, and the energy and diversity they bring.

In some ways Defra feels similar to the DFID I remember. Both departments benefit from a strong engagement with the ‘mission’. And, like DFID, Defra people are generally kind and respectful to each other and there is a strong culture of collegiality.

Before I left DFID another alumnus, Lindy Cameron, gave me sage advice. “David,” she said, “you are going to a new, largely domestic department and a new subject area. The

Life after DFID

David Hallam

I’ve never had a career plan - I just try to seize opportunities that come along. That was the case when I left DFID, after 24 years, to join the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in 2019. Brexit felt like the biggest challenge the civil service would face, and I wanted to play my part.

So, when Defra advertised a role on trade, I applied. It turned out that my DFID experience - negotiating

challenge isn't whether or not you have a bump, it's how you get over it." So I had my eyes open as I went through my first 3 months thinking "this ain't too difficult" and then crisis as I realised I didn't know anything!

What helped was working out what "the thing" is for Defra on trade. In short, the "thing" is not messing up a once-in-a-generation reform of how we support agriculture. That is a huge transition for our farming sector. For those of us working on trade, our role is to ensure that the pace of liberalisation allows our farmers to adapt.

I recently moved into a new role as Director for Floods and Water. I can, hand on heart, say this is my dream job: outside work I spend a lot of time in or on water, and as a student I studied hydrology, meteorology and climate change. But in my first purely 'domestic' job I've had a steep learning curve on domestic law and regulation.

the reality on the ground and that's a lot easier when your partners are a train ride away - no flights and fewer nights in hotels is a definite bonus! Once a month I make a point of getting away from my desk, perhaps to see a flood protection scheme or to meet farmers, water companies or environment workers. Each visit gives me a boost and I always try to take one of my younger colleagues with me.

Another DFID alumnus, Michael Schultz, once said to me that a civil servant complaining about politics was a bit like a sailor complaining about the wind. Sometimes it gets a bit blowy and it's all you can do to keep on course. But you can't go anywhere without the wind.

Well, until a few years ago, there wasn't much attention paid to water as a valuable natural resource (something DFID knows very well). Water bills remain on average less than £1 per person per day for seemingly limitless supplies of pure drinking water. There wasn't much attention paid to how our integrated drainage and sewerage systems can get over-whelmed either. Nor on how we balance the needs of a growing population, farming and the environment as the climate changes.

That's all changed. In sailing terms we've got a strong breeze - perhaps a light gale - on all things to do with water (and poo). So it's a great time to be in this role and to see what we can do to harness that political wind.

One of the things I took from DFID was the value of seeing

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Welcome

We are delighted to have welcomed these new members to the Association over the last 3 months:

Sally Chakawhata

Kelley Toole

Joan Kerr

Honor Flanagan

Matthew Rycroft

Frances Harper

Rod Matthews

Katie Wiseman

Janet Al-Utaibi

Alan Johnson	Sarah Sanyahumbi Benon Talemwa	Saul Walker
Nigel Kirby	Lynn Macdonald Debbie Palmer	Jonathan Beynon
Jonathan Beynon	Samson Agbo	Sophie Lawrence
Pauline Perry	Louise Robinson Ivan Parks	Hilary Cordon
Dirk Mueller	Lisha Lala	Anooj Khalid
Liz Brower	Sam Fell	Hilary Cordon
Katie Dewing	Jennifer Stuttle Moeen Akhter	Olivia Goldin
Su King	Graham Gass	
Iftikhar Khan	John Keane	Farewell
Phil Outram	Robbie Barkell Sarah Love	Sadly, we have been informed that five colleagues have passed away.
Alexandra Ijel	Anna Wilson	Andy Willson
Rebecca Terzeon	Chris Austin	Dave Fish
Rogerio Ossemane	Daniel Humble Peter Reid	Louise Jenkins
Chris Pearce	Amy Potter	Mary Brown
Annabel Gerry	Matthew Wyatt Sue Kinn	John Block
Asma Abdullah Khan Mekdes Wolde Susan Clapham Sarah	Jessica Vince Nadeem Hasan	Our condolences to their families and friends. We highlight some tributes on the next pages.
Harper	Doreen Muzirankoni	
Alice Stilitz	Taimoor Baig	We reported Danny Graymore's death in July. Andrew Green's obituary in The Lancet celebrates his contribution to public health:
Saima Anwer	Sarah Cooper	https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(22)01785-8/fulltext
Esme Gausen	Katie Wilson	
Rana Saifi	Naeem Afzal	
	Kemi Williams	

Dave Fish

Dave Fish, who died at the end of July, was a larger than life character who was so highly regarded in our offices in East Kilbride, in London and across the world. These memories of Dave are just two of many tributes we received and passed on to Dave's family.

"So very saddened to hear of the passing of Dave Fish. What a legendary figure, especially for SAIC staff (staff appointed

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in country), he actively supported the growth and presence of SAIC in the international arena, strongly advocating the creation of third country postings for local staff. We would look forward to his visit to the country office, to his towering and caring presence. He will be remembered for his promotion and very valued contribution to SAIC career advancement. He will be greatly missed, may he rest in peace".

Jiji Bhattacharji, India Country Office.

“Pat McVey and I talked Dave into playing for the office team at Glasgow Green one Saturday morning. You could see from Dave’s reaction that he thought “Green “ equated to grass. In actual fact, it was blaes (red ash). Dave came off the pitch with bleeding knees saying he would never again play for us. Secretly, I think he enjoyed the experience but he never repeated it. Such a good footballer!”

Jim Leary, DFID Abercrombie House.

