

Speech: Amanda Spielman's speech at the Wellington Festival of Education

Thank you for that kind introduction.

It is an absolute pleasure to be back at Wellington for what I think is my fifth time, and for my second as Chief Inspector. Speaking here last summer was one of the highlights of my first year. That speech was a chance to set out what I want to achieve as Chief Inspector, and just as important, it prompted an enormous amount in the way of feedback, engagement and ideas. If I had any doubts that there is a real enthusiasm and appetite in the sector to help shape Ofsted's future, speaking here dispelled them.

That is the way it should be. Ofsted isn't just about bringing in the great and the good to give the benefit of their wisdom to others. Doing that assumes that education is static and uniform. While it can be helpful to identify good practice, we also know that an approach which worked at a specific time in a specific school won't necessarily work well everywhere else.

For that reason, Ofsted absolutely should harness the expertise from the exceptional former leaders who make up our HMI workforce and at the same time make sure that we continue to learn from the sector. We need to keep a direct link with those still in the game, living school life day to day. That's why I'm so proud of our Ofsted Inspectors, who include more than 1,100 serving practitioners, who give up their time to carry out inspections. It's why I, and so many of my team, attend events like this. And it's why, despite the occasional frustrations and incivility of the Twitterverse, we put so much effort into our digital presence as well.

It was that collaboration and engagement that informed the [Ofsted strategy we launched last autumn](#). Through the strategy, we have committed ourselves to being a force for improvement, through intelligent, responsible and focused inspection and regulation. I am determined to make sure that the strategy is one that doesn't just go dusty on a shelf, but actively informs everything we do.

I want to spend some time telling you about what we've been doing, under each of the strategy's 3 strands.

Ofsted's research

First, intelligent inspection: that is, everything we do should be valid, reliable and evidence based.

Many of you will have seen the [discussion paper we published after the international lesson observation seminar](#) we held last year. Lesson observation is an important part of our inspections and we wanted to look at the different approaches taken across the world. We won't be importing any

one of these models wholesale – because most are better suited to in-school observation as part of professional development – but they have provided some useful pointers for building on and refining our approach.

This work has been part of a broader revitalisation of Ofsted's research function under Professor Daniel Muijs. Our survey reports take a system-wide view of issues in schools and colleges. We know that these reports have real impact in informing policy and practice. So, we want to do more of them, on the issues that you've told us you care about. We will soon be publishing a full research plan for the next 2 years. But, just to give you a flavour, themes will include:

- science in primary schools, and foreign languages and art in secondary schools
- how pupils with SEND in mainstream schools can get better access to support
- teacher wellbeing and workload
- improving basic skills and knowledge in further education
- how we develop curriculum knowledge in initial teacher education
- what does it mean to a school to be part of a MAT

To make sure that inspector practice is as good as it can be, we have reshaped our training. It now has a real focus on developments in education thinking, research and practice; a new 'inspector curriculum' if you like.

We're also thinking about the role that inspection plays in the school leadership journey. The role of HMI has traditionally been the final chapter in a school leader's career. Now, with the growth of MATs and with other system leadership opportunities, that is often not the case. And I don't think that's a bad thing. I am attracted to the idea of school leaders coming to Ofsted for 4 or 5 years, and then returning to a more senior leadership position, taking with them everything they've learned through inspection.

Responsible inspection

The second strand of our strategy is responsible inspection: here our concern is to use the influence that we have over the education system with deliberation and with care.

I made clear, to my detriment I might add, at my select committee confirmation hearing that I didn't see the role of Chief Inspector as a crusader. And, despite being goaded occasionally by cartoons in the education press that portray me variously as a middle aged Hermione Grainger and as a jousting knight, I have stuck to my view that battle language is generally unhelpful.

There are of course times when I must use the Chief Inspector platform to draw attention to the areas where performance just isn't good enough. I chose to highlight in my [annual report](#) the plight of a group of schools that haven't been good at any point in the past decade. And I've taken up my predecessors' work, tackling unregistered illegal schools that leave pupils unsafe and sometimes at risk of radicalisation. And it's why I've been

absolutely clear that Ofsted as an inspectorate will back heads who take tough decisions on behalf of their pupils.

Alongside these relatively high profile interventions, we've been thinking hard about how we can make sure our inspection reports meet the needs of the diverse audiences who read them. We know that parents want us to incorporate more of their feedback, and to give a better feel for the distinctiveness of individual schools. We're also thinking, as I said a couple of weeks ago, about how we can make more space for engagement and interaction with classroom teachers in inspections.

