

# Press release: New ambassadors to champion green action

Leading environmentalists have today (26 February) pledged to champion and promote the Year of Green Action.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove has welcomed UN Patron of the Oceans and endurance swimmer [Lewis Pugh](#), environmentalist David de Rothschild and TV presenter Jan Leeming, who will all help to educate and inspire the next generation of environmental leaders.

They are among the first ambassadors to join the Year of Green Action, a year-long drive to connect more people with the environment and raise awareness about the simple steps everyone can take – in their home, garden, workplace or school – to make a difference to the natural world.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

The natural world is our greatest asset and we all have a responsibility and role to play in protecting it for generations to come.

These new ambassadors have shown tremendous passion in their drive for environmental protection and have been tenacious in their desire to raise awareness, from swimming the length of the English Channel to sailing a recyclable boat made from reclaimed plastic bottles.

I am delighted to have them on board to champion the Year of Green Action and inspire change.

The Year of Green Action is a year-long initiative to get more people from all backgrounds involved in projects to improve the environment.

It provides a focal point for organisations, individuals, communities and businesses to learn more about their environmental impact, take action to reduce it, and spread the word on environmental issues.

The newly-announced ambassadors are:

- UN Patron of the Seas Lewis Pugh, an ocean advocate and endurance swimmer;
- Adventurer and environmentalist David de Rothschild, who sailed across the Pacific Ocean in 2009 on a entirely recyclable boat made using 12,500 reclaimed plastic bottles;
- TV presenter and newsreader Jan Leeming, a keen supporter of environmental issues, who has also spent time working on cheetah conservation projects in South Africa;

- Ethical lifestyle blogger [Besma Whayeb](#);
- Sian Conway, Green & Eco Influencer of the Year 2018;
- Explorer, entomologist, zoologist and broadcaster George McGavin;
- Professor Tim Jackson, [Director of the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity](#);
- Founded of [Earth Changers sustainable travel company](#) Vicky Smith;
- Blogger and social influencer Izzy McLeod; and
- Lucy Finlay MBE, Founder of [Social Enterprise Mark CIC](#).

UN Patron of the Oceans Lewis Pugh said:

I have been swimming for 32 years and over that period of time, I've seen our oceans change completely. That's why I am delighted to support the Year of Green Action and help share the importance of protecting our oceans and tackling plastic pollution.

We need urgent action. Our greatest hope is that there are 66 million people in the United Kingdom. Any problem, however colossal, becomes manageable when divided by 66 million. If we all play our part, we can fix this.

The Environment Secretary has also called on businesses up and down the country to pledge support for the Year of Green Action, with representatives from some of the UK's biggest businesses attending a parliamentary reception this evening.

The Year of Green Action is a leading pledge from the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, an ambitious blueprint to improve the environment within a generation.

Since its [launch in January](#), the government has outlined ambitious plans to overhaul the waste system and transform household recycling, pledged support for charity [Step Up to Serve's #iwillfornature campaign](#), and set out plans to protect some of the country's rarest and most threatened fungi.

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## [News story: Kathryn Cearns OBE appointed as new Chair of the Office of Tax Simplification](#)

Kathryn will chair the OTS board and will lead the OTS as it shapes its strategy and priorities. Kathryn will direct engagement with HM Treasury, HMRC, ministers and Parliament.

Alongside the Tax Director, Bill Dodwell, she will provide independent advice to the Chancellor on simplifying the UK tax system for both businesses and individual taxpayers.

Kathryn joins the OTS with extensive senior level experience in both the public and private sectors, notably as Chair of the Financial Reporting Advisory Board to HM Treasury from 2010 to 2016 and Chair of ICAEW Financial Reporting Committee from 2008 to 2017.

Mel Stride, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, said:

We want to ensure our tax system is as simple as possible for everyone, and Kathryn Cearns will play a vital role in helping meet that commitment.

Her impressive track-record of leadership in the public and private sectors and strong vision made her the ideal candidate to steer the OTS through the next phase of its work.

