

News story: Minister for Defence Procurement visits JFC

This was the minister's first visit to JFC since starting in his role 5 months ago. During his visit, the minister heard about the important contribution that JFC makes towards defence and how it works with the single services.

The minister was briefed on the role that JFC plays in driving defence innovation, especially through work being carried out by the jHub. He recognised the enabling capability that JFC provides and highlighted the criticality of innovation to defence

During his visit, the minister held a meeting with military and civilian staff based at the Northwood site. He took the opportunity to praise the work undertaken across JFC, especially around integration and commented that JFC is the glue that brings the whole of defence together.

Referencing recent humanitarian efforts undertaken by the UK armed forces, such as after Hurricane Irma, the minister congratulated JFC on helping coordinate the UK response. He expanded further, confirming one of JFC's key roles is to ensure strong integration and co-ordination. He also shared that JFC is an important enabler within defence when it comes to working with our international partners.

Finally, he opened a discussion with members of the audience, covering subjects including the growing importance of space to UK defence and the need through Modernising Defence Programme for defence to deliver in an increasingly agile manner.

Statement to Parliament: Grenfell one year on

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the government's response to the Grenfell Tower fire, meeting our commitment to update the House following the Opposition Day debate on the 16th of May.

I am also writing to the Chair of the Select Committee to provide a formal report on progress, a copy of which will be placed in the House library.

As we mark a year since that tragedy, this will be an extremely painful time for the community.

Many honourable members provided powerful and poignant contributions in the

e-petition and Opposition Day debates last month.

And I know that the whole House will join me in sending the bereaved and survivors our love and prayers.

Mr Speaker, the 14th of June 2017 saw the greatest loss of life in a residential fire since the Second World War.

71 people lost their lives on the night of the fire and a former tower resident who was rescued from the 19th floor passed away earlier this year.

The start of the public inquiry was a timely reminder of that terrible human cost.

A baby who never lived to learn how much he was loved.

Three generations of a family wiped out.

Heroes who died saving others.

Nobody could fail to be moved by the extraordinary tributes paid by family and friends to the loved ones they lost.

By their courage and dignity in the face of unimaginable loss.

And, yes, by their anger too.

A catastrophe of this kind should never have happened in the UK in 2017.

And when it did, the initial response was not good enough.

Nothing can undo the anguish and devastation this has caused.

But, as the Prime Minister has said, we can and must do right by the memory of those who lost their lives – and those left behind.

To support those affected.

To secure justice.

And, above all, to ensure that nothing like this can ever happen again.

There has been an unprecedented effort across government and our public services.

Help is being provided by a range of issues from advice on benefits to emotional and mental health support.

In total, we have spent over £46 million of national government funds – and committed a further £34 million to help meet rehousing costs, deliver new mental health services and deliver improvements to the Lancaster West Estate.

The appointment of my Right Honourable Friend for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner as Grenfell Victims' Minister has helped ensure that the voices of

those affected inform the response.

And we [set up the Independent Grenfell Recovery Taskforce](#) to help and challenge the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) to provide better support for residents and rebuild trust.

And I want to thank everyone for their tireless support – particularly the emergency services and the public and voluntary sectors.

Clearly, one of the most pressing issues has been rehousing those who lost their homes.

A large scale programme of investment work has been under way to ensure they are of good quality and personalised to meet the needs of families.

The council has acquired over 300 homes in and around the borough.

203 households needed new homes. 198 have accepted permanent or temporary accommodation, which means that all but 5 households have accepted offers. 134 have now moved in.

Most of the work to ensure all homes that have been accepted are ready to move into is complete and we expect many of the remaining properties to be ready in the coming weeks.

While they are preparing to move, the council has ensured that all households have had the option to move into more suitable accommodation.

But I remain very concerned about the 43 households who are living in hotels.

My ministerial team has met with many of them and I've personally written to all of them, to find out what barriers exist in each individual case and how we can overcome them.

Mr Speaker, this is not where any of us wanted to be a year on from the fire.

While there has been progress in recent weeks, overall the pace has been too slow.

My department and the Independent Taskforce are continuing to provide scrutiny and challenge to the council and we have provided additional resources directly to the council to help them speed up this work.

We will not rest until everyone is settled into new homes.

But Mr Speaker, those affected also badly need answers and to see justice done.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry and Metropolitan Police investigations will ensure this happens.

But we must also learn from what has happened.