Finally, we are doing more to make sure that our inspections are focused on the right things at the right level. So, for example, we have changed our approach to safeguarding, so that we are genuinely looking at whether a school has a safeguarding culture, rather than, dare I say it, looking at the height of playground fences. We're redesigning our approach to batched inspections of schools in multi-academy trusts, and of course we continue to engage with the department on how to address the assessment of MATs in a way that reflects how they actually operate.

I hope you have noticed that I have been robust in make sure that inspection does not become a catch-all for every worthy aspiration. That is absolutely not because I don't care about these issues, whether it is child obesity, or first aid training or whatever else. It is because, quite simply, the more we load into the inspection framework, the less capacity we have to inspect the quality of education and whether schools are properly preparing young people to succeed in modern Britain.

So, I really hope you can see that we are living that commitment to be a force for improvement in all we do. Nowhere is that more so than in our work to develop the new education inspection framework for 2019.

My starting point for that work is that we have a good education system. Almost 90% of schools are rated good or outstanding. I want the new framework to reflect that level of performance, allowing improvement support to be mainly directed at where it is most needed.

Inspection grading

That leads me on to the question of grading in general. I know that there are some who would like Ofsted to abandon grades altogether or to move to a pass/fail model. For me, that is a decision which must squarely be decided on the basis of whether the current grading system meets our mission of being a force for improvement. We will keep this under regular review. But we've concluded, on balance, that it is right to maintain the current grading system in the new framework and that is the basis of the discussion I'm having with ministers now as we engage with them on the new framework as a whole. Let me tell you why:

First, our teacher polling conducted by YouGov, indicates that the profession prefers a 4 point grading system to a pass/fail one. Many teachers have told us directly that a pass/fail would make the system even more high stakes – it

would de facto turn Requires Improvement into a 'fail'. That could risk deterring more teachers from working in challenging schools.

Secondly, parents tell us that they want to keep the current grading system. They like the clarity of 4 grades in helping them to make informed choices, and as a marker of how well their child's school is performing.

When it comes to the outstanding grade in particular, a number of school leaders and others from the sector have persuasively lobbied me, and others, to keep it. Their argument is that by losing outstanding we'd send the wrong message about aspiration and excellence in the system. And excellence really matters.

For these reasons I am not yet convinced of the case for change.

However, if we are to keep the grading system, I have to be sure that people can have confidence in grades. That is why I would like to see the removal of the outstanding exemption. I entirely understand why the exemption was brought in. My starting point is always that we should trust our best leaders and teachers to get on with the job. But there are now almost 300 schools that have gone a decade or more without inspection. And regardless of what the quality of education in these schools is today, there is no doubt that the long gap since inspection has undermined parental confidence. From our perspective, it also means our inspectors are getting to see fewer examples of outstanding practice. That makes it more difficult to award the grade to others. I have also heard from many teachers that it is the exemption itself that drives workload because of the understandable pressure to achieve and maintain it. I am pleased to say we are engaging constructively with the department on this issue and hope to say more in the future.

Education quality and data

A second area of framework development is one you've heard me talk about before. How do we make our inspections and reports complement, rather than reinforce, performance data?

It would be entirely perverse if there were no correlation between what we find about the quality of education on inspection and what the data says about a school's performance. They are, one hopes, inextricably related. But inspection asks a different question. We want to know how schools are achieving a good education, not just what the results are.

Those of you who are avid readers of our annual report – and at Wellington, if nowhere else, there are probably a few – will know we have compared our inspection judgements with Progress 8 outcomes. Despite what some say, that analysis does disprove the charge that 'data is all'. It shows the significant overlap between the Progress 8 scores of good, outstanding and requires improvement schools. In the new framework, we're thinking about how we can go further in dispelling this myth, demonstrating through our judgements that we are just as interested in why and what schools are teaching, along with the outcomes.

Behaviour in schools

I also want us to have a clearer focus on behaviour. We welcomed [Tom Bennett's 2017 behaviour review](#) and are looking at how we can incorporate the recommendations relating to Ofsted in the new framework.

Pupil behaviour is the number one concern that parents raise with us: the first question they want answered in a report is 'what the behaviour is like?', 'is the school a safe environment?' and 'will they be protected from bullying?' We also know that behaviour is a primary driver of low morale in the profession. My position is that I want to see behaviour get the attention it deserves in our inspections, probably through a separate behaviour and attitudes judgement.

And when I talk about behaviour, I'm not just talking about serious disruption or bullying, important as these are. I want us to look just as hard at low-level disruption, which stops pupils learning and which can make the job of classroom management miserable.

I fundamentally disagree with those who say that taking a tough stance on behaviour is unfair to children. Quite the opposite, there is nothing kind about letting a few pupils spoil school for everyone else. That is why we expect heads to put in place strong policies that support their staff in tackling poor behaviour. And I think it's entirely appropriate to use sanctions, such as writing lines, 'community service' in the school grounds, such as picking up litter, and school detentions. And where they are part of a school's behaviour policy, they'll have our full support.

