

## Name of Grenfell Tower Inquiry panel member announced: 23 December 2019

Today the Prime Minister has announced Ms Benita Mehra as a decision-making panel member for Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, replacing Professor Nabeel Hamdi.

Benita Mehra is an experienced chartered engineer with a range of skills and experience directly relevant to the issue the Inquiry will be investigating.

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## 2022 Festival update

Martin Green CBE, the mastermind behind the hugely successful Hull UK City of Culture 2017, and the former Head of Ceremonies for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, has been asked by government to develop plans to curate, manage, and promote a UK-wide festival in 2022.

The major nationwide festival, backed by £120 million funding from government, was first announced in 2018. As a UK-wide celebration of our creativity and innovation, the Festival will be designed in collaboration with the devolved administrations to showcase the best of our art, culture, heritage, design and technology sectors.

From early January, Martin and his team will begin working with these sectors across the UK. Over the coming months, he will develop a vision which engages communities across the United Kingdom and ensures the delivery of a world class festival of creativity.

The project will be delivered by a dedicated team established within the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Organising Committee, led by Green in addition to his role as the Chief Creative Officer of the Games.

Culture Secretary Nicky Morgan said:

The nationwide festival will give us a fantastic opportunity to champion all that is great about the UK. It will be a tremendous showcase for our creativity and innovation, which will not only celebrate our values and identities, but will also help attract new inward business and investment.

Martin Green CBE said:

I am honoured to be asked to lead the Festival. As a passionate believer that art and culture has the power to bring people together, I am immensely proud to be working on the project to showcase and celebrate the cultural dynamism and distinctiveness of the UK.

There are three main aims for the festival that will underpin the planning process:

- To bring people together to celebrate our strengths, values and identities, and boost pride throughout communities
- To celebrate all four nations' offer to the world, supporting our brand and helping attract new inward business and investment
- To leave a lasting legacy across the UK.

Additional details on the festival will be made available in due course.

### **Notes to editors:**

Martin Green is Birmingham 2022's chief creative officer. Martin has masterminded some of Britain's most significant major events including the opening of The O2 in London, the opening ceremony of the 2014 Tour de France Grand Départ in Leeds, and was Head of Ceremonies for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. He was also responsible for the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay that visited Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England, and for the last two years he was the executive producer for the Hogmanay in Edinburgh.

As CEO and Director of Hull UK City of Culture 2017 Martin delivered 365 days of transformative culture for the city to huge acclaim. He is an advisor to the Japan 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Martin is also an inaugural member of the Circle of Cultural Fellows at King's College London. In 2018 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Hull and made CBE in the Queen's New Year Honours list.

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## **Taff Merthyr mine water treatment scheme**

Taff Merthyr – one of the Coal Authority's largest treatment schemes – uses natural or "passive" methods, such as settlement lagoons and reed beds, to remove iron from mine water that was polluting the Taff Bargoed and community park lakes.

The site is located within the wider reclamation area of the former Taff Merthyr, Deep Navigation and Trelewis collieries.

A year after the collieries closed in 1993 and the pumps that kept them dry were switched off, iron-rich mine water started to flow directly into the Taff Bargoed, polluting 4km of the river.

When assessed by the Environment Agency (now Natural Resources Wales), this coal mine discharge was ranked at number 3 on a priority list of sites requiring treatment in England and Wales.

Construction of the £1.2 million scheme started in 1999 and was completed in the summer of 2001.

Today it forms a key part of the Taff Bargoed Millennium Park – a major land reclamation project undertaken by Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taff county borough councils, together with Groundwork Merthyr.

Our extensively landscaped 7 hectare site, which is surrounded by a cycle path and footpaths, features:

- 4 individual settlement ponds – at a total of 1.2 hectares
- 16 individual reed beds – at a total of 3.2 hectares
- 100,000 plants

As the park is a well-used community facility – today the area has fishing lakes, canoe slaloms and a climbing centre – it was important our scheme contributed to the general improvement of the surrounding area.

In 2018, we installed 108 solar panels to reduce the site's carbon footprint and help cut the electricity bills for pumping the polluted mine water from the pit.