I would like to thank Angela Knight for her contribution to the OTS over the past 3 years. She leaves having established the OTS as a permanent office, acting as an independent voice providing beneficial advice.

Kathryn Cearns, incoming OTS Chair, said:

I am delighted to have the opportunity to help to develop a tax system in the UK that is straightforward for taxpayers while remaining effective and fit for purpose for the 21st century.

OTS Tax Director, Bill Dodwell said:

I – and the OTS team – look forward to working with Kathryn as our new Chair. Improving the interactions of taxpayers with the tax system and aiding understanding of taxation remain very important goals.

## **Further information**

The OTS was established in 2010 to provide advice to the Chancellor on simplifying the UK tax system and was made a permanent, independent office of HM Treasury in July 2015. It was put on a statutory footing in the Finance Act 2016.

Kathryn Cearns brings to the OTS a wide range of relevant leadership experience:

- non-executive director of Highways England and Chair of the Highways

England Audit and Risk Committee and member of the Group Audit and Risk Committee at the Department for Transport

- previously, Chair of the Financial Reporting Advisory Board to HM Treasury from 2010 to 2016
- formerly Chair of the ICAEW Financial Reporting Committee for 10 years up to the end of 2017
- other prior roles include a project director at the UK Accounting Standards Board (now the Financial Reporting Council), and the consultant accountant for Herbert Smith Freehills LLP and council member of the ICAEW
- Kathryn currently holds a number of non-executive, trustee and advisory appointments most notably as a member of the External Audit Committee for the International Monetary Fund, a non-executive director for the UK Supreme Court, a non-executive board member and member of the Audit Committee for Companies House, a non-executive director for The Property Ombudsman and as a trustee for Royal British Legion Industries

Although this appointment does not come under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the recruitment process has been run in line with the Commissioner's Code of Practice.

The Treasury Select Committee can hold a hearing for the Chair of the OTS after the appointed is announced, but before it has been formalised. The hearing will be held on Tuesday 5th March 2019.

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## [News story: Taking on the best: Ministry of Defence Police show sporting prowess](#)

Constable Claire Stott-Barrett acquitted herself well in the competition last year to find Britain's strongest police officer and discovered that, for her, competitive powerlifting is her favoured sport. She said;

I made the leap and entered my first powerlifting competition, the PSUK Powerlifting Championships in Glasgow, where I turned up on my own, full of trepidation and nerves.

But I needn't have worried, I discovered powerlifting is a community, total strangers screaming your name and encouragement when you are on the lifting platform, everyone, even your competitors wanting you to succeed. I am a novice, but found that everyone was friendly, helpful and supportive.

At the presentation dinner after the PSUK event, Mikey Yule, British Paralympic Powerlifter, gave the address and handed out the awards. Claire won her weight category and achieved the British Championships qualification requirement.

I entered the Scottish Championships, which helped give me more competition experience and was delighted to improve on all my lifts and increase my previous total score, achieving second place in my weight category. My overall total lifted at both competitions has resulted in qualification for the British National Full Power Championships held in July 2019 in Edinburgh

I also contacted the World Drug Free Powerlifting Federation and my application to enter the European Full Power Championships, held in April 2019 in Suffolk, has been accepted. All the powerlifting competitions I enter are sanctioned by the British Drug Free Powerlifting Association or the World Drug Free Powerlifting Association.

Silver for Simon Photo: Cwm Calon Photography, all rights reserved.

Police Sergeant Simon Amery took part in the British indoor rowing championships in December 2018 at the Lea Valley Velodrome, entering the over 50 lightweight category which is for competitors under 75kg.

He said: > I'm pleased to say that I gained a silver medal in the 2 kilometre race with a time of 6 mins 42 seconds. Last year I competed in the lower age category and came fifth, so I was pleased to have moved up. > > The event is open to all ages and people regardless of whether they row on the water or just in the gym. Simon commented: 'It has proved to be an excellent motivator for maintaining my fitness for my anticipated return to the Operational Support Unit from the Force Control and Information Room.