There's no doubt that technology has made the challenge of low-level disruption even worse, which by the way is why I also support recent calls to back heads who have decided that the way to improve behaviour is to ban mobile phones in their schools. I'm not the target audience, but nevertheless I am yet to be convinced of the educational benefits of all day access to 'Snapchat' and the like; and the place of mobile phones in the classroom seems to me dubious at best.

There are obvious limitations in what we're able to observe about behaviour in a single day. But we are looking to overcome them. As Tom suggests, there is scope for more dialogue with a wider range of staff – such as trainees and lunchtime supervisors – who are more likely to witness poor behaviour. We're establishing an expert advisory panel of heads and teachers who have taken a strong and successful approach to clamping down on poor behaviour to give us their advice. Alongside that, we fully support Tom's proposal of a national behaviour survey. Such a survey would allow pupils and staff to give us their honest, anonymous appraisal of behaviour in their schools before an inspection takes place. Finally, I want to address, once and for all, the cacophony of rumours we hear about badly behaved children being hidden, perhaps on a conveniently timed spontaneous school trip, during inspections. My research and analysis teams are currently designing a study to try and assess the extent of the problem and what we might do about it.

We will be airing more concrete proposals for consultation on the framework

shortly. In the interests of expectation management, I should point out that it will be an evolution not a revolution. Schools rightly expect stability, and policy makers need a degree of comparability to make informed intervention and policy decisions.

Nor do I expect Ofsted to be doubling its budget any time soon. But within the envelope I do have, I want to be sure we use our resources to maximum effect. I've spoken before about the amount of positive feedback I have had about the professional dialogue between inspectors and schools. Many heads find it to be invaluable CPD and a real driver of school improvement. So, a key priority is rebalancing inspector time, so that there's more time on site engaging with you and less time spent on the less visible activities.

Curriculum

That approach of dialogue and professional conversation is exactly how I see our curriculum work translating into practice. It's reassuring that since we announced our new focus on the curriculum I haven't heard any real disagreement with my thesis that it is an area that has been given too little attention for too long.

I suppose that shouldn't be a surprise. In my 17 years working in education, I've never met a teacher who went into the job to maximise Progress 8 scores. Teachers go into teaching because they want to inspire young people through 'the best that has been thought and said', and to give them the best possible chance in life. A focus on the curriculum will be a return to doing just that.

On the other hand, I know that whenever Ofsted announces a new approach, it triggers a degree of anxiety. So let me try and address those anxieties now:

First, we are not rushing into this. When I arrived as Chief Inspector, the default assumption was that I would want a new framework for 2018. I pushed that back to 2019, to give us the chance to do the research, and debate, and testing and training to get it right.

That extra year has let us carry out a thorough, research-based, curriculum review, before going anywhere near inspection practice. Last year, we conducted an overview study of the state of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools. We built on that work this spring, through workshops with schools who had really invested in curriculum development. We're now in the third stage of the project. This involves testing out really broad range of indicators, to see what they might tell us about the quality of a school's curriculum. Based on the results of that testing, through visits this summer, we will narrow down to a workable basket of curriculum indicators and shape the inspection practice and evidence collection methods that will sit alongside them.

Alongside our research work, we've already built more thinking about the curriculum into the inspector training that I talked about earlier. Alongside the general training, we've also piloted a new approach through a team of inspector reading champions.

This team was born out of concerns that there is a not insignificant group of schools, that are generally doing well, but where there are signs that early reading is not as well embedded as it could be. We know this has a disproportionately negative impact on disadvantaged children who might not get the same reading opportunities at home. To address this, we trained a group of inspectors to look specifically at whether schools are getting the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics right from the start, and whether this is well joined-up with subsequent literacy teaching. These inspectors have then been deployed on standard primary inspections. Our initial evaluation of this approach has been encouraging and it is a model we will pilot more broadly to assess other areas of education quality.

I also believe that a focus on curriculum will help to tackle excessive and unsustainable workload. For me, a curricular focus moves inspection more towards being a conversation about what actually happens in the day-to-day life of schools. As opposed to school leaders feeling that they must justify their actions with endless progress and performance metrics. To that end, inspecting the curriculum will help to undo the 'Pixlification' of education in recent years, and make irrelevant the dreaded Mocksted consultants. Those who are bold and ambitious for their pupils will be rewarded as a result.

That is why I am also confident that our work on the curriculum will not be susceptible to political pressure or the latest educational fads. Anyone who knows me, or who has seen my actions since becoming Chief Inspector, knows that I guard our independence vigorously.