It is estimated that over 25 years these will provide more than 600,000 kW hours of electricity, saving around £100,000 on electricity purchase and reducing CO2 emissions by more than 300 tonnes.

## **How our scheme improved biodiversity**

Studies in 1998 found the site was largely unvegetated – mainly large, abandoned terraces of bare ground enclosing the old mine workings and associated colliery spoil – with little to offer wildlife.

However, it now supports a mosaic of habitats and the reed beds in particular, because they are not common to the area, have improved biodiversity, providing valuable wildlife havens for many different species of flora and fauna.

Since the scheme was built, there has been an increase in the number of birds, including the reed bunting, sedge warbler, willow warbler, black cap, grey wagtail, water rail and song thrush.

Between the treatment pools, which provide a habitat for a range of

invertebrate and amphibian species, there is dense scrub, containing willow and alder trees.

This helps to connect to nearby mature deciduous woodland, whose ancient oaks can support a range of invertebrates and offer potential for roosting bats.

There are also areas of grassland containing Yorkshire fog grass, perennial rye grass, stinging nettle, common vetch, cuckoo flower and creeping buttercup.

These offer a habitat for a range of invertebrates, including butterflies, and other groups of fauna, such as reptiles and small mammals, which in turn create foraging opportunities for raptors such as kestrel.

The scheme has improved the quality of the Taff Bargoed and by our site the river now runs clear, meaning it can support a range of aquatic invertebrates. In addition, fish such as brown trout have been reintroduced.

Otter spraint – or dung – has also been recorded nearby and, given the site's location and how suitable it is for the species to commute and forage, it is highly likely the mine water treatment scheme is now used by otters.

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## [NDA completes transfer of plutonium from Dounreay](#)



Dounreay site in Caithness, the UK's former centre of fast reactor research and development

This means that all significant UK stocks of this material are now held at Sellafield – the centre of excellence for plutonium management.

NDA Chief Executive, David Peattie, said:

The successful conclusion of the work is another clear demonstration of the NDA delivering its mission – to clean up the UK's nuclear sites safely, securely and cost-effectively with care for people and the environment.

The safe and secure management of civil separated plutonium is a priority for the UK government and an important part of the NDA's strategy. This is a major step forward in decommissioning and cleaning-up the Dounreay site in Caithness, the UK's former centre of fast reactor research and development.

The NDA's Programme Manager, Phil Edge, added:

Successfully achieving this milestone has only been possible because of the co-ordinated efforts of a committed team of extremely skilled people, working across several organisations. This includes the UK Government, our regulators, the police services in both Scotland and England, Dounreay, Sellafield and our specialist transport companies – Direct Rail Services and International Nuclear Services.

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## [Government to consult on future analogue radio licences](#)

The Government has today launched a consultation on whether to extend licences for analogue commercial radio stations. Although digital radio now accounts for around 57% of all radio listening, analogue stations remain an important platform for millions of listeners who still use FM and AM radio services every day.

A number of FM and AM licences are due to expire from early 2022, including those for Classic FM and TalkSport. Ofcom does not have the power to renew these licences for a longer period under current legislation.

Therefore, the government is seeking views on whether analogue licences should be renewed for a further period and if so, how long they should be renewed for.

Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan said:

Although we now live in an increasingly digital world, there are

still many people that use FM and AM radio and will want to continue listening to these services. That's why we are seeking early views on options to renew commercial radio licences in a way that benefits both the commercial stations affected and their loyal listeners.

The consultation will remain open until 21 February and the government plans to take forward any legislative reform at the earliest opportunity.

### **Notes to editors:**

Read and respond to the [consultation](#).

Commercial radio licences are entitled to a number of renewals of their analogue (FM or AM) licences provided they also broadcast their services on digital radio. A number of licences, including national analogue licences for Classic FM and Talksport, have used up their renewals and are to expire from early 2022. Ofcom has no power to renew these licences for a further period. The changes only affect analogue commercial radio services. Digital radio and community radio are subject to different licensing arrangements.

The government consultation contains three options:

- Do nothing and allow licences to expire and be re-advertised by Ofcom;
- Allow the renewal of licences for a further 5 years;
- Allow the renewal of licences for a further 8 years.