

[Press release: Appointment of Lord-Lieutenant of Ross and Cromarty: 29 May 2019](#)

The Queen is pleased to appoint Mrs Joanie Aileen Whiteford as Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Ross and Cromarty to succeed Mrs Janet Bowen, CVO who is due to retire on 12 July 2019.

Biographical Notes

Joanie was educated at Berwick-upon-Tweed Grammar School, studied Home Economics at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen and subsequently completed a Post Graduate Teaching diploma at The Moray House School of Education, Edinburgh. She is currently a self-employed computer trainer for Farmplan Computers and also produces management accounts for a number of clients. She previously worked in Ernst & Young's Business Advisory Department and also delivered Business Development courses for the Agricultural Training Board throughout Wester Ross, Lochaber, Orkney and Shetland. She has held numerous voluntary posts and is currently a Vestry member and treasurer of St Andrews Episcopal Church in Tain. She is treasurer of Tain Tennis Club, and is involved in junior tennis coaching. She has also been a committee member of Nigg & Shandwick Friendship and a member of Hilton and Cadboll School Board. With a keen interest in sports and the natural environment, Joanie particularly enjoys tennis, golf, cycling and skiing, gardening, walking her dogs, hill walking, farming and cooking. She is aged 59, married to David and has three adult children.

[News story: Appointment of 2 new Non-Executive Directors to the Companies House Board](#)

This appointments took effect from 17 May 2019 and last for 3 years.

Companies House is the UK's registrar of companies and is an executive agency and trading fund of government. It falls under the remit of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Martin Spencer

Martin Spencer has a background in economics, technology consulting and business transformation. Martin is currently Senior Vice President at NTT

DATA, a global IT services business that delivers some of the world's largest digital infrastructure and transformation projects. Previously Martin has held UK and European leadership roles with Capgemini and KMPG Consulting. Martin was also a Director at Detica, the international business and technology consulting firm specialising in data analytics and information intelligence.

Martin is a Non-Executive Director at the Education and Skills Funding Agency, the NHS Counter Fraud Authority and the Serious Fraud Office.

Mike Fishwick

Mike Fishwick has a background in technology and digital. He is currently Chief Technology Officer at the Intellectual Property Office (IPO). Mike joined the IPO in September 2015, having spent the vast majority of his career in the private sector. Previously, he was the Chief Information Officer at Fat Face, the UK clothing retailer and prior to Fat Face, Mike founded and led a big data monetisation business for Telefonica digital – the digital services division of the global telecoms giant – and he gained significant corporate change management experience while at Yellow Pages where he held numerous roles including that of Chief Data Officer.

[Speech: Preventing the targeting of civilians in Syria](#)



Statement and right of reply by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on Syria.

Thanks very much, Mr President. Thank you to the Assistant Secretary-General for her briefing.

Like others, Mr President we continue to be extremely concerned by the Syrian offensive in Northwest Syria. And I want to put on record how much we welcome Turkey's ongoing efforts to reinstate the ceasefire, de-escalate the violence and set up a working group on Idlib.

As the French representative said: 3 million lives are at risk and we don't want to see another Aleppo. One of the things that has worried us, Mr President, is that there was a declaration of a unilateral ceasefire by the pro-regime forces, but violence went on to increase the very next day and has increased further in recent days. So I join others, Mr President, in calling for the ceasefire to be respected; in calling on all parties to adhere to the Sochi ceasefire; to respect international law; and protect civilians and aid workers. And the international community won't let up on the pressure until these stipulations are met.

There's one report in the press this morning, Mr President, that doctors at a maternity hospital in Al Atareb in Aleppo, in the countryside around Aleppo, are reporting multiple attacks in the area and have started to evacuate the hospital. I wonder if OCHA could say whether they know this report to be correct or not and if the hospital's location has been included in the de-confliction mechanism.

One of the things we discussed last time, Mr President was that de-confliction mechanism. It's inexcusable that hospitals, schools and other infrastructure have been attacked despite OCHA's de-confliction mechanism. And I want to join other colleagues in calling on all parties to distinguish between civilians and civilian infrastructure and military targets.