I want to reassure you that there will not be an Ofsted-approved curriculum. Instead, we are interested in why you make the decisions, whether your decisions are translating into practice, and how you know they are having the intended effect. The starting point for many schools is the National Curriculum. For those using academy freedoms to go beyond it, we'll want to talk about what that looks like.

There will be practices we will want you to justify in that conversation. We will want, for example, to know why you've shortened Key Stage 3, what has been lost as well as what has been gained, and whether that trade-off is really justified for all children. We will want you to tell us why you're entering so many pupils for ECDL, or whatever new qualification has risen from the grave to replace it. Where there is settled evidence that a practice is bad, we won't hesitate to point that out, but none of this is the same as an ideological preference. I cannot stress enough, what we want is a dialogue to understand your thinking and how you're making sure that the curriculum gives every child a full, deep, rich education.

Areas of underperformance

And by that I do mean every child. I was struck last week by the debate about Ofsted inspection judgements and demographics – particularly the underperformance of some schools with high proportions of white working class children.

I want to be clear on the context of this analysis. Data was provided to a

member of the public in response to a specific query. It wasn't the result of an in depth investigation by Ofsted into the confounding effects of deprivation and ethnicity. Five years ago, we published a detailed report 'Unseen children' to dig in to the relationship between deprivation and outcomes. Clearly, this isn't something that can be adequately explained in a handful of charts. Sean Harford, will be publishing a blog about this with further detail shortly.

But that aside, we can't pretend that Ofsted judgements are not lower in certain areas – many of them with a high proportion of white working class children. But that shouldn't surprise us. Over the past few years, there has been a long overdue debate about white working class communities in England, and why they have fallen behind. That debate hasn't been limited to the UK and our coastal towns. It has also echoed throughout continental Europe and across the Atlantic. We are having to grapple with the unhappy fact that many local working class communities have felt the full brunt of economic dislocation in recent years, and, perhaps as a result, can lack the aspiration and drive seen in many migrant communities.

DfE's analysis plainly shows that schools in these areas face challenges in terms of their pupil intake, and that there are also real capacity issues. Schools in these areas struggle with teacher recruitment; there are fewer local academy sponsors; and there is less access to leadership support through national leaders of education and through teaching schools. Just this month, analysis from the OECD showed that England is one of a handful of countries that shows marked differences in teacher qualifications and experience between advantaged and disadvantaged schools. And, although there isn't time to go into it now, that OECD analysis does leave us with a difficult question: is the extra resource provided through the funding formula and through pupil premium in particular always spent on the things that make the most difference?

Our job is to report without fear or favour on the quality of education as we see it in these areas. That is explicitly not the same as saying that teachers in these areas are putting in any less effort or that the leadership is worse. There is no doubt that these schools have a harder job to do than others. And we should be just as interested in why some schools in more affluent areas aren't doing better. I have nothing but admiration for the teachers who make it their mission to tackle disadvantage. But the overall effectiveness of a school is not an effort grade.

However, that is not the same as the inspectorate being biased against certain schools. What our inspection outcomes do is to act as a call for action in these areas – a call for the right kind of support and intervention. Part of the reason there is this welcome debate about neglected communities, Brexit and Trump aside, is because organisations like Ofsted have highlighted how national policies can fail to reach these communities. To give just one example – our judgements have helped the DfE in its major programme of work to tackle underperformance, not least with the identification of their flagship Opportunity Areas. That wouldn't be possible if we were to pretend that everything is rosy when it is not.

My stance continues to be that our job is to provide an objective assessment of the quality of education. And I say 'continues' because this is a question that has been asked and answered before – as long ago as 1854. So to finish, I will repeat what my distinguished predecessor, Matthew Arnold HMI wrote in his general report for that year:

I constantly hear it urged that consideration for local difficulties and peculiar circumstances should induce him [the inspector] to withhold the notice in his report of shortcomings and failures, because these may have been caused by circumstances for which neither managers nor teacher were to blame, and because the statement of them may unfavourably affect a struggling school. There is some plausibility in this plea for silence; but it is based, I feel sure, on a misconception of what the peculiar province and duty of an inspector is.

If, for fear of discouraging voluntary efforts, inspectors are silent respecting the deficiencies of schools – respecting the feeble support given to this school, the imperfect accommodation in another, the faulty discipline or instruction in a third, and the failure of all alike to embrace the poorest class of children – if everything is represented as hopeful and prosperous, lest a manager should be disappointed or a subscriber estranged – then a delusion is prolonged in the public mind as to the real character of the present state of things, a delusion which it is the very object of a system of public inspection, exercised by agents of the government on behalf of the country at large, to dispel and remove. Inspection exists for the sake of finding out and reporting the truth, and for this above all.

