

# Press release: Secretary of State for Northern Ireland statement on political talks

The sickening attack that led to the death of Lyra McKee has deeply shocked everyone across the world.

Lyra was a brilliant, talented journalist. She was a role model to many who always fought to make Northern Ireland a better place.

Since Lyra's death communities across Northern Ireland and the political spectrum have come together – united in condemnation at this murderous act – and they have delivered a clear message:

The people responsible for this act of terrorism have absolutely nothing to offer Northern Ireland and have no place in society.

Due to the hard work, resilience and commitment of the people of Northern Ireland, along with those we entrust to uphold the rule of law, the security situation is transformed.

But there remain small numbers of dissident republicans who remain intent on killing.

Our challenge is to ensure that we continue to work for peace for the whole community. Northern Ireland today is a dynamic, modern, outward looking place and it is open to everyone regardless of their community background, political aspirations, race, gender or sexuality.

Lyra symbolised the new Northern Ireland and her tragic death cannot be in vain.

All of us must take inspiration from what Lyra achieved in her life and work even harder to make Northern Ireland a brighter, more peaceful and prosperous place for everyone.

As Secretary of State, my absolute determination is to see the restoration of all the political institutions established by the 1998 Agreement.

That Agreement has formed the bedrock of peace and progress here since it was reached just over 21 years ago. It must be upheld and it must be defended from those who would seek to undermine it.

Northern Ireland needs its political leaders to stand together and work with each other in the spirit of unity and togetherness – now more than ever.

That is why, the PM and Taoiseach, in their statement earlier today, called formal political talks to restore the Executive, commencing on the 7 May.

The talks will take place in full accordance with the well-established three stranded approach to which we remain committed. There will also be a meeting of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC) on the 8 May.

Both our teams will be working with the parties on an intensive period of preparation to get ready for those talks.

The Tanaiste and I will do everything in our power to make those talks a success, but we need Northern Ireland's political leaders to do everything they can to ensure we emerge with an agreement, restore the Executive, and build a better future for the people of Northern Ireland.

Over 21 years ago Northern Ireland's political leaders reached the Belfast Agreement, and showed how coming together for the benefit of the whole community can achieve truly ground-breaking and remarkable things.

These talks offer us a chance to move forward, restore the political institutions and deliver for the people of Northern Ireland.

I am determined to ensure we use this opportunity to succeed in doing just that. We have a narrow window in which genuine progress can be made and we must act now.

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## **Press release: Selly Park North flood alleviation scheme ready and operational**

Work on a multi-million pound scheme to reduce the flood risk to over 150 homes and businesses in Selly Park North is ready to protect people from flooding.

The scheme, funded by an innovative public-private partnership with a £2 million financial contribution from Calthorpe Estates, protects 150 homes and helps to protect key highway routes and infrastructure during times of flood, maintaining vital transport and emergency routes in an area that was affected by flooding in 2008, 2016 and more recently in May 2018.

The work involved deepening and widening an existing flood water storage area near the Bourn Brook Walkway on Harborne Lane. This has increased the capacity of the storage area and offers wildlife habitat.

The major part of the works is a 2.4 metre diameter 227 metre long bypass culvert running underneath the Pershore Road. This tunnel will take water away from homes to safely flow into the river downstream.

This scheme is part of the Environment Agency's programme to invest £2.6 billion by 2021 protecting over 300,000 homes and businesses from the risk of flooding.

Jon Saner, from the Environment Agency, said:

We've worked closely with the local community and partners to help deliver this scheme, which will help protect homes and businesses from future flooding.

This community has experienced the terrible effects of flooding and the measures we've built here reduce future risk. We would like to thank local people for their patience and support throughout the building of this scheme.

This scheme was delivered by contractors commissioned by the Environment Agency, and compliments the scheme completed in January 2018 for Selly Park South. Together these schemes work to protect over 350 homes and business in the heart of Birmingham.

The area of Selly Park has a history of flooding from the River Rea, the Bourn Brook and surface water. The Environment Agency has been working in partnership with Birmingham City Council, Calthorpe Estates and other organisations to develop schemes to help reduce the risk of flooding for properties in the Selly Park area.