In that connection, Mr President, I want to be clear that we condemn breaches of the ceasefire by the terrorist group HTS. All combatants in a conflict – non-state actors or state actors – are bound by IHL, so there's no excuse at all for these attacks on hospitals and other civilian targets. But I think it's very important that we stress that the fight against terrorists isn't carte blanche to conduct any attacks indiscriminately and it doesn't take place in a civilian free zone. So I join others again in calling for the principles of distinction, proportionality and necessity.

The other thing that has deeply concerned us, Mr President has been the reports of journalists in Idlib being targeted last week. The latest was a Sky News crew on 23rd of May. And I recall that in February a US District Court found the Syrian authorities responsible for killing Sunday Times' journalist Marie Colvin in 2012. So again, Mr President, here is another group of people that urgently requires the interest and protection of this Security Council.

I want to just say a word, if I may, about humanitarian access in Rukban and in Al-Hol. In Al-Hol we need to see UN access. We're very concerned also at the deteriorating situation in Rukban. The humanitarian conditions are dire and are a direct result of humanitarian access having been blocked. And as the US representative said, this means residents are forced to leave or face continued peril inside that camp. A third aid convoy must be allowed to reach the camp via the UN in Damascus. This is now becoming desperate.

Mr President, we asked on the last occasion – I did and a number of other colleagues did – we asked some questions of the Syrian authorities. We didn't get any answers. So I don't want to repeat those questions. I want to make it a bit easier. I'd like to ask today for four commitments from the Syrian representative on behalf of his Government:

Number one, Mr President is a commitment not to target journalists. Number two is a commitment to abide by IHL. Number three is a commitment to abide by UNSCRs on protection of civilians. And number four is a commitment to let in the third UN convoy into the camp in Rukban, as a number of us have called for. These commitments aren't difficult to give, Mr President. I think any government that truly had the safety and interests of its citizens at heart would be able to give them.

Finally, I'd like to close by echoing what the French representative said about the peace process. It goes much wider than just the Constitutional Committee. There cannot be any reconstruction assistance from our side until there is a sustainable and reversible political process. And I wanted also to end by repeating what the French and US representatives said about chemical weapons; we are ready to respond robustly if needed. And on the issue of have there been chemical attacks or not, the OPCW, Mr President, have fact-finding

missions that can go in and ascertain the answer to that important question.

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr President. Sorry for taking the floor again. I'll be brief. But I've been quite alarmed by what we've just heard in the last closing interventions. So I'd like to be very clear about a number of things.

First of all, I'd like the record to show that I didn't get the commitments that I was seeking. I want to be very clear that the Sky News crew is not a legitimate target. Targeting journalists is not permissible. And I call again on the Syrian representative to pass that message back to his government and give us a commitment that they won't be targeted, unlike the late Marie Colvin.

The second thing I wanted to do, Mr President, was repudiate the slander against the White Helmets. I've said many times in this chamber that they're a humanitarian organisation doing good work to help the suffering civilians in Syria.

The third thing I wanted to do was to say that OCHA does not do the UK and US bidding in the manner in which the Syrian representative implied. OCHA, like all the UN, is impartial; it does the best job it can in terrible circumstances for the people of Syria. And it would be better if the Syrian authorities supported OCHA in that work rather than attack them.

And the last thing I wanted to say, Mr President was that there are more babies in Idlib than there are HTS fighters. Rather than talk about responding to HTS provocations, no one is taking issue with the question of whether to respond to HTS provocations. The question, Mr President is how they get responded to. How do Russia and the Syrian regime respond to HTS? They say they want to protect the 3 million civilians in Idlib, but massive aerial bombardment of civilian areas, bombing of hospitals, schools and civilian infrastructure is not necessary and it's certainly not proportionate. That's the absolutely critical thing about IHL. There needs to be a distinction between civilian and military targets and there needs to be proportionality. And that's what we're not seeing, Mr President. And that's why the Council is so worried about this.

