

Lieutenant General Sharon Nesmith becomes Deputy Chief of the General Staff

Press release

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Lieutenant General Sharon Nesmith has taken up the role of [Deputy Chief of the General Staff](#) (DCGS), becoming the first female British Army officer to hold the rank of Lieutenant General and occupy this prestigious role.

The appointment, which was approved by Her Majesty The Queen, was [announced in April 2022](#).

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

I am delighted that Sharon Nesmith has taken up her role as Deputy Chief of the General Staff. She brings extensive experience and new ideas to drive the Army's transformation and deal with emerging threats across the world.

Lieutenant General Nesmith said:

I am deeply honoured to be appointed as the Deputy Chief of the General Staff at such a pivotal time for the British Army. I am excited to be playing my part in leading the Army's mobilisation to meet today's threats, and the delivery of our [Future Soldier's](#) bold

modernisation agenda.

Raised in Northumberland, Lieutenant General Sharon Nesmith commissioned into the Royal Corps of Signals in 1992, spending the majority of her early years serving in Germany, the Balkans and Iraq. Whilst in command she has been responsible for providing information and communication services, command support and capability development, in support of formation headquarters up to and including the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps and the UK Joint Force Headquarters. Higher command appointments were the 1st (United Kingdom) Signal Brigade and General Officer Commander the Army Recruiting and Initial Training Command.

Staff appointments have been focussed on capability development, resource planning and personnel. She has completed the Higher Command and Staff Course and is a graduate of the Major Projects Leadership Academy. She has served as Colonel Capability Plans in the Army Headquarters, the Head of Manning as a Brigadier, and the Director of Personnel as a Major General. She has also been the Senior Responsible Officer for the Armed Forces Recruiting Programme. She became the Deputy Chief of the General Staff in August 2022.

General Nesmith is the Master of Signals, a Colonel Commandant for the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, and a Vice President for Army Football and Army Rugby.

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[New National Trail status awarded for popular Coast to Coast route](#)

The Coast to Coast route stretching from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hoods Bay in the North York Moors National Park will become a new National Trail, it was [announced today](#) (Friday 12 August).

Natural England will work alongside partners to improve the popular route, with £5.6 million committed to upgrade the 197-mile path. This includes funding set aside to develop a community engagement programme, and maximise economic and health benefits for local people and businesses.

Today's announcement, which delivers on a Government commitment to develop the route, will also ensure long-term support for the National Trail.

There are significant benefits to the Coast to Coast becoming a part of the internationally recognised National Trails family, including meeting the [National Trail Quality Standards](#) with investment to ensure:

- The path is made more accessible for people of different abilities. This could include measures to remove stiles and using accessible gates where possible
- High quality signage, waymarking, path surfaces and infrastructure are provided consistently across the whole route
- Circular paths and link routes are developed to make the trail more accessible for those interested in taking shorter walks
- The route is well promoted including being featured on the Visit Britain and National Trail's website to create new opportunities for international and domestic tourism
- Work with local businesses to ensure they are aware of the potential economic opportunities of the route
- A long term commitment to funding to help the local authorities maintain the path

Natural England will work alongside the Lake District, North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks as well as Cumbria and North Yorkshire County Councils to improve the path. Enhancements will be undertaken over three years with the upgraded path expected to open in 2025. It is intended that the new National Trail will closely follow the existing route.

Lord Benyon, Minister for Rural Affairs, said:

The Coast to Coast route passes through some of our most spectacular countryside, villages and natural habitats so I'm delighted to approve these plans and deliver on our manifesto commitment to develop the route into a new National Trail.

With over £5 million of new funding to upgrade the path, local business and communities will be able to secure real benefits from the sustainable tourism this route offers. I look forward to seeing the route go from strength to strength and leave a lasting legacy across the North of England.

Marian Spain, Chief Executive of Natural England, said:

The way we will now develop the Coast to Coast into a National Trail is a turning point for national trail development as it will be the first national trail where delivery of the social and economic benefits for users and communities will be built in from the start.

Once established the Coast to Coast National Trail will allow many different types of users, with a range of abilities and backgrounds, to connect with nature on this iconic walking route whilst also bringing the benefits of tourism and other business to

communities along the trail.

Those who live nearby but may not currently access the countryside on their doorsteps will also have the chance to use the Trail for local and longer circular walks. Natural England looks forward to working hard with our partners to make this vision a reality within the next 3 years.

With seven towns within 5 km of the route: Cleator Moor, Egremont, Kirkby Stephen, Northallerton, Richmond, Whitby and Whitehaven, as well as seaside fishing villages, investment in the path will promote levelling up through improved health, wellbeing and public access opportunities for local communities close by.