Mary Brown

Just a few weeks after Dave’s passing, his long time Secretary/Executive Assistant, Mary Brown, also died after a short illness. Mary will have been known to many in ODA/DFID not only for her work with Dave Fish but also previously when she was Sue Unsworth’s secretary. Mary was one of the first members of staff of Abercrombie House and worked both there and in London.

Mike Hammond, DFID Alumni Committee member, commented: *“I have such fond memories of Mary who was as much the power behind the throne as there can ever have been. Mary was such a lovely caring lady, a real loss. I have really good memories of her both in London and AH.”*

Louise Jenkins.

Louise Jenkins, (some may remember her as Louise Penny) sadly died in August. Louise is survived by her husband Neil, who is also an ex-ODA. worker. Alumni member, Ron White, shared these lovely memories of Louise and of office life in general:

“My memories of Louise go back a long way. My first and main memories go back to 1960. I was a temporary clerical officer in the Colonial Office working in the personal files registry in room S823f in Sanctuary Buildings. Louise was in the department answering correspondence once I had registered it (hopefully on the correct file) and then sent the file to her to deal with. I clearly remember Louise as a lively, caring, considerate and most pleasant colleague who was always cheerful.

Some random memories: in those days office life was much

less pressured than in more recent years. We had a staff restaurant just across the road in Church House with white linen table cloths and waitress service. Each week we were given freshly laundered hand towels.

When promotion boards sat there would be great excitement. People would peer out of the windows of Sanctuary Buildings hoping to see who might be a candidate as they crossed the road to face the board in Church House. There would be speculation about their chances, often accompanied with adverse comments about the wisdom of those who selected candidates. Telegrams were then the fastest way of sending a printed message and they were expensive. The cost was printed at the bottom of the telegram. I remember some costing over a thousand pounds”.

Andy Willson.

Alumni member Andy Willson died in July after contracting Covid-19. He had been battling leukaemia for several years which left his immune system heavily compromised. Andy worked for ODM/ODA/DFID for many years. His last job in DFID was working in CHASE on demining, but over his long career he also worked in Abercrombie House, East Kilbride, Ghana, other posts in headquarters in London, and NRI in both London and Chatham. During one of his spells working in London he was one of the two duty officers in Eland House.

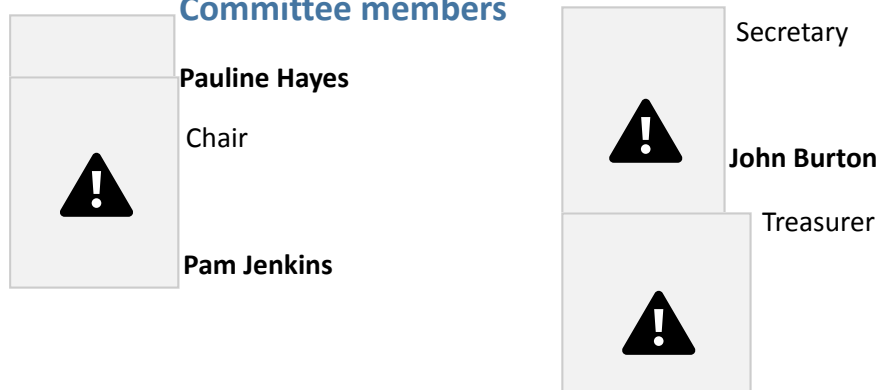
John Block.

Another long-time ODA staff member John Block sadly died recently. John joined the department from HMSO Norwich in the early 70s, and soon established himself as a prominent and passionate Union member and staff representative, which was duly recognised when he was seconded to Union HQ in 1987. He was also a mainstay of the ODA Sports & Social club and its much-esteemed staff bar in London. John retired in 1992 and moved to Chapel St Leonard's near Skegness with his wife Sandra, who had also worked at ODA and who unfortunately passed away a couple of years later.

We are sure that many of our readers will have fond memories of Andy and John from their long and dedicated DFID careers.

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Committee members





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Secretary's update

Christmas reception on 8th December from 5 to 7pm

Following the success of and positive feedback about our reception in June, which was held at Admiralty House, Whitehall, London, I am pleased to confirm that we will hold our Christmas event at the same location, on 8th December from 5 to 7pm.

At this stage, I can't confirm the cost of the tickets but will try to keep it down to as near to the price of the June tickets as possible i.e. £27. For such a fabulous location, with plentiful food and drinks, I expect we will once again sell out the ticket allocation quickly.

At this stage, I am simply asking those of you who would like to attend, to let me know by email (pamjjenkins@outlook.com) and I'll add you to the list. In a month or so, I will write out again confirming the ticket cost and requesting payment. We already have around 50 names on the list following my email of 22nd September, so if you would like to come, let me know quickly.

100 club raffle

As usual, we will be running the ever popular 100 club raffle with the prizes awarded at the Christmas reception. You don't have to be there to claim your prize, I will contact you afterwards if you are a winner. The 100 club helps us to cover the cost of the twice yearly Alumni social gatherings.

Tickets are £20 and if you would like to buy one or some, just send your payment by bank transfer to the usual Alumni bank account identifying yourself by name. Name of HSBC account: DFID Alumni Association. Sort code: 40-01-13. Account number 51705032.

Pam

pamjjenkins@outlook.com

Editions of The Four Corners from December 2013 are available for anyone - member or not - to download from the Association's web site at www.dfid-alumni.org

The Four Corners has appeared quarterly since 2007. Members of the DFID Alumni Association can download the older editions – and other documents in the archive - from the DFID Alumni Library on dgroups at <https://dgroups.org>.