

Cabinet Secretary to stand down

Sir Mark Sedwill has today announced that he will stand down from his role as Cabinet Secretary, National Security Adviser and Head of the Civil Service in September, after over 30 years in Government service.

In his letter to the Prime Minister, Sir Mark said:

Two years ago, when my predecessor fell ill, your predecessor asked me to step in as Cabinet Secretary, and you asked me to continue to support you through Brexit and the Election period. It was obviously right to stay on for the acute phase of the Covid-19 crisis. As you are setting out this week, the Government's focus is now shifting to domestic and global recovery and renewal.

I am fortunate to have served in some of the most challenging and rewarding jobs in national and international public service under seven prime ministers and in extraordinary times. I am grateful for your confidence and friendship as both Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister. I wish you well and, of course, remain at your disposal in the years ahead. It has been a privilege to serve.

In his response, the Prime Minister paid tribute to Sir Mark's public service:

Over the last few years I have had direct experience of the outstanding service that you have given to the Government and to the country as a whole.

It has been by any standards a massive contribution – but as PM I have particularly appreciated your calm and shrewd advice.

You have also spoken with a unique authority – unusual in a Cabinet Secretary – on international affairs and national security; and as National Security Adviser you have done much to keep this country safe. It is therefore great news that you have agreed to continue to serve this country on the international stage, beginning with the UK's preparations for the G7 summit next year.

You have done it all in Whitehall: from Afghanistan to the modernisation of the civil service; from immigration policy to Brexit and defeating coronavirus. After serving for decades with great distinction – and unflappable good humour – I believe you have earned the gratitude of the nation.

In recognition of his distinguished service to public life, the Prime Minister, with the approval of HM The Queen, has nominated Sir Mark Sedwill

for a life peerage.

The Prime Minister has also asked Sir Mark to lead a new G7 panel on Global Economic Security as the UK assumes the presidency. Its mission will be to ensure that the global free trading system on which our economy is based remains fair, competitive and secure.

The First Civil Service Commissioner, Ian Watmore, will shortly launch a competition to appoint a new Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service. Applications will be invited from existing and former permanent secretaries.

David Frost, currently the Prime Minister's Europe Adviser and the UK's Chief Negotiator, will succeed Sir Mark as the Prime Minister's National Security Adviser.