

Joint statement by Presidents Jean-Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk on the re-appointment of Li Keqiang as Premier of the People's Republic of China

"On behalf of the European Union, we would like to convey our sincere congratulations on your recent reappointment as Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China.

The European Union regards China as one of its most important strategic partners. As global actors, the European Union and China have a joint responsibility to work together towards a more cooperative, rules-based global order.

We firmly believe that our relations, developed in the spirit of equality and mutual respect, will help us collaborate in dealing with shared economic, security, climate and other challenges in our globalised world, and strengthen people-to-people contacts. In recent years, we have witnessed an ever deeper and broader relationship in almost every area.

The next EU-China Summit in China will be an important opportunity to reinforce our cooperation in a forward-looking way. We look forward to our next discussion with you."

Statement by President Donald Tusk on follow up to the European Council meeting of 22 March 2018 regarding Salisbury

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Special announcement by President Tusk on EU response to the Salisbury attack

Good afternoon, I would like to make a special announcement about the follow-up to the European Council's decisions last week on the Salisbury attack.

To recall, last week the European Council condemned in the strongest possible terms the recent attack in Salisbury. The European Council agreed with the United Kingdom government's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible and that there is no plausible alternative explanation. We decided to recall the EU Ambassador to Russia for consultations.

As a direct follow up to last week's European Council decision to react to Russia within a common framework, already today 14 Member states have decided to expel Russian diplomats.

Additional measures, including further expulsions within this common EU framework are not to be excluded in the coming days and weeks.

We remain critical of the actions of the Russian government, but at the same time, today we Europeans – together with the Russian people – mourn the victims of the tragic fire in the city of Kemerovo in Western Siberia. Our thoughts and hearts are with you.

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[News story: Ilford pupil celebrated in international short story competition](#)

A school pupil recognised in an international short story competition has today (Monday 26 March) been awarded a prize for her success by Education Minister Nick Gibb, as part of the ongoing celebration of the history of the Commonwealth.

Alyssa Malley, aged ten, a pupil at Churchfields Junior School in Ilford, scooped third place out of 1,600 entries from across the Commonwealth. Alyssa's prize-winning story focused on ending conflict through recognition of the common values shared by people across the globe.

The annual Commonwealth Class Writing Competition – which is run by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the British Council – was themed around 'peace' this year and the first and second prizes were awarded to pupils from India and Pakistan.

This international recognition builds on the rising standards in our schools, with over 15,969 more pupils in Ilford in schools rated good or outstanding than in 2010 and 95 per cent of Ilford schools given this rating at their

last inspection.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Congratulations to Alyssa on this achievement. Despite fierce competition, it is brilliant to see a pupil from Ilford recognised on the global stage.

Thanks to the hard work of teachers and our reforms, academic standards are rising in England, with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

This determination to offer every pupil a world-class education was evident at Churchfields Primary School, where I saw first-hand how pupils were broadening their understanding of the Commonwealth and its unique history.

In a visit to the school, Minister Gibb presented Alyssa with a certificate and a £30 book voucher to celebrate her achievement.

Nick Gibb presented the pupil with an award recognising her success in the Commonwealth Writing Competition. This is the second consecutive year in which pupils from Churchfields Junior School have been successful in this prestigious event, in which so many other students throughout the world take part. Alyssa commented that she was proud so many people across the world would hear her message of peaceful problem solving and she was looking forward to writing more stories in the future.

Mr Gibb also visited a lesson where pupils were being taught about the Commonwealth and what it means to be a member of this unique historic institution. Teachers were using an [education resource pack](#) – produced by the Department for Education – which aims to illustrate the importance of the Commonwealth to young people today.

Headteacher Mrs Emeny said:

Writing is a strength of Churchfields Junior School and the ministerial visit was a great opportunity for Nick Gibb to see our world-class school in action. As he toured the classrooms, I was pleased by his comments about the high levels of achievement and excellence he witnessed across the curriculum. During his visit, the Minister spoke to staff and pupils about our school ethos and how the wealth of opportunities we provide enable pupils to develop outstanding language and maths skills, as well as a deep cultural understanding.

Today's focus on the Commonwealth comes ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which will be hosted by Britain in April. Leaders, business, civil society and young people from around the world will meet to

discuss a common future.

Sinead Russell, Senior Literature Programme Manager and Joe White, Literature Coordinator at the British Council from the judging pane said:

It was a privilege to read so many excellent stories from around the world. Although every story differs in its approach to this year's theme, what they all have in common is a depth of humanity and a feel for language which, quite frankly, humbled us.