Over the past year my department has been working closely with fire and

rescue services, local authorities and landlords to make sure other buildings like Grenfell Tower are safe.

Remediation work has started on two-thirds of buildings in the social housing sector.

And the [Prime Minister announced last month](#) that the government will fully fund the removal and replacement of potentially dangerous ACM cladding on buildings over 18 metres owned by social landlords, with costs estimated at £400 million.

And we've made it clear that we expect building owners in the private sector to not pass costs on to leaseholders.

To that end, I recently met leaseholders and put their concerns to representatives from industry at a number of roundtables.

Some in the sector, such as Barratt Developments, Legal & General and Taylor Wimpey, are doing the right thing and taking responsibility.

I urge all others to follow.

The private sector must step up and I am not ruling anything out if they do not.

In addition, [I recently welcomed Dame Judith Hackitt's final, comprehensive report](#) following her [Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety](#).

In response, I committed to bringing forward legislation to reform the system of fire safety and give residents a stronger voice.

Having listened carefully to concerns, the government intends to ban the use of combustible materials on the external walls of high-rise residential buildings, subject to consultation.

We will publish the consultation next week.

It is essential that people living in buildings like Grenfell Tower are not only safe but they feel the state understands their lives and works for them.

There is no question that their faith in this has been shaken.

Which is why – as well as strengthening building and fire safety – we'll be publishing a social housing green paper by recess.

I am confident that these measures will help us rebuild public trust and deliver the meaningful, lasting change that's needed.

Mr Speaker, our country has seen many difficult times, but that night at Grenfell Tower was one of our darkest hours.

We will never forget those who died.

We will not falter in our support for those who are still grieving.

Nor flag in our determination to ensure that no community has to go through such agonies again.

In doing so, I think we can be inspired by the incredible spirit of the people of North Kensington and the way they have come together.

And when we say 'never again' we mean it.

I commend this statement to the House.

Statement to Parliament: PM statement on G7 summit: 11 June 2018

Introduction

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a Statement on the G7 Summit in Quebec.

The G7 is a forum that allows close allies with shared history and values to discuss issues that affect the security and prosperity of our people – and of the world at large.

Discussion at this year's summit focused on our shared efforts to promote the rules-based international order; to advance free and fair global trade by making the global economy work for everyone; to strive for equal opportunities for all our citizens; and to drive further action to protect the environment, and in particular our oceans.

As was clear over the weekend, there was strong debate, and disagreement on some issues. But after detailed discussions between both leaders and our teams, we were able to find common ground and draw up a communique which reflected these discussions and the agreements we reached.

I want to pay a particular tribute to Prime Minister Trudeau for his leadership and skilful chairing, which enabled us – after two days of negotiation between leaders – to agree actions and a shared approach on some of the most pressing challenges facing the international community and our citizens.

And the United Kingdom fully intends to honour the commitments we have made.

Upholding international law

Mr Speaker, recent events have underlined the importance of a strong international response to malign state activity.

We cannot stand by when international law is undermined, when the security of our citizens is compromised and when foreign interference in our democratic institutions threatens the values and interests that we share.

So at this Summit, we agreed to establish a new Rapid Response Mechanism.

As a result G7 nations will work together to share intelligence, co-ordinate action and develop new strategies to tackle this growing threat.

We also agreed that we must maintain the global norm against the use of chemical weapons – and that we will strengthen the ability of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to attribute responsibility for chemical weapons attacks.

And we all agreed in our discussions and our communique that we need to maintain sanctions on Russia in light of its failure to fully implement the Minsk Agreements in Ukraine. And that we stand ready to take further restrictive measures if necessary.

Making the global economy work for everyone

Turning to trade and the global economy, it is clear that in many of our countries some people feel left behind by globalisation. And not all countries are playing by the rules.

We must address this.

We need to make the international rules-based trading system work better, so the benefits of free trade can be felt by all. And that includes encouraging the World Trade Organisation to operate more effectively in supporting a global economy that works for everyone.

Multilateral action is the right way to achieve this.

It cannot be done by taking unilateral action against your partners.

So at this Summit, we expressed deep disappointment at the unjustified decision of the United States to apply tariffs to steel and aluminium imports.

The loss of trade through tariffs undermines competition, reduces productivity, removes the incentive to innovate – and ultimately makes everyone poorer. And in response, the EU will impose countermeasures.

But we need to avoid a continued tit-for-tat escalation.