Along with flood defences, knowing your flood risk is also important when protecting your family and property from flooding. People can [check their risk](#) and [register to receive free flood warnings](#) online or call the Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

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## [News story: Can you help trace the family of a missing World War 2 soldier?](#)

A British soldier was killed in action in October 1944 and for just over 70 years he lay where he fell until his remains were uncovered in 2015. Several years' worth of research has produced a short list of potential candidates that may help uncover the identity of this brave man.

The MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) is searching for male family members of 2 of the potential candidates who were from Manchester. DNA samples have been taken from the remains and JCCC want to try

and confirm the identity by comparing this sample with a member of each of the families of the 2 potential candidates.

Both soldiers served with the 2nd Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers and were killed during the Allied Gothic Line Offensive in Italy on 23 October 1944, during the battle to capture Monte Spaduro.

The 2nd Bn Lancashire Fusiliers in Italy during 1944, Crown copyright, All rights reserved

### **Fusilier Joseph Frank Faulkner**

Joseph Frank Faulkner was the son of Joseph Faulkner and Mary Isabel Plant. He was born in October 1921 in Dartington, Cheshire. His last known address was Worthington Avenue, Partington in Trafford. Joseph had 5 brothers: Kenneth, George, Cyril, Harry and Jack and 1 sister, Mary. JCCC's initial family research suggests that some of the descendants from these siblings could still be living in the Manchester area.

### **Fusilier Walter Vickers**

Walter Vickers was the son of Walter Vickers and Maggie Straker. He was born in April 1921 in Rusholme, Manchester. His last known address was listed as Boynton Road, Rusholme. We believe from our initial research that Walter had 3 brothers and 3 sisters: Bernard, James, Geoffrey, Nita, Lorna and Elva. Once again, the JCCC believe that the descendants of these siblings could still be living in the Manchester area.

Artefacts found with the remains, Crown copyright, All rights reserved

Now an appeal has been launched by the MOD's JCCC to track down either of these men's surviving male relatives so that they can be invited to undertake a DNA test to prove whether the remains are theirs. If positive identifications can be made, they will be given a full military burial in Italy with a named headstone.

Artefacts found with the remains, Crown copyright, All rights reserved

Nicola Nash from the JCCC said:

I am really hoping that family members of these 2 brave men will see this appeal and agree to help us. If anyone thinks they may have some information, then please get in contact so that we can try and identify this soldier that has been found.

If you can help, please call Nicola on 01452 712612 ext. 6063 (office hours) / 07773 187075 or email her via [Nicola.nash101@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Nicola.nash101@mod.gov.uk).

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# Press release: Statement by PM Theresa May and Taoiseach Leo Varadkar: 26 April 2019

In coming together with other political leaders in St Anne's Cathedral to pay tribute to Lyra McKee, we gave expression to the clear will and determination of all of the people of these islands to reject violence and to support peace and a better future for everyone in Northern Ireland.

We also heard the unmistakable message to all political leaders that people across Northern Ireland want to see a new momentum for political progress. We agree that what is now needed is actions and not just words from all of us who are in positions of leadership.

We have agreed to establish a new process of political talks, involving all the main political parties in Northern Ireland, together with the UK and Irish Governments, in accordance with the three stranded process. The aim of these talks is quickly to re-establish to full operation the democratic institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement – the NI Executive, Assembly and North-South Ministerial Council – so that they can effectively serve all of the people for the future.

We have asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Tánaiste to meet later today in Belfast to set out our proposed approach and to commence the talks process as soon as possible after the local elections in Northern Ireland.

In addition, we have agreed that there should be a meeting of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference during the same period. The Conference will consider East/West relations, security cooperation, and political stability in Northern Ireland.

We understand the complexity of the underlying concerns of all parties, and the need for renewed trust, mutual respect, generosity and new thinking to resolve the issues.

As Prime Minister and Taoiseach, we are determined to work together to ensure this process comes to a successful conclusion.

We will review progress at the end of May.