Thank you.

[Press release: Giant 40-metre-wide structure to help improve journeys on M6](#)

The huge 20-tonne gantry will span the width of the motorway, hold 10 large electronic signs and is the biggest single structure being installed as part of a £274 million upgrade of a 20-mile stretch of the M6 to a smart motorway.

The Highways England scheme between junction 16 at Crewe and junction 19 at Knutsford involves converting the hard shoulder to a permanent extra lane and introducing new variable speed limits to help tackle congestion and keep

traffic flowing.

A similar smart motorway scheme on a stretch of the M62 in West Yorkshire, which was completed in 2013, has resulted in commuters saving an average 30 minutes each week.

Arun Sahni, Project Manager at Highways England, said:

This is a major milestone for the project and a lot of planning and preparation work has been carried out to make sure the gantry can be lifted into place as quickly and safely as possible.

The superspan gantry is one of a series of structures we're installing along the smart motorway route to hold over 250 electronic signs that will provide drivers with live information about their journeys, and help to improve journey times by tackling stop-start conditions caused by sudden braking.

We'd like to thank drivers for their patience while this work takes place. We're on schedule to complete the smart motorway upgrade by spring next year and are doing everything we can to minimise disruption, including keeping all of the lanes open in both directions during the day.

Superspan gantries are constructed off-site using a series of symmetrical steel bars, and are becoming a familiar sight on motorways across England.

The gantry on the M6 between junctions 18 and 19 will be lifted into place overnight on Wednesday 27 June, with a crane lowering it onto two pillars which have already been installed on either side of the motorway. Electronic signs will then be fitted to the structure at a later date.

The southbound carriageway on the M6 will be closed between junctions 19 and 18 on Wednesday 27 June from 10pm to 6am to bring the crane onto the motorway for the gantry lift.

Police will hold traffic on the northbound carriageway for several minutes during the lift so that drivers can then continue their journeys once the gantry is in place without needing to come off the motorway to follow a diversion.

Stretches of the route will also be closed overnight, Monday to Saturday, later in the summer to install similar, smaller gantries on each carriageway. Drivers will be able to follow diversion routes when parts of the motorway are closed and details on closure dates will be publicised nearer the time once they have been finalised.

Around 500 people are currently working on the project to upgrade the M6 to a smart motorway through Cheshire. When the scheme is complete, 258 electronic signs will be used to alert drivers to changes in the speed limit, lane closures and incidents ahead.

A total of 70 CCTV cameras will also be installed to provide 100% coverage of the route and allow Highways England's traffic officers and the emergency services to respond quickly to incidents. And 18 emergency areas will be built to provide drivers with a safer place to stop if they break down.

More details are available on the [scheme website](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Speech: PM statement at press conference with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg: 21 June 2018

Prime Minister Theresa May:

Jens, it's a pleasure to welcome you to Downing Street today.

The range of issues we have discussed I think underlines why NATO is as vital now as it ever has been.

And why our commitment to the Alliance remains steadfast.

Not only do we exceed the NATO target of spending 2 per cent of GDP on defence, but as we meet today thousands of our Armed Forces personnel are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with NATO allies around the world.

They serve alongside our Allies in Poland and Estonia to deter Russian aggression as part of NATO's "enhanced Forward Presence".

They are training and mentoring our Iraqi and Afghan partners to help them build a brighter and more prosperous future.

The Royal Navy has led half of NATO's Standing Maritime Forces for the past year and has declared our nuclear deterrent capability to the defence of the Alliance since 1962.

And Royal Air Force Typhoon jets stationed in Romania are patrolling the skies over the Black Sea as part of NATO's Southern Air Policing mission.

I am proud that whenever the call comes from NATO the UK is one of the first to respond.

But while we step up we cannot allow NATO to stand still.

So today the Secretary-General and I welcome the progress made on modernising NATO while recognising that there is more to do.

There has been much discussion about the need for Allies to take on greater responsibility by increasing their spending on defence and we welcome the steps that NATO Allies have taken since the Wales Summit four years ago.

Burden sharing will be one of the key items on the agenda for the Summit in July, where we will take stock of progress since the Leaders' Meeting last May and the Warsaw and Wales Summits.

Europe is shouldering more of the burden but must continue to do more.

And as the challenges we face evolve so must we, which is why another key priority for the Summit will be making NATO more modern and adaptable.

Next month we expect to agree an ambitious package of measures to strengthen our deterrence and defence, to increase our efforts on tackling terrorism, and to address the threats presented by cyber and hybrid warfare.

Our values and our unity are the source of NATO's strength, but as an organisation of 29 based on consensus, there is a risk that we cannot always act as quickly as our adversaries.