All of the winning stories and highly commended entries, each illustrated by Tarsila Kruse, Children's Book Illustrator, can be seen on the British Council's Commonwealth Class [website](#).

Writing tips from Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland, Myra Zepf and former Children's Laureate, Anne Fine can be downloaded [here](#).

The Commonwealth Class initiative enables schools to take part in online competitions and work on projects with the aim of giving young people a hands-on international learning experience based around the Commonwealth family of countries.

[Press release: Events to find out more about North East natural flood management](#)

Weardale residents can find out more about how a £2.1million natural flood management project could reduce their risk of flooding and create a haven for wildlife in a series of events to be held next month.

The Weardale Natural Flood Management (NFM) pilot project will see the Environment Agency investigate and deliver natural features across 100km squared area to reduce the risk of flooding to 141 properties.

The project team is currently carrying out an assessment of NFM techniques that might help reduce flood risk in Weardale and takes in towns and villages including Stanhope, Westgate, Eastgate and Wolsingham.

The Environment Agency is working on the project with Natural England, Forestry Commission, Durham County Council and the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership.

They want to work with local farmers and landowners who are interested in getting involved in the project to assess the impact of different NFM

features. Over the coming months, the North Pennines AONB partnership will be taking the lead in approaching farmers and landowners to discuss voluntary involvement in the scheme. They will be supported by Wear Rivers Trust.

A series of information events for communities is taking place in April to find out more about what it means for them and how they can get involved, as well as capturing their local knowledge about flooding history in the area.

First step in 'pioneering project'

Environment Agency Project Manager Kirsty Hardy said:

This is the first step in what is a pioneering project to explore and deliver natural flood management features to reduce flood risk, as well as enrich the landscape and habitat of what is a beautiful area of countryside.

Until December this year we will be assessing different techniques and our colleagues at the North Pennines AONB Partnership, supported by Wear Rivers Trust, will be speaking with local farmers and landowners before we can then identify any suitable locations for potential delivery of natural flood management features.

This project is ultimately going to increase our understanding of the impact natural flood management can have on reducing flows along tributaries on the Upper River Wear.

We're hosting a series of events where people can find out more about natural flood management and how they can get involved, as well as help us understand past flooding in the area. This really is an exciting project where the community can play a key role and I'd encourage people to come along.

Early discussions

Rebecca Barrett, Biodiversity Lead for the North Pennines AONB Partnership, added:

We have already had some early discussions with a number of farmers and landowners in Weardale. They are interested in the project and are happy to discuss ways to help reduce the impact of flooding on their community.

It is a pleasure to meet with the people whose land management activities play such an important role in the appearance and function of our landscape and we are looking forward to developing the project in partnership with them over the coming months.

All drop-in events take place between 2.30pm and 7pm on:

Date	Location
4 April	Westgate Village Hall, Front Street, Westgate, DL13 1RX
5 April	Wearhead Village Hall, Wearhead, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1DY
10 April	Cowhill Village Hall, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1DA
11 April	Eastgate Village Hall, Eastgate, DL13 2HU
12 April	Stanhope Community Association, Front Street, Stanhope, DL13 2NQ

In March 2017 the Environment Agency announced £15million of funding had been made available for NFM schemes nationally. The Weardale project will allow the Environment Agency to gather and understand evidence to support that natural flood management can play a role in reducing flood risk.

NFM features are specifically designed to work with the natural processes in the landscape to slow river flows and reduce flood risk. As with traditional flood walls and embankments they are a tool to help reduce risk but can never eliminate the risk of flooding entirely.

Police appeal for information on fatal traffic accident in Tai Po

Police today (March 26) appealed for information on a fatal traffic accident in Tai Po on March 20 in which a 22-year-old man died.

At about 2.50pm that day, a private car driven by a 57-year-old woman was travelling along Ting Kok Road towards Kowloon. When approaching near Fung Yuen Road, it reportedly knocked down the 22-year-old male cyclist who was crossing the road.

Sustaining head and limbs injuries, the man was rushed to Prince of Wales Hospital in unconscious state. He was certified dead at 3.42pm the next day (March 21).

The private car driver was arrested for dangerous driving causing death. She was released on bail and is required to report back to Police in late-April.

Investigation by the Special Investigation Team of Traffic, New Territories North is underway.

Anyone who witnessed the accident or has any information to offer is urged to contact the investigating officers on 3661 3800.