

Press release: PM calls with leaders of the DUP and Sinn Fein parties: 10 November 2017

The Prime Minister has spoken on the phone to the leadership of the DUP and Sinn Fein parties about the political situation in Northern Ireland.

In separate phone calls, she expressed her concern that despite recent progress agreement had not yet been reached and she urged both parties to bridge the gaps on the outstanding issues that remained.

On Northern Ireland's finances, the Prime Minister explained how the UK Government will reluctantly be taking forward legislation for a Budget Bill on Monday, to ensure that in the absence of an Executive, public services in Northern Ireland have the resources they need to operate.

The Prime Minister made clear this was absolutely not an indication of direct rule but it was necessary to enable the Northern Ireland Civil Service to allocate funds for key public services while talks between the parties continued.

There was agreement on the importance of devolved Government being returned to Northern Ireland for the benefit of all communities and the Prime Minister said that the UK Government would continue to work, alongside the Irish Government, with the parties in reaching a successful outcome.

News story: Culture Secretary Karen Bradley on India mission to attract more tourists to Britain

Culture Secretary Karen Bradley met key representatives from the Indian travel market today to bang the drum for British tourism.

India is a key priority for the government's tourism arm. VisitBritain expects the number of visits from Indian tourists to grow from 415,000 in 2016 to 531,000 by 2020.

Last year the Indian tourism market was worth £433 million to the UK economy, with the average Indian visitor spending more than £1,000.

The Culture Secretary met senior representatives including British Airways,

Cox and Kings, Thomas Cook India Ltd, Mercury Travel Ltd, MakeMyTrip.com and Ezeegol.com to highlight the range of unique attractions Britain has to offer and discuss how the UK government and VisitBritain can best support tourism growth from India.

England and Wales are hosting the Cricket World Cup in 2019 and this has been earmarked as a key event that can be used to encourage cricket-loving Indian visitors to come and see the best of Britain.

Karen Bradley, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

India is forecast to be the world's fastest growing major economy over the next five years, sparking a huge rise in outbound travel.

It is vital that we capitalise on our strong relationship with India to make Britain the number one European destination for Indian holiday and business visitors in the coming years.

The cultural ties between the UK and India span centuries and our countries both benefit from shared ideas, institutions and technologies. As we prepare to leave the EU, it is a fantastic opportunity to further strengthen this special relationship and boost travel between India and the UK.

VisitBritain Chief Executive Sally Balcombe said:

We know that visitors from India are coming in increasing numbers and rate Britain for its interesting and exciting contemporary culture and its outstanding natural beauty. By continuing to showcase the incredible experiences on offer and working with regional partners such as Cox and Kings to extend our reach, we will inspire more visitors from India to discover for themselves, all there is to see in our nations and regions.

In February the UK and India agreed to ease restrictions on the number of scheduled flights between the two countries, removing limits from key Indian cities including Chennai and Kolkata.

There is capacity for 1.6 million passengers to fly directly from India to the UK every year, with 88 scheduled services per week in each direction between the two countries, and India-UK direct flights are higher than any other European country.

It is one of VisitBritain's seven GREAT inbound tourism markets, meaning there is long-term potential for growth and the national tourism market is investing additional funds in the market.

The Culture Secretary is visiting India to mark the UK-India Year of Culture,

announced in 2015. She has opened a joint exhibition between the British Museum and the CSMVS Museum in Mumbai. Other key events include the 1928 Anglo-India film Shiraz, which was remastered by the BFI and set to a modern score by musician Anoushka Shankar and has just completed its tour of India. Acclaimed contemporary dance piece FAR by Company Wayne McGregor, scored by Brian Eno, will also undertake a four-city tour of India in November.

News story: Chair of Residential Care Leadership Board appointed

The Department for Education today announced Alan Wood as Chair of the new Residential Care Leadership Board.

The Residential Care Leadership Board (RCLB) was set up following Sir Martin Narey's 2015 review of children's residential care in England. It will drive forward improvements to the children's residential care system and support vulnerable children across the country.

The Board will take forward the recommendations in Sir Martin Narey's report. They include making improvements to the commissioning of places, engaging with the wider sector to support the development of new approaches, and ensuring learning and best practice is shared and implemented.

The Board will also support the roll out of Staying Close pilots, which will allow young people leaving care to keep in touch with their support network. This is a key part of the Department's work to make sure every child, regardless of their circumstances, receives the best possible support.

Robert Goodwill, Minister for Children and Families, said:

Children living in care have often experienced traumatic situations. These children can be some of the most vulnerable in the country and we are committed to doing all that we can to give them the best possible care and support.

I am pleased that Alan has been appointed to this role, and I look forward to working closely with him to make our residential care system the best it can be.

Alan Wood, Chair of the Residential Care Leadership Board, said:

We have some excellent residential care for our children but nationally our system needs to be able to provide flexibly for a wider range of need. All local authorities and providers have a

vital role to play in ensuring provision matches needs and resources are used most effectively.

The RCLB will work to build a strong partnership across the sector focusing on developing its range, promoting improvement where it is needed and celebrating its successes.

Alan Wood is a former President of the Association for Directors of Children's Services, and has also worked as a children's services commissioner in Doncaster and Tower Hamlets. In 2016 he conducted a review of multi-agency arrangements for child protection.

He was selected for the role following an open and transparent recruitment process, overseen by the office of [The Commissioner for Public Appointments](#).

[Press release: Traffic officer and lay reader Chris serves a wide congregation on South West travels](#)

But it was a Road to Damascus moment some 37 years ago which changed the life of the then 26-year-old.