So it is reassuring that NATO continues to adapt to ensure that it is less bureaucratic, better at prioritising its activity, and more capable of taking and implementing decisions quickly.

This work will include improving readiness to make sure that we have the right forces in the right place so that they can act to protect our people.

The UK already plays an important part in this by supporting the design of a new NATO Command Structure – and I'm proud to say that we'll be committing an additional 100 posts to that Structure taking our commitment to over 1000 UK Service personnel.

Finally, this is the first time that the Secretary-General and I have met since Russia's use of an illegal nerve agent in Salisbury.

We saw a powerful demonstration of the value of the Alliance in its response to this incident and I would like to thank the Secretary General for his and for NATO's support.

This act was the latest Russian provocation in a wider pattern of malign behaviour – cyber, disinformation, political subversion and increased military posturing.

We will continue to be at the forefront of those opposing Russia's malign

activity and the abuse of the international rules-based system, but we remain committed to the NATO approach of deterrence and defence backed up by periodic and meaningful dialogue with Russia.

The message that I have conveyed to the Secretary-General today is that the UK will continue to lead by example in NATO, meeting the 2% target on Defence spending, contributing across the board to Alliance missions and operations and continuing to encourage all Allies to do the same.

[Press release: United Kingdom- Poland Quadriga Joint Communiqué](#)

Today's annual meeting of Foreign and Defence Ministers demonstrates that the UK and Poland are delivering on their commitment to develop our partnership to be even stronger and even more strategic.

We took the opportunity of this meeting to celebrate the hundred years of Polish regained independence and a bilateral relationship that has vastly expanded over a century. During that time the UK and Poland have worked and fought side-by-side for freedom in Europe and the world. We remember the heroism of British and Polish soldiers, sailors and pilots throughout the Second World War and subsequent conflicts. Our countries have a strong trading relationship and deep cultural links through the thriving Polish community in the UK. We are active partners in international fora like the UN, OSCE, EU and NATO, and our troops serve together on the ground in Poland as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence. Today we have discussed concrete ideas for how we can further enhance our strategic foreign, defence and security partnership.

As the hosts of the previous two NATO Summits, we share a deep commitment to the Alliance, and to a successful Summit in Brussels. NATO continues to adapt to the evolving security environment, having made good progress since 2014 in rebuilding and strengthening its Deterrence & Defence posture and Projecting Stability. The 2018 Summit is an important landmark in providing a modern, prepared and unified NATO. It will be an opportunity to review the progress made since Wales and Warsaw, demonstrate Allies' unity, and agree the remaining steps ahead of NATO's 70th anniversary in 2019. Ensuring the effectiveness of NATO's deterrence and defence, including in the Eastern flank, is of vital importance for both countries. Our partnership in the area of security and defence continues to serve that purpose. Against this background, Poland and the UK stand for a timely and successful adaptation of the NATO Command Structure.

Both the UK and Poland are committed to meeting the NATO target of spending at least 2% of GDP on defence, and 20% of that on major equipment capabilities. We recognise the importance of increased defence spending

across the Alliance. We also fully support NATO's open door policy and the 2018 Summit offers an opportunity to recognise the progress made by aspirants, particularly as this year marks the 10th anniversary of decisions made at the Bucharest Summit. We recognize that Euro-Atlantic integration remains an important driving force of reforms in Georgia and Ukraine.

In order to build our collective capability to tackle hostile activity and hybrid threats, the UK and Poland will draw on the complementary experiences of NATO, EU and likeminded partners, ensuring a consistency in approach across multilateral fora to all forms of threats. We commit to strengthen resilience to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear-related risks (CBRN), through practical cooperation including sharing information and lessons learnt. By coordinating the attribution of hostile activity in cyberspace and pushing for all available diplomatic tools to be used in response to cyber-attacks, we will raise the cost of malicious cyber activities. We will also explore new areas of innovation, and seek to harness the commercial cybersecurity opportunities they afford, by facilitating an exchange of ideas and expertise between British and Polish businesses.

Our two countries will enhance our strategic communications and develop strategies to reinforce our democracies, strengthen our societies' resilience, and uphold freedom of expression and a free and independent media in the face of the disinformation threat. We will further continue to initiate joint actions aimed at supporting independent media in Eastern Partnership countries so as to build resilience to Russian disinformation and build plurality and balance across media landscapes. The UK and Poland will work together to tackle hybrid threats through NATO to improve crisis management, identify the tools available to hostile actors, and enhance resilience among NATO Allies and partners. The NATO-Ukraine Platform on Countering Hybrid Warfare can play an important role, and the UK and Poland will work to strengthen this instrument.