Thank you.

[News story: Greg Clark visits Scunthorpe, Skinningrove and Teeside](#)

to meet British Steel staff



Greg Clark last week visited British Steel sites in Scunthorpe and Skinningrove, and on Teesside, to meet staff, trade unions, suppliers and customers.

The Business Secretary made clear his continued commitment to leaving no stone unturned to securing British Steel's future, and repeated his pledge to work alongside the Official Receiver, special managers and a support group of unions, managers, suppliers, customers and the local community in doing so.

In Scunthorpe, Mr Clark met with British Steel management and trade unions, representatives from the supply chain and local council leaders. He also visited the rod mill and took questions from workers on the site as part of a tour of the plant.

He was joined on the visit by Business Minister Andrew Stephenson, the Official Receiver and Sarah Albon, Chief Executive at the Insolvency Service.

He then visited British Steel's sites at Skinningrove and Teesside, meeting those managing and working at the sites and meeting customers and representatives of Unite the Union and the Community Union

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

Having worked intensively with British Steel over the last 2 months, I was determined to meet with management as well as staff, and answer their questions as soon as possible.

This is clearly a worrying time for everyone there, but whether in Scunthorpe, Skinningrove or on Teesside the highly-skilled and talented workers are united in their passion and commitment to keeping steel-making excellence going at British Steel.

We will leave no stone unturned, and I remain committed to continuing to work intensively with those involved directly with the company, those in its supply chain and the wider communities to secure the future of these important sites.

[Press release: South West Water fined after repeat sewage spill at Devon beach](#)

More should have been done by South West Water to prevent history repeating itself when raw sewage spilled onto a popular beach, a court ruled.

Ordering the water firm to pay more than £60,000, a district judge said South West Water did not heed the Environment Agency's warnings and guidance after a similar incident in 2012.

Sewage spilled from a manhole on South Sands Beach on 13 April 2017 – Easter Bank Holiday. A sand dam had been built around the manhole by children playing nearby.

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency said:

Water companies must carry out regular inspections and maintenance of their sewerage infrastructure and respond urgently to leaks, especially at beaches.

On this occasion raw sewage leaked directly onto one of Devon's most popular beaches over a busy Bank Holiday. There was a very real risk of sewage harming children nearby and contaminating the bathing water.

The Environment Agency tests water quality at every official bathing water to ensure it is maintained and improved and we are committed to working with water companies, councils and local communities to keep our beaches clean, reduce pollution and protect the environment.

The court heard the manhole and sewer pipes at South Sands are covered at high tide. This makes access and maintenance difficult. The blockage was blamed on sand entering the sewer network from homes, possibly from washing down wetsuits and beachwear. Sand was also the cause of an 8-day blockage in August 2012.

Lacking the correct equipment, a South West Water technician called in a specialist firm to flush out the blockage. However, when the specialist arrived high tide was imminent and the work was delayed until the next morning. The manhole seeped a liquid which contained 'extremely high' levels of e-coli bacteria for about 32 hours.

South Hams District Council decided warning signs were not needed. But

District Judge Jo Matson said that South West Water could have done more to deter people from the area than just putting up cones and tape.

The water company took samples of seawater at South Sands on 13 April and claimed there was no environmental impact to the beach or bathing water. However, the samples were taken when the tide was out, nowhere near the manhole, and so not conclusive.

South West Water has since replaced seals and covers on a number of manholes in the area. But the manhole where sewage seeped onto the beach was not sealed until a year later in April 2018. The court questioned why the manhole had not been sealed after the first incident in 2012.

Appearing before Exeter magistrates, South West Water was fined £44,000 and ordered to pay £18,883.06 costs and £170 victim surcharge after pleading guilty, at an earlier hearing, to causing a water discharge activity, namely the discharge of poisonous, noxious or polluting matter, namely untreated sewage to coastal waters contrary to Regulations 12 (1), 38 (1) (a) and 39 (1) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.