That is why it was right that we had such an open and direct discussion at

this Summit.

And why, as a champion of free trade, the UK will continue to support a constructive dialogue.

As long-standing allies we do not make progress by ignoring each other's concerns; but rather by addressing them together.

Championing equality

Turning to equality, there was a special session at this Summit focused on empowering and supporting women and girls around the world.

Efforts to tackle global poverty are fundamentally undermined for as long as millions of girls are not getting the education they deserve.

So at this summit, the UK announced £187 million of new funding to support over 400,000 girls in developing countries in getting 12 years of quality education.

We also called for new action to prevent gender-based violence, abuse and harassment online.

Women and girls must be able to use the internet without fear of being subjected to online rape threats, harassment, cyberstalking, blackmail and more.

Following the UK's call for action last year, tech companies have made real advances in tackling online terrorist propaganda.

So in Canada, I called for this work to be extended to end the abuse targeted specifically at women and girls.

And we committed in particular to new joint working on stopping the internet being used to facilitate people trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

Sustainability

Finally, on World Oceans Day, the UK sought to build on the international agreements we reached at the Commonwealth Summit in April by calling for a global effort to protect our oceans from avoidable plastic waste.

This is one of the great environmental challenges facing the world today.

This Summit recognised the need for global action, including working with business, industry and Non-Governmental Organisations to find innovative solutions.

The UK is continuing to lead by example at home through our 25 Year Environment Plan. And on Friday we proposed to extend the blue belt protecting sea life around the English Coast with a further 41 new Marine

Conservation Zones.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, this was a difficult Summit with, at times, some very candid discussions.

But the conclusion I draw is that it is only through continued dialogue that we can find ways to work together to resolve the challenges we face.

The countries round the G7 table have been pillars of the rules based international order which has benefited all our citizens and, I believe, the world as a whole.

The United Kingdom, with our allies and partners, will continue to play our part in promoting that order to the benefit of all nations.

And I commend this Statement to the House.

Press release: Minister for Women joins procession through London

On Sunday 10 June, the Minister for Women joined thousands of women and girls as they walked together through London as part of a mass participation artwork to mark the centenary year of women's suffrage.

Processions took place in London, Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh, with participants wearing either green, white or violet – the colours of the suffrage movement – to give the appearance of a flowing river of colour through the cities' streets.

Nearly £210,000 of UK Government funding went towards commissioning women artists to work with organisations and communities across England to create centenary banners for the London Procession as part of an extensive public programme of creative workshops.

Minister for Women Victoria Atkins said:

Yesterday's processions have the potential to go down in history, just as the processions 100 years ago, and to serve as a legacy for us all to build on.

It is vital that we all play our part in celebrating our history, paying tribute to those who sacrificed so much to shape our country, and reigniting our determination to build on the great

work of the great women who have gone before us.

[News story: New Director General of Customer Strategy and Tax Design announced](#)

Ruth is currently Director for Customs and Indirect Tax, and will take over her new role from interim Director General David Richardson on his planned retirement later this summer.

Ruth said:

I'm absolutely delighted to have this opportunity to lead Customer Strategy and Tax Design and join HMRC's Executive Committee. I know first-hand what important work our group does every day to help create the best possible tax, customs and payment systems for the UK. HMRC's work to raise revenue to fund vital public services is hugely motivating to me, and my decision in 2016 to join the department was definitely one of the best I ever made.

Thanks to Jim Harra, David, our senior team and so many others across the group, we already have great foundations to build on. I'm keen that over the months ahead we go further in bringing customer insight to the heart of all our work on policy and design, and continue to strengthen our policy partnership with HM Treasury. I'm really looking forward to discussing with teams across the group how we can best approach this next stage together and help make the group an even better place to work.

Chief Executive Jon Thompson said:

Ruth was an exceptional candidate and is absolutely the right person to take forward this important role following David's retirement in July. I'm grateful to David for his leadership over the last few months and look forward to welcoming Ruth to the team in the next few weeks.

Ruth joined HMRC as Director of Indirect Tax in March 2016, and has led on Customs and Indirect Tax since early 2017. Since joining the Civil Service in the 1990s, she has led a range of policy work in different departments including the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the

Department for Transport and the Department of Health.

While at DCLG Ruth worked on housing policy, including leading work to prevent homelessness and repossessions at the time of the credit crunch, for which she was awarded an OBE. She lives in central London with her husband and two sons.