

# Press release: Oral statement on the death of Lyra McKee

Mr Speaker, with permission it is with great sadness that I wish to make a statement to the House today on the appalling murder of Lyra McKee in Londonderry on Thursday evening.

That evening, PSNI carried out searches in two locations in the Creggan area of the city, believing that dissident republicans were storing firearms and explosives in preparation for attacks.

While the searches were being carried out a crowd gathered. Three vehicles were hijacked and set alight and the police came under attack, with up to 50 petrol bombs thrown at police lines. During the disorder a gunman fired a number of shots in the direction of police, wounding Lyra McKee.

Showing incredible bravery while still under attack, PSNI officers attended to Lyra as she was transported to hospital in a police vehicle.

Tragically neither those on the scene nor medical staff were able to save her... and she died from the injuries she sustained.

I want to thank once again the police, medical staff and other emergency services for their bravery and commitment.

On Saturday I had the privilege of thanking a number of them in person and to pay my respects to Lyra at the Guildhall with John Boyle, the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council.

As we signed the book of condolences he told me the touching anecdote that he was one of Lyra's first journalism tutors.

Mr Speaker, this is first and foremost a personal tragedy for the family and friends of Lyra who fully expected her to come home. It is a truly shocking and heartbreaking situation for them and we can only imagine the devastating pain they must feel – something that they should never have had to endure.

I know the whole house will want to join me in extending our deepest sympathies to her partner, Sara, family, friends and colleagues.

Lyra was a brilliant, talented journalist, and a true loss to Northern Ireland.

She was a role model to many who always fought to make Northern Ireland a better place.

Nothing we can say today can take away the pain that Lyra's family must be experiencing now.

But what I can say to her family, the people of Derry and the whole of

Northern Ireland is that we will continue to strive for peace in Northern Ireland.

We are behind you and we are united in rejecting those who seek to undermine peace with terror. They have no place in our society. They must be dealt with under the law.

The people responsible for Thursday's sickening attack will never win.

This is also a tragedy for the community in Creggan and the city as a whole.

I am sure we have all been struck by the profound sense of anger at this sickening and callous attack.

This was a young woman with so much hope and so much to offer unlike those who have continually shown that they have nothing to offer. It remains the case across Northern Ireland that small numbers of dissident republican terrorists remain intent on killing.

But what we have seen in the days since Lyra McKee's death is that the communities that they claim to represent and seek to control don't want them.

They want peace, progress and prosperity ... and want no part of the sort of mindset that leads to the death of a young woman, simply doing her job.

To those responsible for this act of terrorism we say we have heard your excuses and your hollow apologies – no one buys it – this was no accident.

There is nothing that can justify this murderous act ... and you are being called out for what you really are.

Church and community leaders have united their voices in condemnation ... as have those across the political spectrum.

Those voices of peace are strong and united and louder than those who peddle hate and division in a city with so much to offer.

Strong and effective policing has reduced the number of national security attacks in Northern Ireland from 40 in 2010 to just 1 in the whole of 2018.

Yet despite this welcome reduction, vigilance in the face of this continuing threat remains essential. The current threat level in Northern Ireland from dissidents remains SEVERE ... meaning an attack is highly likely.

As the PSNI investigation into Lyra's murder continues, I would urge anyone with information to pass it to the police or anonymously to Crimestoppers, so that her killers can be brought to justice. The brave men and women of the PSNI and other security partners will always have the fullest possible support from this Government.

Mr Speaker, I have heard those in Northern Ireland calling for political leaders now to come together.

And I am sure the whole House will have welcomed the united display from leaders of the political parties in the Creggan estate on Friday.

The Belfast Agreement has formed the bedrock of peace since it was reached just over 21 years ago.

It must be upheld and must be defended from those who would seek to undermine it.

And I intend to hold discussions with party leaders later this week to see what progress can be made.

Our clear and overriding objective must be the restoration of all the political institutions established by the Belfast Agreement.

Northern Ireland's politicians need to take charge ... including in the vitally important area of tackling all forms of paramilitary activity. But Mr Speaker – today is not a day for party politics.

Lyra was a young, vibrant woman who symbolised the new Northern Ireland.

A modern, dynamic, outward looking place that is open to everyone regardless of their community background, political aspirations, race, gender or sexuality.

Yet last Thursday Lyra McKee was killed in the most tragic of circumstances.

It should not have happened ... and it cannot be in vain.

All of us must take inspiration from what Lyra achieved in her life ... in wanting to make Northern Ireland a brighter place for everyone.

Lyra once wrote of being part of the Good Friday Agreement Generation and the need to reap the spoils of peace.

Our lasting tribute to Lyra will be to ensure that we continue to work for peace for the whole of Northern Ireland.

Mr Speaker, I commend this statement to the House.

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## **Press release: PM call with President-elect of Ukraine: 23 April 2019**

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister spoke to the President-elect of Ukraine,

Volodymyr Zelenskiy, today to congratulate him on his success in the Presidential elections.

She assured President-elect Zelenskiy of the UK's support for his upcoming Presidency and Ukraine's democratic future, and our willingness to continue and increase our already deep partnership across a range of areas.