We remain committed to continuing our efforts aimed at stabilising the EU neighbourhood and handling various challenges on the Eastern and Southern flanks. The heightened risk from Russia and the bold pattern of its behaviour, designed to undermine the rules-based international order, concerns us greatly. We have worked hand-in-hand to shape Europe's response to Russian aggression against Ukraine and hostile action. Russia's hostility has seen it operating in more agile and asymmetric ways, be it the use of a nerve agent on the streets of Salisbury or cyber-attacks such as NotPetya in Ukraine. We agreed that the best response is to maintain pressure on Russia, including through sanctions, until the Minsk agreements are fully implemented and Russia abides by agreed international norms and standards.

Our discussions also focused on the dire situation in Syria, and we agreed to continue to champion urgent humanitarian access through the UN Security Council. We call on all parties to engage fully in the UN process in Geneva towards a credible political solution. We deplore the repeated use of chemical weapons by the regime and will use the special session of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention later this month to reinforce global norms and work towards a new attribution mechanism for chemical weapons incidents. We also discussed Iran and, whilst remaining concerned

about Iran's ballistic missile programme and regional behaviour, we shared a desire to maintain both the JCPOA and Transatlantic unity. The UK and Poland continue to be close partners in the Council on numerous issues, and plan to host a joint event in New York later this year.

We reaffirm our shared commitment to the security, stability, prosperity and sovereignty of all six countries in the Western Balkans. The UK and Poland will continue our close cooperation in preparation for the 2018 and 2019 Berlin Process summits. In particular, we will explore joint projects and activities on priority themes, which include countering corruption, and resilience against disinformation and the malign activity of external actors. Foreign Ministers will make a joint visit to the region between our Summits. This will ensure continuity between the British and Polish Berlin Process summits as well as a lasting, positive impact in the Western Balkans region.

Alongside our foreign and security policy collaboration, we also agreed to deepen our bilateral defence cooperation. In December 2017 we signed a defence treaty that will elevate our bilateral cooperation in the areas of information exchange, collective defence, intelligence and technologies, military exercises and investment planning. In the past year we have also made steps in the development of bilateral capability collaboration projects. The Defence Capability and Industrial Dialogue has been supported by Ministerial and senior official engagement, and we will continue to discuss opportunities for both British and Polish companies.

We have signed the Plan for Bilateral Defence Cooperation for the year 2018, and continue to deliver these commitments; working together across a full range of activities, including in such thematic areas as enhanced interoperability of forces, promoting defence industries' collaboration as well as bilateral visits and exchanges.

The UK and Poland continue to respond jointly to shared threats and hostile state activity. This includes leading discussions in multilateral organisations such as the Northern Group. This year, we both participate in two large scale exercises, SABER STRIKE and ANAKONDA 18 demonstrating the strength of our military cooperation and enduring commitment to Euro-Atlantic security. We are determined to participate in exercises aimed at restoring NATO's ability to conduct large combat operations, including in the Eastern flank.

Speech: Matt Hancock speaking at the Dynamo Conference in Newcastle

It is fantastic to be here in Newcastle.

Tomorrow I will be launching the Great Exhibition of the North, a celebration

of everything that is great about the North of England.

This is a unique opportunity to celebrate the exceptional creativity here and to inspire the next generation of innovators.

The Exhibition will feature 80 days of events, looking ahead to the economy of tomorrow and the role that the North of England is playing in shaping our future.

And we cannot think about the future without thinking about technology.

Technology really is transforming everything.

Netflix has transformed broadcasting, Airbnb has transformed the hotel industry. And in January, I transformed politics in West Suffolk through launching the Matt Hancock app...

In fact the combined user base of Netflix, Airbnb and the Matt Hancock app is now over 300 million...

I like to live and breathe technology and that is why I really wanted to come here to today's Dynamo Conference.

Last week was London Tech Week and we were talking a lot about how the UK is a digital dynamo.

We are a nation of pioneers, and the truth is that we have out to the West in the United States, and out to the East in China, two tech giants.

And our role is to be the best in our timezone, to be the best in Europe and to be one of the best places in the world for tech.

The prosperity that comes from this technological revolution, and the success that underpins it, can only happen and is only worth shouting about, if the benefits can be shared right across the country.

So I wanted to talk about what we're doing to support digital dynamos like you in the North East and all across the country.

The North East

It is a critical goal of our Digital Strategy to make sure that the considerable benefits of our tech industry get outside of London.

This is also true also in our creative industries. I am delighted to be working with Channel 4 who are creating a new National HQ outside London, bringing real benefits from what they do.

Nearly 70 percent of investment in the UK tech industry last year was outside the capital

The North East has played a huge part in that. And it has played that part through history.

From Stephenson's first railways to the incandescent lightbulb and of course the industrial heritage here.

