

[Press release: Karen Pierce appointed as Britain's new Ambassador to the UN](#)

Karen is the first woman appointed to this role, and is uniquely suited for the position having previously served as Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, and more recently as the Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva.

The current Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Matthew Rycroft, has been in the post since 2015 and will handover in January 2018 when he returns to London to take up his new role as Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Development.

On being announced as the new Ambassador to the United Nations, Karen Pierce said:

The UK has long been a strong supporter of the UN and its role at the heart of the global rules-based international system at a time when it is coming under challenge. Through our role as a permanent member of the Security Council and position as the UN's third largest donor, the UK will continue to work with others to tackle the pressing security, stability, development and prosperity challenges of today.

Our security and economic interests depend to a large extent on a strong and effective United Nations. I am honoured to be appointed as the UK's Ambassador and to head the UK cross-government effort at the UN. I undertake to ensure we are an active force in New York for progress and partnership.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Britain has a proud history of working for positive change through the United Nations, not least in addressing the problems in Libya and Syria. I know Karen has the diplomatic skills, energy and patience to continue this vital work, and I congratulate her on her appointment.

Notes to editors

Karen Pierce's full career history can be found [here](#).

Press release: Queen approves Knighthood for Antony James Zacaroli QC

The Queen has approved a Knighthood for Antony James Zacaroli QC.

The Queen has been pleased to approve that the honour of Knighthood be conferred upon Antony James Zacaroli QC on his appointment as a Justice of the High Court.

Antony James Zacaroli was called to the Bar in 1987 and took Silk in 2006.

News story: Consultation on revised arrangements for GCSE computer science

Ofqual has today (27 November 2017) launched a consultation that proposes changes to non-exam assessment in GCSE computer science given evidence of widespread rule breaches.

Non-exam assessment in computer science is intended to test students' programming skills and is worth 20% of the overall 9 to 1 grade. However, there is evidence that some of this year's tasks have been posted to online forums and collaborative programming sites, contrary to exam board rules. Detailed solutions have been provided in many cases, and some of these posts have been viewed thousands of times.

The apparent extent of malpractice in this qualification leads us to believe that it is no longer possible for exam boards to ensure that grades awarded next summer will fairly reflect the ability of all students unless changes are made to the assessment arrangements.

We are asking for views on alternative assessment arrangements that would apply to students sitting exams in 2018 and 2019. Our preferred option is to retain the need for the non-exam assessment task to be completed by students, but for it not to contribute to their overall 9 to 1 grade. We continue to believe that there is significant value in students completing programming tasks and they will be required to do so. It is our expectation that teachers will want to provide feedback to students on their completed task as preparation for their exams, which include the assessment of computational

thinking and programming, though they will not be required to formally provide marks for each student to their exam board.

Julie Swan, Executive Director for General Qualifications, said:

It is with great reluctance that we are proposing to change a qualification for which students are already studying. However, we must take immediate action to address these issues and the potential impact on public confidence in relation to this qualification. Subject to the consultation responses, we believe our preferred solution will deliver fairer and more reliable results than would otherwise be the case. It will also allow us to be confident, that standards will be set appropriately.

[The consultation](#) will run until 22 December 2017. It includes a discussion of the need to consult in due course on a longer-term solution for non-exam assessment as part of this qualification. Responses will be reviewed over Christmas and a decision announced in the week beginning 8 January 2018.

Press release: Environment Agency discovers 6 illegal waste sites in one day in Bristol, Somerset and Wiltshire

Over the last 12 months the Environment Agency has seen an increase in illegal waste activity across Bristol, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire.

The first of these events took place on Tuesday 21 November 2017. Environment Officers visited 15 locations in the Bristol, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire area. They confirmed 6 illegal waste sites and found a number of unauthorised waste disposal activities, including waste being burnt.

Tackling waste crime is a top priority for the Environment Agency. Waste stored or disposed of without the proper environmental controls can have a huge impact on the environment, polluting watercourses, land and underground aquifers, and in some cases contributing to flooding. It is often an eyesore that attracts further dumping, while creating issues for neighbours such as smells and pests. The Environment Agency is determined to make life hard for criminals and to support legitimate businesses by disrupting the criminal element and taking tough enforcement action.

Andy Hicklin, Environment Agency Area Environment Manager for Wessex area, said:

Waste crime is a blight on communities and the environment and undermines legitimate business. Acting on reports from members of the public, days of action are just the first step in tackling waste crime. We will work with our partners in local authorities and use all of the tools at our disposal to disrupt, prevent and stop illegal waste activity.

The Environment Agency is asking members of the public to be vigilant; to contact them with information on anything suspicious. Illegal treatment and disposal of waste is a crime that blights lives and communities and damages the environment. Individuals involved in this type of illegal activity can be hostile and we would urge members of the public to avoid any direct contact with the culprits.

If you see or suspect illegal waste activities, report it anonymously to [Crimestoppers](#) or call 0800 555 111 or via the Environment Agency incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

[Press release: Preparing sirens for winter](#)

Four sirens, located approximately 250 metres apart in Chiswell, will be activated on Thursday (30 November 2017) at 11am, 2pm and 5pm, weather permitting. Local residents are being informed in advance via a leaflet drop and door-knocking exercise.

Rachel Burden, Wessex Flood and Coast Risk Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

Regular siren testing is an essential part of our forward planning, not only to ensure we are incident ready, but also to make sure our community flood warning and informing measures are effective.

If severe storms hit Portland, the sirens will play a crucial part in alerting local residents to imminent danger and potential evacuation. Ultimately, these sirens could help save lives.

The Chiswell area of Portland is classed as a high risk flood area because of the potential for strong south westerly winds, high tides in Lyme Bay and the close proximity of properties to the sea.

Rachel added:

Chiswell was badly affected by the floods in 2013/2014. It is a vulnerable area and can take a heavy pounding from the tides when the south westerly wind picks up. Although good flood protection measures are in place, we can never fully defend against the worst that Mother Nature can throw at us.

The sirens, which are tested twice a year, are extremely loud so that they can be heard above the noise of crashing waves during a storm. These modern sirens were installed in 2010 and replaced older Second World War equipment. An additional siren was put in during 2015 in order to fill a 'quiet spot' which was identified during the storms of the previous winter.

The testing will involve remote activation from our Blandford incident room, from the coastguard's hut and from the individual sirens. Representatives from the Environment Agency will be on hand to assist.

The day supports the annual Environment Agency [Flood Action Campaign](#).