A programme of work to boost the economic and social benefits for local areas will help ensure local businesses are aware of new opportunities from further developing tour guiding services, to improved accommodation and hospitality.

Natural England will also work with local communities and local authorities boost access to nature for all abilities. This will include working with disabled user groups and developing circular paths: to make more of the route accessible for shorter day or part-day circular walks/ rides, these could start in towns and villages or car parks, shops or pubs.

Julia Bradbury said:

I'm so pleased that this well-trodden route is to become an official national trail.

Having walked the walk (and talked the talk!), and promoted its virtues on TV and in print, I know exactly why it is one of the great Alfred Wainwright's most popular routes. Taking in the magical Lake District, to the heights of the peaks and the rolling landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales and Moors – it is just stunning.

Through our website – The Outdoor Guide – we are passionate about encouraging more people to explore our countryside, connecting body with mind and feeling the benefits of nature. I hope that this improved path and more local routes will inspire everyone to get walking and enjoy it in all its glory!

Eric Robson OBE DL, Chairman, The Wainwright Society:

The designation of Wainwright's Coast to Coast Walk as a National

Trail has long been one of the Society's ambitions. The Walk is one of the country's most popular long-distance routes, and helps support businesses and jobs from St Bees to Robin Hood's Bay, including in some of the north's most sparsely populated rural communities. We very much welcome, therefore, the news that the route will become a new National Trail. This is the start, of course, of bringing the project to successful fruition. But this is a very exciting and important step and we look forward to working with partners along the route to establish the C2C Walk as one of the UK's great National Trails. As Alfred Wainwright said of the walk he devised: "Surely there cannot be a finer itinerary for a long-distance walk!"

The upgrade to National Trail status will see the route recorded on Ordnance Survey maps in its entirety for the first time. The route was first devised by Alfred Wainwright, a renowned fell walker and author, with his guidebook to the route published in 1973. The route immediately gained a strong following, becoming one of the UK's most popular long-distance walks.

Today, the long-distance route noted by Wainwright for its scenic beauty passes through the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors crossing through three National Parks and the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The path remains popular with walkers and international tourists and is currently walked in its entirety by around 6,000 people every year, generating approximately £7 million for the local economy, despite its unofficial status.

On the Coast to Coast path walkers can traverse through high fells, heather moorland and heath. The route also encompasses some of England's richest history – from iron age hillforts to medieval castles and the village of Ingleby Cross, which is thought to date back to the 10th century.

Natural England has worked closely with the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Park authorities and Cumbria and North Yorkshire County Councils to develop proposals and secure approval for the National Trail.

Natural England and partners will begin to engage with local communities as work begins on the path. It is estimated that work will be completed by 2025.

Natural England proposed the trail under section 51 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and approval is made on behalf of the Environment Secretary under section 52 of the Act.

While 85% of the existing route is a public right of way or on land with existing legal access rights there are some locations where changes to the existing rights of way or new paths are needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the trail. Natural England will now begin to discuss [the proposals](#) to create:

- 9.7 miles of new public footpath

- 9 miles of new public bridleway
 - 5 miles of realignment of existing rights of way
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Calling on Russia to return full control of Ukraine's nuclear facilities to their rightful sovereign owner: UK statement to UN Security Council

Thank you President, and thank you to Director-General Grossi for briefing us once again on the situation in Ukraine.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the ongoing impacts of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and, in the context of today's meeting, its effects on nuclear safety.

The Council discussed Russia's reckless actions at the Ukrainian nuclear facilities, including the Chernobyl nuclear site and the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant at the start of the invasion.

On 3 March, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution calling for Russia to cease all actions against and at all nuclear facilities in Ukraine, so that the competent Ukrainian authorities could regain full control and ensure their safe and secure operation, and the IAEA could resume their important safeguards verification activities.

Now, over five months later, Russia's control of the Zaporizhzhia Plant continues. The competent Ukrainian authorities and IAEA inspectors are still prevented from properly carrying out their essential duties.

As IAEA Director General Grossi has said, Russia's actions have violated almost all of his seven pillars of nuclear safety and security. Russia's actions are contrary to the principles of the Convention of Nuclear Safety and other international nuclear safety conventions, and put at jeopardy the safety of millions who would be affected by a nuclear incident in Ukraine.

In light of this, and despite Russia's continued lies and obfuscation in this chamber about its brutal and irresponsible assault on Ukraine, we should be clear. It is Russia's continued invasion and military presence that is putting the plant at risk and thereby endangering the local population, the wider region and the entire international community.

President,

We welcome Director General Grossi's efforts to strengthen nuclear safety and security in Ukraine in challenging circumstances, and the tireless, heroic efforts of the Ukrainian nuclear facilities staff, despite the immense pressure they are under.