Now in the modern era, it is home to the 30 million pound National Innovation Centre for Data, which opened last year to harness the power of data.

Newcastle is home to 30,000 digital and tech jobs – and it is the fastest growing tech economy outside of London.

The North East is home to some of the UK's tech powerhouses, like Sage, our second largest technology company.

And then we have some exciting new tech firms. Tomorrow I'm seeing True Potential in Newcastle, which is the only UK fintech firm to have been in the Deloitte Technology Fast 50 for three consecutive years.

This is all boosted by the research universities in Newcastle and Northumbria. And from strong support networks like our hosts today here at Dynamo North East.

But the point is that when you have the second largest tech company in the country, the fastest growing area and 30,000 tech jobs there is something special going on. We want us to support it and see it grow.

Talent and skills

There's a couple of other things I want to mention which I think are critical to making this happen. The first is talent and skills.

The task here is to make sure that we keep getting the brightest and the best from around the world and also that we do much more to support our home grown talent.

We have put in place something called the Digital Skills Partnership.

The aim of this partnership is to improve the digital capability that is needed right across the country.

And building local partnerships to tailor digital skills training to the needs of the local community.

The point of the Digital Skills Partnership is this. If we in Government try to solve the skills shortage in tech on our own we will get it wrong. We will be training people with outdated capabilities and we will do far less than needs to be done.

The Digital Skills Partnership, yes, has Government at its core and we convene it. It has universities and academia, but it also has the companies that are the beneficiaries of this tech talent as part of the partnership.

And we launched just last week the second of these local partnerships and there's plans for four more across England later this year.

We're working with North East and Tees Valley LEP to see how we can develop a new partnership here and I really want this to become a reality.

The private sector has a critical role to play in making this happen. Tech firms are showing great leadership on this issue.

For instance, the North East Futures UTC has got the backing of local companies like Ubisoft and national companies like Accenture.

That's going to open its doors this year on the site of Stephenson's original railway workshop.

It's only by delivering the skills that businesses need that we're going to get this right.

The recent Tech Nation report showed that skills was the biggest concern for tech firms in Newcastle and Sunderland. And we are determined to tackle the problem but we need to do it in partnership.

Conditions for starting and growing a digital business

The next thing I want to touch on is make sure we get the conditions right.

We have a key objective in making our country the best place in the world to start and grow a digital business.

Of course part of this is the old style physical infrastructure, but also the modern infrastructure and connectivity.

Almost five million extra homes and businesses have been connected to superfast broadband thanks to the Government's investment.

And at 97.2%, the North East has the highest coverage of superfast broadband in the country.

And we're now looking at the next frontier, at the 5G and the full fibre rollout, where we have invested over a billion pounds.

And we're working with local authorities, here and across the rest of the country, to make sure that we get that rollout going.

A strong digital infrastructure is vital to power the next generation of emerging technologies, especially those heavily reliant on data like AI.

And then there's access to finance, which of course is vital to companies in their early stages of development.

Just last week we announced £2.5 billion of extra funding by the British Business Bank, to unlock over £10 billion of finance and support new UK businesses in their ambitions to grow.

It will invest alongside private capital because we want to make sure the investment goes to places with a good business case.

The networks for ambitious entrepreneurs, Tech City UK and Tech North, have also recently evolved into Tech Nation.

This isn't just a rebranding but reflects our commitment to supporting tech pioneers wherever they are based.

Tech Nation will support 40,000 entrepreneurs and up to 4,000 start-ups as they scale their businesses across the country.

And along with this work, we want to connect British businesses across the UK with potential investors and partners across the world.

Hedgehog Lab, with its headquarters in Newcastle, is breaking ground in AR and VR, and now has offices in Denmark, India and the USA.

I want all firms to have these opportunities.

And then we're expanding a range of tech hubs between the UK and different countries, based in embassies, to make sure that when people go abroad there are the connections and meeting points.

We launched our first one in Israel and since then we have launched another in India. And we'll be launching more hubs in Brazil and South Africa to help tech companies go global.

For example, as part of the Indian hub, the North East will be linked to Karnataka, the home of the Indian Space Research Organisation and several hi-tech manufacturers.

Looking forward

So with all the new technology in development, we are clear that there is a role for us in Government to help this great industry to grow right across the country.

To make sure we get the infrastructure, the skills, the finance and the business support in place.

The North East was pivotal to the first industrial revolution.

Some call this the fourth industrial revolution and I am absolutely determined to do what I can to help you to be pivotal to this one too.

Focusing together on the skills and the conditions for technology to thrive, to shape our society and our economy for the better.

I think it's a very exciting opportunity and I look forward to working with you to make it a reality.

Thank you very much.