Victory celebration Photo: Cwm Calon Photography, all rights reserved.

Constables Sophie Dowson, Lucy Mercer, Meghan Mason, all based at Aldermaston or Burghfield, were selected for the British Police Women's Rugby team for a recent match against the Royal Navy's women's team.

Sophie explained how the match progressed: > After attending training selection throughout the day, we were then selected in starting positions to represent BPWR. Whilst the Navy put up a resilient effort throughout the game, the Police dominated in the scrums – from where Lucy Mercer scored 2 tries. > > We went into the second half 19-0 up, and managed to pull away, playing intelligent rugby and finishing the game 41-0. As always it is an absolute honour to represent Britain and our force in a sport that we love, and the message it sends to empowering females within sport is a message that we are all fully behind. > > We are currently awaiting selection for the International Policing Tournament, which this year is to be held in Hong Kong in September.

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## [News story: Government to consult on ban on 10-year-old tyres to boost road safety](#)

The government will consult on options to ban older tyres from use on buses, coaches, heavy goods vehicles and mini-buses to help keep road users safe.

The Department for Transport has today (26 February 2019) announced that it will consult on legislation to make it illegal for these vehicles to run with a tyre aged 10 years or over.

This follows a research project, launched by the government last year, to look at whether the age of a tyre has a direct impact on its safety.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Keeping people safe on our roads is our priority, and we have been working hard to understand the link between tyre age and road safety.

Emerging evidence and leading expert testimony shows us that we need to ban tyres over the age of 10 years from larger vehicles based upon the 'precautionary principle' – a move that will make our roads safer for everyone.

It follows the ['Tyred' campaign](#), led by Frances Molloy, whose 18-year-old son Michael was among 3 people killed in a coach crash on the A3 in 2012. The collision was caused by the failure of a 19-year-old tyre on the front axle of the coach.

Roads Minister Jesse Norman said:

I want to pay tribute to Frances Molloy and the Tyred campaign for their brilliant campaign to ban older tyres on buses and coaches.

I believe the changes we are consulting on will save lives. And I hope it will be welcomed by everyone who shares a commitment to making our roads safer, for the benefit of all.

The move follows a series of measures on tyre safety put in place by the government.

In 2013, the DfT issued guidance advising bus operators against fitting older

tyres to the front axles of their vehicles.

This has been reinforced through inspections by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency. Since June 2017, they have inspected 136,263 buses and coaches and have found 0.06% to breach the guidance.

Then in November last year (2018), the [DVSA guidance on maintaining roadworthiness](#) was updated to say that tyres of 10 years of age or older should not be used on the front axles of heavy goods vehicles as well as buses and coaches.

In addition, the government commissioned world-leading research in 2018 to establish the effect age has on the integrity of road vehicle tyres.

As part of this research, the UK's Transport Research Laboratory has worked with a leading laboratory in the United States to carry out testing and analysis. The outcome of this research will be published later in the spring.

\*[Dft]: Department for Transport

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## **Speech: PM statement to the House of Commons: 26 February 2019**

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the Government's work to secure a Withdrawal Agreement that can command the support of this House.

A fortnight ago I committed to come back before the House today if the Government had not by now secured a majority for a Withdrawal Agreement and a Political Declaration.

In the two weeks since, my Rt Hon Friends the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, the Attorney General and I have been engaging in focused discussions with the EU to find a way forward that will work for both sides. We are making good progress in that work.

I had a constructive meeting with President Juncker in Brussels last week, to take stock of the work done by our respective teams.

We discussed the legal changes that are required to guarantee that the Northern Ireland backstop cannot endure indefinitely.

On the Political Declaration, we discussed what additions or changes can be made to increase confidence in the focus and ambition of both sides in delivering the future partnership we envisage as soon as possible – and the Secretary of State is following this up with Michel Barnier.