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# Press release: Arts Minister Michael Ellis steps in to save the Bacon

- Arts Minister Michael Ellis placed a temporary export bar on the works to save them for the nation
- One of the works is the earliest surviving Bacon painting in existence

Arts Minister Michael Ellis has placed temporary export bars on four works by Francis Bacon worth a combined total of more than £3 million in a bid to keep them in the country.

Francis Bacon (1909 – 1992) was one of the most important British artists of the 20th century. Born in Dublin, Ireland, to British parents, Bacon did not take up painting until he was in his 20s but went on to become a world renowned artist, ranking alongside Turner and Constable in importance. The four items under an export bar include a painted screen valued at £2.5 million. It was Bacon's first work in triptych, in which a picture or relief is carved on three panels, attached together and usually presented as an altarpiece.

Completed at the beginning of Bacon's career around 1930, the screen is thought to be his earliest surviving large-scale work and his earliest surviving figure painting. It showcases many of the elements and motifs that Bacon would return to throughout his career.

The other items placed under an export bar are three rugs that were sold separately at auction. The rugs are considered among the finest modernist carpets in existence and of great importance to British art and design. They are rare survivals of a very limited production of a group of rug designs by Bacon.

Valued at £186,000, £166,000 and £146,000 respectively, they were hand-knotted at the Royal Wilton Carpet Factory as part of their Wessex range in 1929. The rugs show Bacon working in a mode similar to his paintings and were displayed hanging on the wall, to be enjoyed as works of art in their own right.

Arts Minister Michael Ellis said:

Francis Bacon is one of our most respected and renowned artists, whose works had a huge influence on modern art.

It is right that we try to keep these outstanding works in this country, where they could inspire our next generation of world-class artists.

The [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest](#) (RCEWA) made its recommendation on the grounds of the painted screen and the three rugs' outstanding aesthetic importance and their value to the study of the works of Francis Bacon, one of the greatest artists of the 20th century.

Committee Member Richard Calvocoressi said:

Given how much of his work Bacon destroyed, it is crucial that we try to retain these rare early examples in this country. Bacon's first short career as an interior designer, principally of modernist furniture and rugs, informed so much of his later painting – not least his feeling for space and structure.

The decision on the export licence applications for the three rugs and the painted screen will be deferred until 25 July 2019. This may be extended if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase the items is made at the recommended price for each item.

You can download images of the items from the [DCMS Flickr page](#).

## Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the items should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200. □
2. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria. □
3. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk).

## Details of the painted screen are as follows: □

Case 28: £2,501,572.50 Francis Bacon 1909-1992 Painted Screen, c.1930 Oil on plywood with metal hinges, each panel 183 x 61 x 2.8cm; overall: 183 x 183 x 2.8cm

Provenance: Eric Allden, London. Roy de Maistre, London (until 1968) Francis Elek, London. Thence by descent to the present owner.

The export bar may be extended until 25 November 2019 if a serious intention

to raise funds to purchase the screen is made at the recommended price.

**Details of the rugs are as follows:**

Provenance for all three rugs:

Eric Allden, London Francis Elek, London (acquired from the above late 1940s)  
Thence by descent to the present owner.

Case 30: £146,742.90 Hand-knotted rug in wool with linen weft, designed by Francis Bacon, produced by Royal Wilton carpets as part of their 'Wessex' range, 1929- 1930. Measurements: 212.5 h x 128 w cm. Approx. 7'h x 4' w

Case 31: £186,642.90 Hand-knotted rug in wool with linen weft, designed by Francis Bacon, produced by Royal Wilton carpets as part of their 'Wessex' range, 1929- 1930. Measurements: 212.5 h x 124.70 w cm. Approx. 7' h x 4' w

Case 32: £166,842.90 + VAT of £6,500 Hand-knotted rug in wool with linen weft, designed by Francis Bacon, produced by Royal Wilton carpets as part of their 'Wessex' range, 1929- 1930. Measurements: 206 h x 127 w cm. Approx. 7' h x 4' w

The export bar may be extended until 25 October 2019 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase the items is made at the recommended price.