We reiterate our call for IAEA inspectors to be permitted access to all nuclear facilities in Ukraine to address nuclear safety, security and safeguard concerns, in a manner that respects Ukraine's sovereignty over its territory and infrastructure.

In this regard, we note with appreciation Foreign Minister Kuleba's letter to Mr Grossi and the Secretary-General on this issue.

And we once again call on Russia immediately to withdraw its forces from Ukraine, and return full control of all Ukraine's nuclear facilities to their rightful sovereign owner to ensure their safe and secure operation.

Willingness to collaborate and bridge differences for the greater good underpins Security Council negotiations

The United Kingdom remains open to discussions on improving penholding. We welcome these discussions being taken forward shortly within the Informal Working Group on documentation and other procedural matters.

Colleagues, the penholding convention we know today is still relatively new. As mandated missions grew and files became more complex, the current approach evolved to provide efficiency, continuity and predictability.

This flexible and informal approach means that anyone can penhold and there are different ways of doing it. Indeed we have seen many valuable products initiated by elected members, particularly during their presidencies – such as on peacekeeping, WPS, climate security and protection of civilians.

We have also been open to co-penholding to enhance the process and have done so recently with Germany on Sudan and Libya sanctions and with Gabon on UNOCA.

The UK's approach to penholding reflects a deep sense of responsibility for the Council's role of addressing conflict and human suffering through proactive and practical action, and its mandate to address threats to international peace and security.

We strive to balance differing views. To reach consensus the UK has to go against our own national position. For example the fourth 3 month extension of the UNSMIL mandate last month; and the technical rollover of UNITAMS/Sudan mandate in June. The last time a UK-drafted resolution did not reach nine positive votes was in 1976.

Colleagues, the objective of improving working methods is surely for improving better outcomes, including Council products.

What underpins penholding it is what underpins all Council negotiations: the willingness of all of us to collaborate, listen and bridge national positions for the greater good.

But there is another approach pursued by the Russian Federation. Not engaging in negotiations, then tabling alternative texts for a vote, without taking into account the views of most Council members, is not consistent with this spirit of collaboration. Such showdowns are not best practice.

We note that the Russian Federation has initiated texts themselves, on Libya, WPS and on the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. These were not successful because they refused to take account of other views to reach consensus.

Colleagues, Note 507 – agreed recently in 2017 – sets out helpful guidance for enhancing ‘the full participation of Council members in the preparation of Council documents’.

The UK strives to take a professional, transparent, consensus-based, collaborative approach to enable all stakeholders time to articulate their views. Consulting the host government and the region early is critical for us. For example, the two technical rollovers of AMISOM in 2021 and 2022 ensured African partners and the African Union were ready to engage on a substantive reconfiguration of the mission.

We welcome further suggestions for how the process can be improved further and look forward to constructive discussions in the IWG.

Finally colleagues, it needs no reminding that Russia has convened this discussion today on working methods while their invasion of Ukraine – now six months in – remains in flagrant breach of the UN Charter – the very foundation that underpins everything the Council does and how it functions.

UK and allies agree expanded International Fund for Ukraine support

At the Copenhagen Conference today, the UK and a coalition of key allies and

partners have agreed to expand the International Fund for Ukraine (IFU) to finance military training and equipment for Ukraine to help the country free itself from Russia's invasion.

Britain will put £250 million of [the recently announced £1 billion](#) into the IFU, a flexible low-bureaucracy fund, which will be used to provide military equipment and other support to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). The fund will ensure a steady flow of money not just for the provision of vital new weapons, but the essential maintenance and repair of existing kit, and training to maximise the Armed Forces of Ukraine's effectiveness on the battlefield.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace met counterparts from fellow co-hosts Denmark and Ukraine in Copenhagen, along with representatives from other partner nations, to put together a plan for long-term military support for Ukraine.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

This conference sends a clear message to Russia. We will not tire and we will stand by Ukraine today, tomorrow and in the months to come.

The UK and partner nations have agreed to provide long-term military funding, ensuring a steady flow of finance to provide vital military equipment, essential maintenance of existing kit and maximising our UK-led international training programme for Ukraine's Armed Forces.

The allies also discussed how to evolve their support for the training of Ukrainian military personnel, including offers for expanding and coordinating the international training scheme begun by the UK.

Britain has so far trained more than 2,300 Ukrainian personnel in the UK under a training programme announced in June. Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Germany and Latvia have announced they will be joining the initiative, after the Netherlands previously announced its intention to support the scheme.

It comes after the UK [announced it would send additional multiple launch rocket system \(MLRS\) launchers](#), along with a significant number of precision guided rockets to help Ukraine defend itself against Russia's indiscriminate use of artillery.