

Dame Lynne Owens announces retirement as Director General of the NCA

Lynne has led the NCA since January 2016 following a career that spanned three police forces, starting in 1989 when she joined the Metropolitan Police Service as a Constable. Prior to joining the NCA she was Chief Constable of Surrey Police.

Lynne was diagnosed with breast cancer in the summer and recently received treatment.

Commenting on her retirement, Dame Lynne Owens said:

It has been an absolute privilege to protect the public for the last 32 years.

Following the treatment I received for breast cancer in the summer, the prognosis remains entirely positive and I have recovered from the initial surgery well. However results indicate, and the medical team advise, that I now require more extensive surgery (a mastectomy).

Whilst back at work I am mindful that I have recently been away from the Agency for almost 4 weeks and the next stage will require a more extended period of absence.

Throughout my service I have sought to focus on our responsibilities to the public and those I lead before myself and I cannot, with integrity, conclude that it is in the interests of the Agency to leave it with such uncertainty in leadership.

Similarly I recognise I need to create the time and space to heal physically and emotionally without the self-imposed pressure to return. I do not feel that my working life is over and I hope to contribute again in the future.

There is no doubt in my mind that the National Crime Agency will continue to go from strength to strength.

Our outstanding officers work tirelessly to protect the public from serious and organised crime, sometimes in the shadows and with a contribution that is less visible to the public eye.

We have worked hard to share some of our superb results and I know that the UK; its citizens, communities and businesses are safer as a result of their actions both here and abroad. I am so proud of them and all they do.

I remain grateful to the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, and the

Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, Matthew Rycroft, for their care and compassion through this time.

During her time leading the Agency, Lynne has overseen considerable change, driving the Agency's growth in size, stature and capability which has enabled it to carry out some of the most impactful operations against serious and organised crime.

The Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I was deeply saddened to learn of Lynne's decision to step down as Director General of the National Crime Agency. I know this feeling will be shared by colleagues across government and law enforcement who will understand her decision and wish her well.

Lynne has led the NCA with dedication and energy for over five years to keep the people of the UK safe from the threat of serious and organised crime.

During her time as Director General the NCA has modernised its approach to tackling the threat, and worked ever more closely with law enforcement and other partners to achieve some stunning successes against criminals, and I should like to offer my thanks for her integrity, leadership and an unswerving commitment to public service.

The Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, Matthew Rycroft said:

I have worked with Lynne on a daily basis: she is passionately committed to the fight against organised crime. I know that she has not taken the decision to step down lightly, but she has decided that it is in the best interests of the NCA for her to do so.

This is characteristic of her integrity and sense of duty. I will miss her straightforward approach and expert advice, reflecting her very considerable experience over 30 years in law enforcement, including as Chief Constable of Surrey Police. All of us will miss Lynne and wish her well for her surgery.

In the last financial year (2020-21) the NCA had its most successful twelve months to date achieving an almost 40% increase in disruptions compared to the previous year, against the challenging backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic.

These developments have enabled the NCA to protect the most vulnerable in society and enshrined its place at the heart of the UK's world class law enforcement system and as an integral member of the national security architecture.

Recognised as an inspirational figure, Lynne has made a significant positive impact on law enforcement, demonstrating exemplary leadership of an operational Agency and the wider system that safeguards children, removes firearms and drugs from UK streets, disrupts cyber-crime and criminal finance and is at the forefront of innovative law enforcement techniques. She was made a Dame in the New Year's Honours 2021.

The Home Secretary will take the necessary steps to appoint an interim Director General as soon as possible. That person will lead the NCA whilst a substantive successor to Lynne is appointed through a competitive recruitment process.