Chris found himself unemployed and desperately searching for work in late 1979. Not long after becoming aware of a welcome sign outside St Peter's Church in Tiverton, he found work, both as a petrol attendant and as a retained fireman in Cullompton.

Moving into a new home near St Andrew's Church in the town, he said:

I felt drawn again to the church and within me a desire to speak to the minister. I did that, and he spoke with me about committing myself to Jesus.

Once I had prayed a prayer of commitment I felt a very real peace and since becoming a Christian, I have experienced the Lord working in amazing ways in my personal life, in my work and with the fire service. That moment led to him becoming a committed Christian, in 1994 he was licensed with the Church by the Bishop of Exeter and he now combines the role of a lay reader with the uniformed duties of a traffic officer with Highways England.

So much so that he can often be heard discussing traffic-related issues around his regular Pause for Thought broadcast to BBC Radio Devon listeners.

He said:

In 1980 I had what for me was a powerful conversion...and having gone through this time I became passionate about helping people to understand the Bible so that it can be seen to be relevant to everyone. "The Bible has become central to what I believe and becoming licensed involved three years of training and a five-week placement in a church.

As a lay reader, Chris leads services, preaches and presides over funerals primarily at St Mary's Church in Willand and St Andrew's Church and also takes services at small chapels in Somerset and Devon.

As a traffic officer based at Highways England's Chelston outstation in Somerset, the 64-year-old patrols the strategic road network between Exeter and Clevedon, as well as the Pridamsleigh beat as far as the Tamar Bridge on the A38 and as far north as Gloucester when covering patrols from the Almondsbury outstation. Married to Josie for 42 years, with three grown-up sons, the former school caretaker served as a retained firefighter at Cullompton for 34 years, but he now revels in both of his current roles.

Highways England traffic officer Chris Russell on duty at the Chelston outstation in Somerset

He said:

The two roles are similar in that I am serving others. It is about having compassion, helping people through sometimes very difficult times and communicating with others through one-to-one conversations.

I have managed to balance my faith with my friendships at work, I've never had any problems with being a Christian at work.

As a traffic officer, you need to enjoy working with people and be that reassuring person in uniform to the many people who break down or those involved in incidents. Some can find themselves in very worrying or frightening positions and in that respect I enjoy helping people to find the best possible outcome.

Our priority is to keep the general public and stakeholders safe on our network, and good communication is vital as we sometimes have to deal with challenging situations.

Chris will again feature on BBC Radio Devon's daily Pause for Thought broadcast during the Early Show with Laura James next week.

The broadcasts, which start on Monday, will air at 6.20am each day on 103.4FM and DAB, and are also [available online](#).

And he added:

Through my passion to speak about the Bible I have been given a great opportunity through BBC Radio Devon's Pause for Thought. I've done 21 of these broadcasts to date and I'm looking forward to being in the studio next week.

As part of Highways England's Traffic Officer service, Chris and colleagues patrol England's motorways and major A roads, helping to keep traffic flowing smoothly.

Chris Russell pictured in the BBC Devon studio

Traffic Officers have the power to stop and direct traffic, close lanes and carriageways and manage traffic. Traffic Officers help to keep roads running smoothly by attending incidents, ensuring the scene is safe, clearing the carriageway of debris, managing debris and supporting the emergency services.

They also deal with broken down and abandoned vehicles on the strategic road network, removing vehicles that are causing a blockage or hazard, and assist and support road users in times of difficulty.

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of a traffic officer go to Highways England's traffic officer service.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Fake remembrance merchandise seized by Border Force](#)

The goods, some of which were also branded with the words 'Lest we Forget', were later confirmed to have infringed the Royal British Legion's 'two-petal poppy' copyright.

The items were seized on 8 November when Border Force officers from the mobile International Trade Team based at Tilbury Docks attended a freight depot to examine an air freight consignment from China. Inspecting the

shipment, which was destined for an address in the Manchester area, officers discovered packages containing poppy branded goods including 1,212 scarves, 5,400 badges and 1,200 key rings. Suspecting the copyright infringement, officers seized the goods and contacted the rights holder.

Amongst the consignment, officers also discovered 600 four petal brooches which were later confirmed to infringe the 'four-petal' copyright held by the Earl Haig Fund Scotland (Poppyscotland).

Mark Kennedy, Border Force Acting Deputy Director, said:

Had these fake goods entered the market, they could have cheated thousands of pounds from unsuspecting members of the public and diverted vital funds away from the Royal British Legion.

My officers work around the clock at ports, airports and mail sorting centres identifying and seizing counterfeit goods and their diligence has proved vital here.

All counterfeits cheat honest traders and we are determined to crack down on this type of criminality. Border Force works closely with partner law enforcement agencies to ensure co-ordinated action against those who attempt to import fake goods.

Once items are seized, Border Force's specialist international trade teams work with the owners of big brands to establish whether or not goods are genuine. If they are confirmed as fake, the goods are destroyed and the rights holders can then decide whether to privately prosecute the importers.

A spokesperson for The Royal British Legion and Poppyscotland said:

The two-petal poppy is a registered trademark owned by The Royal British Legion and the four-petal poppy is a registered trademark owned by Poppyscotland. We have a responsibility to make sure that these trademarks are protected so that the public can be sure that their donations are going directly to a registered charity.

The Royal British Legion and Poppyscotland offer a number of poppy accessories which raise much-needed funds for our charitable work. By donating for a poppy through our official channels, or corporate partners, the public can rest assured that their money will go towards supporting our Armed Forces community.

As well as working with rights holders when counterfeit goods are seized, Border Force also links with a variety of partners, including Trading Standards and the Intellectual Property Office.

Anyone who has been sold counterfeit goods or knows someone who is selling them should contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.