The Prime Minister reiterated support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and our desire to expand our already significant defence and security cooperation. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of our two countries working together alongside the international community to deter Russian aggression.

The Prime Minister invited President-elect Zelenskiy to visit the UK at the earliest opportunity and they agreed to remain in close touch.

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## **Press release: National Schools Commissioner appointed**

Dominic Herrington has today been confirmed as National Schools Commissioner by the Department for Education – after holding the position on an interim basis since September 2018.

Drawing on four years' experience as Regional Schools Commissioner for South London and South-East England, Dominic Herrington has spent recent months helping academy schools across the country to continue driving up standards – building on the recent milestone of more than 50 per cent of children in state-funded schools in England now studying in an academy or free school.

Herrington will now help to deliver operational changes to the work of Regional Schools Commissioners (RSC) in the coming months – to help schools, academy trusts and local authorities work with them by creating an even more joined-up team in each of the eight RSC regions.

National Schools Commissioner Dominic Herrington, said:

Over the last eight months I have thoroughly enjoyed working with

academy trusts. I am very much looking forward to continuing to work with the team of Regional School Commissioners – helping them to support and challenge school leaders to deliver the best possible education for children right across England.

Academies Minister Lord Agnew said:

Having worked with Dominic extensively over several years at the Department for Education, I am delighted by his appointment. He brings great energy and deep expertise to this important role.

More than 8,300 schools in the country have become an academy or opened as a free school since 2010 and hundreds of schools each year make the positive choice to become an academy.

Today's announcement will help schools and trusts across the county to build on the successes to date – with [figures published earlier this year](#) showing that standards are rising faster in many sponsored academies than in similar council-run schools.

The department is in the process of confirming a permanent replacement for the Regional School Commissioner for the South East England and South London Region.

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## **[News story: Faster publishing of air accident investigation reports](#)**

We are changing the way that we publish our [Field investigation reports](#).

Our routine Field investigation reports will now be published around 1000hrs on Thursdays throughout the month. Publishing throughout the month means that we can communicate the safety messages from our reports faster, removing the delay that was sometimes caused if reports were finalised just after the monthly bulletin had been produced.

We know that the monthly bulletin is a popular format for many of our readers. We will continue to publish it on the second Thursday of each month and its format will stay the same, with both Field and Correspondence investigations included. It will now be published around 1000hrs. Those receiving hard copies will continue to do so.

For those who subscribe to our reports alert service, we are aware that changes made by the Government Digital Service several months ago have resulted in multiple email notifications when our monthly bulletins are

published, with an alert for each investigation within the bulletin. We are working with the Government Digital Service to fix the problem.

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## [News story: Supply chain to play key role in decommissioning projects at Dounreay](#)

Construction of a size reduction facility, shaft and silo decommissioning and demolition of historic active laboratories are just some of the major projects expected to be delivered as part of a decommissioning services framework, potentially worth up to £400 million, which has been announced today.

Six framework contracts have been awarded, bringing together the capabilities of at least 28 companies and their supply chains, initially for up to 4 years with the possibility of extensions of up to an additional 3 years. It will take work at the site, delivered on behalf of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), into a new phase when historic wastes from the shaft, silo and low level waste pits are due to be retrieved, repackaged and consigned to modern waste facilities.

The companies, ranging from small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) within the local community to some of the industry's largest players, will now compete in 'mini competitions' for distinct packages of work that move the site towards its ultimate closure.

Stephen Adamson, Head of Commercial Services, said:

This agreement will deliver real and visible signs of progress towards achieving our mission. It is about forming long-term partnerships so that the successful companies can work alongside our own Dounreay staff, ensuring a first-class team combining the best site skills and experience with the wider industry knowledge and innovation that the supply chain can offer.

In addition to technical submissions, bidders were also required to consider how they will help create a positive legacy in Caithness and North Sutherland with a number of plans put forward including support for STEM and SME development schemes.

Once the UK's centre of fast reactor research, Dounreay is now aiming to be recognised globally for decommissioning excellence. The work is being delivered by DSRL, a company owned by Cavendish Dounreay Partnership, on

behalf of the NDA.

Organisations appointed to DSRL's decommissioning services framework:

**AECOM E&C UK**; MW Hargreaves; Kier Infrastructure and Overseas; Morson Projects; NIS; NSG Environmental; Squibb Group; Westinghouse Electrical Company UK

**Dounreay Decommissioning Framework (DDF) Alliance**; Cavendish Nuclear; BAM Nuttall; KDC Contractors; JGC Engineering and Technical Services

**Dounreay Wood Alliance (DWA)**; Wood; Aquila Nuclear Engineering; GD Energy Services; Orano Projects

**Jacobs UK**; Atkins

**Nuclear Decommissioning Ltd (NDL)**; James Fisher Nuclear; REACT Engineering; Shepley Engineers; WYG Engineering; JBV Demolition; RPS Consulting Services

**Nuvia**; Graham Construction; Oxford Technologies; Thompson of Prudhoe