I also had a number of positive meetings at the EU-League of Arab States Summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, including with President Donald Tusk.

I have now spoken to the leaders of every single EU member state to explain the UK's position.

And the UK and EU teams are continuing their work and we agreed to review progress again in the coming days.

As part of these discussions, the UK and EU have agreed to consider a joint work stream to develop alternative arrangements to ensure the absence of a hard border in Northern Ireland.

This work will be done in parallel with the future relationship negotiations and is without prejudice to them.

Our aim is to ensure that, even if the full future relationship is not in place by the end of the implementation period, the backstop is not needed because we have a set of alternative arrangements ready to go.

I want to thank my Hon and Rt Hon friends for their contribution to this work and reaffirm that we are seized of the need to progress that work as quickly as possible.

President Juncker has already agreed that the EU will give priority to this work. And the Government expects that this will be an important strand of the next phase.

The Secretary of State for Exiting the EU will be having further discussions with Michel Barnier and we will announce details ahead of the Meaningful Vote.

We will also be setting up domestic structures to support this work, including ensuring we can take advice from external experts involved in customs processes around the world, from businesses who trade with the EU and beyond – and, of course, from colleagues across the House.

This will all be supported by civil service resource as well as funding for the Government to help develop, test and pilot proposals which can form part of these alternative arrangements.

Mr Speaker, I know what this House needs in order to support a Withdrawal Agreement.

The EU knows what is needed.

And I am working hard to deliver it.

As well as changes to the backstop, we are also working across a number of other areas to build support for the Withdrawal Agreement and to give the House confidence in the future relationship that the UK and EU will go on to negotiate.



This includes ensuring that leaving the EU will not lead to any lowering of standards in relation to workers' rights, environmental protections or health and safety.

[Political content removed].

Not only would giving up control go against the spirit of the referendum result, it would also mean accepting new EU laws automatically, even if they were to reduce workers' rights or change them in a way that was not right for us.

Instead, and in the interests of building support across the House, we are prepared to commit to giving Parliament a vote on whether it wishes to follow suit whenever the EU standards in areas such as workers' rights and health and safety are judged to have been strengthened.

The Government will consult with businesses and trade Unions as it looks at new EU legislation and decides how the UK should respond.

We will legislate to give our commitments on both non-regression and future developments force in UK law.

And following further cross-party talks, we will shortly be bringing forward detailed proposals to ensure that as we leave the EU, we not only protect workers' rights, but continue to enhance them.

Mr Speaker, as the government committed to the House last week, we are today publishing the paper assessing our readiness for No Deal.

I believe that if we have to, we will ultimately make a success of a No Deal.

But this paper provides an honest assessment of the very serious challenges it would bring in the short-term – and further reinforces why the best way for this House to honour the referendum result is to leave with a deal.

As I committed to the House, the Government will today table an amendable motion for debate tomorrow.

But I know Members across the House are genuinely worried that time is running out, that if the Government doesn't come back with a further meaningful vote or it loses that vote, Parliament won't have time to make its voice heard on the next steps. I know too that members across the House are deeply concerned by the effect of the current uncertainty on businesses.

So today I want to reassure the House by making three further commitments.

First, we will hold a second Meaningful Vote by Tuesday 12 March at the latest.

Second, if the Government has not won a Meaningful Vote by Tuesday 12 March then it will – in addition to its obligations to table a neutral, amendable motion under section 13 of the EU Withdrawal Act – table a motion to be voted on by Wednesday 13 March at the latest, asking this House if it supports

leaving the EU without a Withdrawal Agreement and a framework for a future relationship on 29 March.

So the United Kingdom will only leave without a deal on 29 March if there is explicit consent in this House for that outcome.

Third, if the House, having rejected leaving with the deal negotiated with the EU, then rejects leaving on 29 March without a withdrawal agreement and future framework, the Government will, on 14 March, bring forward a motion on whether Parliament wants to seek a short limited extension to Article 50 – and if the House votes for an extension, seek to agree that extension approved by the House with the EU, and bring forward the necessary legislation to change the exit date commensurate with that extension.

These commitments all fit the timescale set out in the Private Members Bill in the name of the Rt Hon Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford.

They are commitments I am making as Prime Minister and I will stick by them, as I have previous commitments to make statements and table amendable motions by specific dates.

Let me be clear, I do not want to see Article 50 extended. Our absolute focus should be on working to get a deal and leaving on 29 March.

An extension beyond the end of June would mean the UK taking part in the European Parliament elections. What kind of message would that send to the more than 17 million people who voted to leave the EU nearly three years ago now? And the House should be clear that a short extension – not beyond the end of June – would almost certainly have to be a one-off. If we had not taken part in the European Parliament elections, it would be extremely difficult to extend again, so it would create a much sharper cliff edge in a few months' time.

An extension cannot take no deal off the table. The only way to do that is to revoke Article 50, which I shall not do, or agree a deal.

Now, I have been clear throughout this process that my aim is to bring the country back together.

This House can only do that by implementing the decision of the British people.

The Government is determined to do so in a way that commands the support of this House.

But just as government requires the support of this House in delivering the vote of the British people, so the House should respect the proper functions of the Government.

Tying the Government's hands by seeking to commandeer the order paper would have far-reaching implications for the way in which the United Kingdom is governed and the balance of powers and responsibilities in our democratic institutions.

And it would offer no solution to the challenge of finding a deal which this House can support.

Neither would seeking an extension to Article 50 now make getting a deal any easier.

Ultimately the choices we face would remain unchanged – leave with a deal, leave with no deal, or have no Brexit.

So when it comes to that motion tomorrow, the House needs to come together, as we did on 29 January, and send a clear message that there is a stable majority in favour of leaving the EU with a deal.

A number of Hon and Rt Hon Members have understandably raised the rights of EU citizens living in the UK.

As I set out last September, following the Salzburg Summit – even in the event of no deal, the rights of the three million EU citizens living in the UK will be protected.

That is our guarantee to them.

They are our friends, our neighbours, our colleagues. We want them to stay.

But a separate agreement for citizens' rights is something the EU have been clear they do not have the legal authority for.

If it is not done in a Withdrawal Agreement, these issues become a matter member states unless the EU were to agree a new mandate to take this forward.

At the very start of this process the UK sought to separate out this issue, but that was something which the EU has been consistent on.

However, my Right Hon Friend the Foreign Secretary has written to all of his counterparts and we are holding further urgent discussions with member states to seek assurances on the rights of UK citizens.

I urge all EU countries to make this guarantee and end the uncertainty for these citizens.

I hope that the government's efforts can give the House – and EU Citizens here in the UK – the reassurances they need and deserve.

Mr Speaker, for some Hon and Rt Hon Members, taking the United Kingdom out of the European Union is the culmination of a long and sincerely fought campaign.

For others, leaving the EU goes against much that they have stood for and fought for with equal sincerity for just as long.

But Parliament gave the choice to the people.

In doing so we told them we would honour their decision.

Mr Speaker, that remains the resolve of this side of the House.

[Political content removed.]

This House voted to trigger Article 50, and this House has a responsibility to deliver on the result.

The very credibility of our democracy is at stake.

By leaving the EU with a deal, we can move our country forward.

Even with the uncertainty we face today, we have more people in work than ever before, wages growing at their fastest rate for a decade and debt falling as a share of the economy.

If we can leave with a deal, end the uncertainty and move on beyond Brexit, we can do so much more to deliver real economic progress to every part of country.

So I hope tomorrow this House can show that...

...with legally binding changes on the backstop...

...commitments to protect workers' rights and the environment...

...an enhanced role for Parliament in the next phase of negotiations...

...and a determination to address the wider concerns of those who voted to leave...

...we will have a deal that this House can support.

And in doing so, that we send a clear message: That this House is resolved to honour the result of the referendum and leave the European Union with a deal.

And I commend this statement to the House.